

Effects of Low SES on Child Vocabulary Development

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Purpose

- Review the negative effects of low Socioeconomic status (SES), on child vocabulary development.
- Discuss possible solutions and implications for children in low SES families and their vocabulary development

Importance

- In the United States an estimated 22% of all children fall in the Low SES or poverty category. ⁴
- If maternal education and verbal interaction are a mediating factor, then there are even more than 22% of children whose language development reflects that of low SES. ⁴

Questions

What are some of the possible mediating factors between low SES and vocabulary development?

- Maternal Speech
- Child care
- Parental Involvement



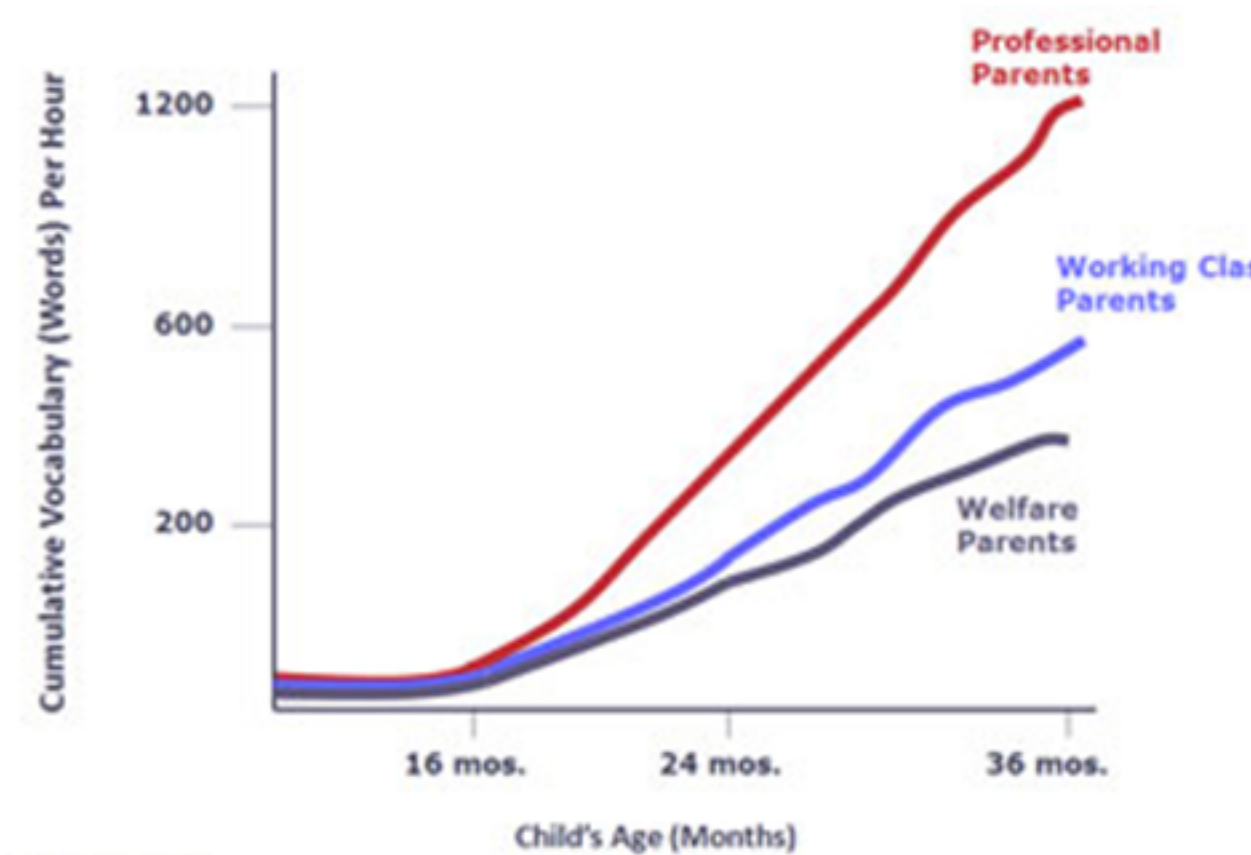
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Cognitive Attainment

- Children from lower SES families develop their vocabularies at slower rates than children from higher SES families. ⁵
- Poverty and low parental education are associated with low levels of school achievement and IQ. ¹
- Low SES parents are less likely to purchase reading and cognitively stimulating materials. ¹

Maternal Speech

- Richness of language exposure has a strong correlation to children's resulting vocabulary ²
- Children who heard longer utterances built productive vocabularies at faster rates than children who heard shorter utterances. ⁵
- Infants in welfare families hear about 600 words per hour while working class families hear 900 words per hour and infants in professional class families hear 1,500 words per hour. ²
- Higher SES mothers address more speech to their children than lower SES mothers. ⁶
- higher-SES children who hear more speech also hear speech that contains a greater variety of words, greater syntactic complexity, and a larger proportion of conversation-eliciting questions ⁶



<http://svlg.org/policy-areas/education/educare>

Child Care

- Childcare serves a compensatory role for disadvantaged children by providing more superior opportunities for learning than those found at home ³
- Children who have participated in group care are more advanced to parents and teachers than children at home in measures of language comprehension and ability to communicate among many other measures. ³
- Preschool programs with qualified teachers have shown to lessen the negative effects of poverty on the intellectual development of socioeconomically disadvantaged children. ⁸
- Participation in child care during the first 3 years of life is positively associated with reading recognition skills among lower income children and 5-6 years of age. ³

Parental Involvement

- It cannot be assumed that all learning environments for low-SES children are weak and that all less educated poor parents do not support literacy development. ³
- Low-income parents who encourage their children to succeed in school has positive outcomes in academic success. ⁹
- Shared book reading at home foster vocabulary development in preschool children. ⁹
- Growth in pre-school phonological sensitivity is related to parental involvement in literacy activities in the home. ⁹
- Children's oral language skills are associated with storybook exposure. ⁹
- Parents cultivate the talents of their children with question/discussion; they stimulate child's development and foster social and cognitive skills and abilities ¹⁰

Implications

Some -changes that could improve the vocabulary development of low SES children are:

- Affordable childcare with qualified staff for low-SES children.
- Programs that educate and inform low income parents of their involvement and the benefits for their children's development.
- Public attention to the importance of child-directed speech and interaction

Sources

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