

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASS CHILDREN
AND ITS CORRELATION WITH PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Differences in language development of children favor the middle socioeconomic status as opposed to the lower socioeconomic status according to Deutsch (1965). These classifications are based primarily on economic attributes. Language development is used and defined differently by each researcher. It may refer to one, some or all of the following: total verbalization, quantity or quality of expressed vocabulary, structural aspects of sentences, word association, parts of speech employed, numbers of colloquialisms and non-standard English patterns used, vocabulary or level of conceptualization. For the purpose of this research, language development has been equated to vocabulary development.

Large numbers of children from lower socioeconomic status families are failing in the public schools of the United States (Goldstein, 1967). This failure is attributable, in large part, to the language development level and the sub-cultural language patterns of lower socioeconomic children. Public schools are based upon middle socioeconomic values and logically reinforce middle socioeconomic language patterns. Worley and Story (1967) reported a difference in the mean language age of lower and middle socioeconomic first grade

children, favoring middle socioeconomic children. Most of the research that has been done on language development of pre-school children has been descriptive (Piaget, 1926; McCarthy, 1946, 1954) or comparative according to socioeconomic status. No research has been done which attempts to isolate specific causes of socioeconomic language differences. It has been assumed that lower socioeconomic children are lower in language development because of their sub-cultural experiences. More to the point, it is the sub-cultural bias of language evaluative tools that places lower socioeconomic children behind. How can a tool developed for a middle socioeconomic child be fair to a child of lower socioeconomic status? There exist too many sub-cultural differences. This must be taken into consideration when evaluating present research in language development of sub-cultural groups and in evaluating this research tract. A child's preschool experiences and sub-cultural influences are of extreme importance in determining his level of language development (Landreth and Pines, 1968).

The purpose of this research was twofold. First, it was planned to determine the relationship between the level of language development and the number of different kinds of experience a child had at home during his preschool years. In addition, there was an attempt to determine the relationship between level of language development and the amount of time children spent with adults, with other children and alone.

The stated hypotheses of this research are as follows:

1. The mean number of preschool activities of lower

socioeconomic children does not differ significantly from the mean number for middle socioeconomic children.

2. Middle socioeconomic children do not spend more time in activities with adults than do lower socioeconomic children.
3. The level of vocabulary development of children from middle socioeconomic homes as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test will not surpass that of children from lower socioeconomic homes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some of the earliest language research done in the 1800's emphasized vocabulary acquisition (McCarthy, 1946, 1954). Piaget (1926), in a 1967 translation, discussed the relationship between the child's language and thought. He classified child language in two basic developmental levels, "egocentric" and "socialized". He studied children at the Maison des Petits de l'Institut Rousseau, recording and interpreting spontaneous verbalizations. While he described language without reference to socioeconomic differences, his work has been influential in understanding child language. McCarthy (1930) reported that upper socioeconomic children in her study asked more questions and used adapted information more frequently than the lower socioeconomic children. She further stated that the difference remained fixed when the mental ages of the children were held constant.

There were marked differences in vocabulary development according to a University of Iowa study comparing upper socioeconomic children living at home with orphanage-reared children (Williams, 1937). A revised version of the M. E. Smith Vocabulary Test of 1926 was used. Environmental factors were cited as playing an important role in the difference. A

comparison of the children of parents on welfare and those of parents paying tuition at the University of Georgia Nursery School showed significant differences. The mean length of response of girls surpassed that of boys at all levels and the children whose parents paid tuition surpassed children whose parents were on welfare in this category. Boys from lower socioeconomic levels had significantly shorter mean length of response than those from all other groups.

Basil Bernstein (1961) conducted extensive studies on social class and language patterns of English adult society in which he identified two distinctive language patterns, formal and public. Formal language, characteristic of the middle class, was noted for its flexibility, making use of several different structural patterns in sentences and being more explicit in meaning. Public language was a restricted language, using a fewer number of structural possibilities and being more implicit in meaning.

Terminology Used In Describing Socioeconomic Language Differences

The terms relied on most heavily are "standard" and "non-standard" English. Standard English is the "kind of English habitually used by most of the educated English speaking persons in the United States" (Allen, 1967, p. 356). English used by individuals speaking any dialect different from standard is termed non-standard. Allen (1967) and Ecroyd (1968) suggested that the cause of the lower socioeconomic language

difference, frequently classified as a deficiency, rested in the non-standard language patterns of the child's subculture. Standard English patterns, reinforced by school and home, are easily acquired by the child of the middle class who thrives linguistically. The lower socioeconomic child receives no such reinforcement from the school and is further expected to learn new standard English patterns for school, while maintaining non-standard English patterns at home. James Alatis (1965), concerned mainly with non-English speaking children, noted that Dr. Leo Pederson classified the language of the average Chicago Negro as a separate subculture of non-standard English. Lavatelli (1963) disagreed with the notion that non-standard English patterns were a handicap. In her opinion only social class prejudice called attention to a difference which in no way hinders thinking processes.

Hurst and Jones (1966) coined the term "dialectolalia" to describe the non-organic speech disorders, the dialects of subcultures, which characterize the language of the lower socioeconomic groups. They use the term to describe sub-variables in speech that need professional attention or, more simply, reflect poor speech skills. Hurst and Jones believed that the speech patterns characteristic of deprived groups in our society represent a speech disorder that needs remedial attention. They suggested opportunities for cultural growth along typical middle-class lines in order to remedy the problem. Their study of 566 male and 643 female college freshmen convinced them that high proficiency speakers are high in

leadership ability, dominance, self confidence, independence, aggression and spontaneity. Their research further revealed that qualities associated with good socialization skills are highly related to oral language proficiency. The tools they employed in the research were a socioeconomic and cultural questionnaire, a speech and language scale assessing attitudes toward speech and language, an evaluation of self and peer speech, Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey and the California Psychological Inventory.

Approaches To The Study Of Socioeconomic Language Differences

Deutsch (1965) carried out thorough studies in work which can rightly be termed language development. His variables included all of the earlier mentioned aspects of total verbalization, quantity or quality of expressed vocabulary, structural aspects of sentences, word association, parts of speech employed, numbers of colloquialisms and non-standard English patterns used, vocabulary or level of conceptualization. His research, over a four-year period in New York City attempted to determine the effects of race and socioeconomic status on the language development of 292 children. Groups were balanced to give an even distribution from each socioeconomic level and from majority and minority races. Data were collected on 100 language variables at first and fifth grades. The results indicated that lower socioeconomic and minority

race membership correlated positively with a below-average language development score, as determined by these variables.

Entwisle (1968) studied word association for common words with children from different socioeconomic classes. She found that first grade slum children were more advanced in word associations than first grade suburban children, provided the I.Q. was kept constant. Slum children began the expected lag in word associations by third grade and showed an increase in lag by fifth grade.

Peisach (1968) studied the question in a completely different manner. She gave 127 fifth graders and 64 first graders from contrasting socioeconomic levels the opportunity to restore words deleted from teacher's and children's speech. At first grade she found no difference in ability to restore words for children from different socioeconomic levels. By fifth-grade level the difference became obvious -- middle-class children were able to restore the teacher's words better than lower-class children.

Anderson and James (1966) studied the language of three-year-olds from middle and lower socioeconomic levels. The only important difference they found was that children from the lower socioeconomic group had a greater verbal output score than the middle socioeconomic group in the testing situation.

When standardized language tests are used in research the difference between middle and lower socioeconomic groups is quite predictable.

Worley and Story (1967) gave the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) to children in Nevada. Forty children, divided evenly by socioeconomic level and sex and matched by age were administered the ITPA. Mean age level language development score of lower socioeconomic children was 5 years 11 months; that for middle socioeconomic children was 7 years 1 month -- a difference of fourteen months in favor of the middle socioeconomic children.

Difference in language ability or development becomes most obvious in public schools. Information concerning language differences of the school age child has been, for the most part, based on opinions of educators who have experienced the difference in their classrooms, or reports from schools or school districts in which lower socioeconomic pupils have scored lower than pupils in middle socioeconomic schools and school districts on standardized language tests. Research, using matched groups and statistical analyses, has shown that children from lower socioeconomic levels are behind in language development, as measured by school achievement and classroom performance (Ilg and Ames, 1965).

Some research has centered on a comparison of the language development of Negro children and white children. Carson and Rabin (1960) compared Northern Negroes, Southern Negroes, Northern and Southern whites in language development, as measured by standardized scales -- Ammons and Ammons Full Range Picture Vocabulary, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and the Qualitative Vocabulary Scale by Rabin,

King and Ehrmann, 1955. Results showed Northern white pupils superior to Northern Negroes and Northern Negroes superior to Southern Negroes. An unpublished Master's Thesis by Charles Wilhelm (1967) at the University of Kansas, showed a significant difference favoring white children on six measures of verbal language skill. The study employed as data-gathering tools the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), four subtests of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities and five subtests of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. Two groups of children, mean age 3.74 months for whites and 3.70 months for Negroes, were studied. Subjects were matched on sex and racial variables and all were from mono-lingual homes and had passed a hearing screening test. The Negro group was from a large city; the white group represented a small city. The factors which may affect language status of children were studied -- age, bilingualism, hearing acuity, socioeconomic status, intelligence, race, sex, size of community and ethnic composition of the community.

Specific Variables Related To Socioeconomic Language Development

No longer can cultural deprivation, social deprivation or social disadvantage be used to explain the causes of the socioeconomic language difference. According to Deutsch (1965) it is necessary to begin to identify specific variables within the subculture. Each socioeconomic level carries within itself patterns of living, speaking, communicating and thinking.

Because these patterns are characteristic of one specific group of society, they are classified as being characteristic of a subculture -- a culture within a larger, more comprehensive culture. Halliday (1968), Bernstein (1965) and Riessman (1962) have all contended that language patterns differ from subculture to subculture. Entwisle (1968) summed up the effect of socioeconomic level, i.e., subculture, on language learning when she stated, "The child's subculture may be the only substantial environmental influence because the young child's exposure to language is primarily auditory" (1968, p. 37).

What are these specific variables? It is not the type of word or range of vocabulary that is decisive, but the fact that the ". . . child is sensitized to a particular organization of words and structural connections which become the major medium for the expression of difference and separateness" (Bernstein, 1961, p. 294).

Piaget (1926) considered this expression of separateness a difficult and essential step in the development of mature language. Bernstein (1961) placed the responsibility for the socioeconomic language difference on structural connections learned. Hess and Shipman (1965) ascribed the difference to the family control which differs with socioeconomic levels. This term linked social interaction with language development. Their conclusion was based on a structured laboratory situation in which mothers "taught" three tasks to their four-year-old children; this was further supported by home interviews

and testing at the university. Middle socioeconomic mothers were more likely to teach by giving information and trying to help their child understand the problem. Lower socioeconomic mothers were less verbal, relying heavily on nonverbal clues and directions. The importance of social interaction in language learning cannot be underestimated because language is learned in a social situation (Wood, 1964). Goldstein and Vera in The Disadvantaged Child, 1967, wrote that a child from a lower socioeconomic background may experience a deficient amount of verbal interaction. They referred to the importance of immediate feedback in the form of verbal interaction, in the development of less concrete words, characteristic of upper level verbal processes. Deutsch suggested two components with significant influence on language development -- family cohesion and preschool experiences. Family cohesion was also an essential component of Goldstein and Vera's verbal interaction process. Family cohesion referred to the strength or quality of the bonds among members of a family as it applied to openness, understanding and acceptance. Preschool experiences referred to activities participated in by family members, regardless of the "quality" of the experiences.

The influence of the subculture in all areas of development, particularly on linguistic and intellectual growth, is most penetratingly felt before the child is six years old (Pines, 1968). Before the age of six or seven, through language acquisition, the child has become a part of the subculture, while at the same time the subculture has become an

integral part of the child. Opportunities for and success in changing subcultural patterns become very slim after ages six or seven. Kirk and Skeels (1953) reported increased I.Q. scores with increased preschool stimulation with the children from lower socioeconomic homes. Bloom (1965) believed that 50% of a child's intelligence (I.Q.) at age 17 is developed between conception and age 4; 30% from four to eight and 20% after age 8. In a popular article, Edwards ("Kindergarten Is Too Late," 1968) stressed the importance of the preschool years. The child from a lower socioeconomic subculture is in great need of early preschool experiences that stimulate his total development (Known, 1968; Ching, 1968; Boyer, Walsh, 1968; Jensen, 1968; Bereiter, Engleman, 1966 and others). According to Cazden (1966) Deutsch and Brown (1964) found that a variety of experiences increased the verbal interaction in families. Assuming that the verbal interaction is positive because of its necessity in the language learning process, the "variety of experiences" takes on great relevancy in socioeconomic language development. The National Council of Teachers of English (1965) published an extensive overview of the socioeconomic language problem and stressed the preschool years as the crucial time for language development of the culturally different, lower socioeconomic children.

Many writers cited the home as the agent that should provide preschool children with the necessary stimulation for language development. Pines, (1968); Bloom, Davis and Hess, (1965); and Stern (1966) wrote of the inadequacy of the lower

socioeconomic home for this stimulation and supported group-care preschools for the above purpose. "Preschool experiences," as with language development has been applied to a wide variety of programs, approaches and practices.

Preschool Programs For Language Stimulation

Landreth reported language development level was improved as a result of additional experiences, described as "hearing stories, talking about pictures and taking field trips" (Landreth, 1967). Programs for the Early Childhood Language Project in Los Angeles tried to "make up" for three or four years of "inadequate experiences and stimulation" in an eight-week program (Stern, 1966). Bereiter and Engleman (1966) used the term "preschool experiences" to describe their highly pressurized method of structured teaching to improve language of three- and four-year-olds. Bereiter's program was a two-hour session, thirty minutes of which was free play. The remainder of the time was spent in formal drill for reading, arithmetic and language. The teacher-pupil ratio was one-to-five. The teacher spoke in complete sentences and demanded complete statement answers from the children. Extrinsic rewards are slowly replaced with praise; punishment takes three forms -- physical, isolation and refusal of reward. The atmosphere of the preschool was structured and resembled an elementary school more than a preschool.

McConnell, Horton and Smith (1969) emphasized small group work in receptive, listening and expressive aspects of

language. This work relied heavily on the relationship between child and adult. Other programs reporting similar practices include those of Blank and Solomon (1968) and Gray and Klaus (1965).

No research could be located which was designed to determine statistically the relationship between concrete home experiences and a tested language development level. Many research studies have been previously cited which suggested a definite connection. However, no research could be found that quantitatively evaluated the experiences preschool children have outside of a structured child care situation.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Problem

Children from lower socioeconomic homes perform at a lower level than children from middle socioeconomic homes on standardized language tests (Deutsch, 1965). Lower socioeconomic homes do not offer the variety of experiences that middle socioeconomic homes provide for their children (Pines, 1968). In an attempt to increase the level of language development for children from lower socioeconomic homes, research suggests that additional experiences should be provided (Known, 1968; Ching, 1968; Boyer and Walsh, 1968; Jensen, 1968; and Bereiter, Engleman, 1966).

This research project was designed to determine if the home experiences of middle socioeconomic preschool children and those of lower socioeconomic preschool children differed statistically. It was further designed to determine if the language development level of preschool children from middle socioeconomic homes differed statistically from that of preschool children from lower socioeconomic homes.

Subjects

The initial subjects for this study were 32 children representing the lower socioeconomic status and 36 children representing the middle socioeconomic status. Two day-care centers, North Topeka Day Care and East Topeka Day Care, both located in Topeka, Kansas, were selected to represent the lower socioeconomic status. Classification was based upon average family income as estimated by the directors of the centers. The children at the day care centers were representative of the Negro and Caucasian races and between the ages of three and five during the 1968-1969 school year. The 32 children from lower socioeconomic status homes who were tested attended the centers from 7 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. The program included a mid-morning snack, lunch, a two-hour afternoon nap along with free play and structured group activities. Children who were enrolled in the Kansas State University Child Development Laboratory during the 1968-1969 school year were selected to represent the middle socioeconomic status. This classification was based upon the teacher-estimated income of the families involved. These 36 children represented the Caucasian and Oriental races and were between the ages of three and five. The children from middle socioeconomic status homes attended the Child Development Laboratory for a two and one-half hour period daily in two sessions -- 18 attended in the morning from 9-11:30 and 18 attended in the afternoon from 1-3:30. A mid-session snack was part of the daily program

which also included (indoor and outdoor) free play and structured group activities.

It was impossible to use seven of the initial subjects from the lower socioeconomic group in the final analysis because of incomplete data from the "Children's Activities Questionnaire". In addition, nine subjects from the initial middle socioeconomic group were eliminated because of incomplete data from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Instrument

The decision was made by the author to evaluate the activities which children participated in outside of the structured group situation at the Day Care Center or Child Development Laboratory. These activities were evaluated quantitatively. The approach of the evaluation was to determine the total number of different activities each child participated in outside of the group situation. The term "home experiences" was applied to this total. The mean totals were then compared by socioeconomic group to determine if the two groups did in fact have quantitatively different "home experiences". It was not the purpose of this study to include a qualitative analysis of the children's home experiences. The next step was to determine if there existed a significant difference between the language development of the two socioeconomic groups as evaluated by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Two instruments were used in making the above evaluations and these are described below.

The "Children's Activities Questionnaire", (Appendix 39), originally developed by the author, was used to determine the total number of activities in which each child participated. The "Children's Activities Questionnaire" listed specific activities that children might encounter outside of their structured age-group situation. Some activities included were as follows: jumping rope, riding tricycles, playing records, visiting the library and attending church. The final category on the "Children's Activities Questionnaire" was to ask respondents if there was anything not on the questionnaire that their child liked to do. The responses to this category were labeled "additional activities" in the analysis of data. The form of the questionnaire was revised after an initial sample questionnaire was administered to five lower socioeconomic status mothers and three middle socioeconomic status mothers who were not to be included in the final study. The order of the items was changed to integrate the items most frequently answered "yes" with those items less frequently answered "yes". This was done in order to prevent discouragement in answering. The final questionnaire form was four pages long, with 17 items. For each item the respondents were instructed to mark "yes" or "no" to indicate if their child participated in that particular activity. In addition, the respondent indicated the frequency of participation with "adults," "with other children," and "alone". The choices for frequency were "most of the time," "some of the time," "very little of the time," or "never".

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test developed by Dunn (1965) was used as the standardized evaluative tool to determine levels of language development for each individual child. The test manual stated that the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is ". . . an estimate of the subject's verbal intelligence through measuring his hearing vocabulary" (Dunn, 1965, p. 25). Reliability and validity tests have been administered with results recorded in the test manual.

Method

Permission was secured from the directors of the Child Care Centers and the Child Development Laboratory to administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to the children enrolled in the centers. Information concerning the birth dates of the children who were to be tested was provided by the directors. The author spent one day at each center prior to the testing in order to become familiar with the children and the program.

The author spent two days at each center conducting the test. Each child was tested individually in a room located away from the rooms used for the regular program. The time required for testing each child varied from 10 minutes minimum to 30 minutes maximum. Several children were tested in two different sittings because they could not sit still or pay attention to the test material for an extended period of time. The ability of the younger children to attend to the test was considerably less adequate than for the older children. The

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test raw score was tabulated immediately and the Mental Age, Intelligence Quotient and Percentile Rank were determined by tables provided in the test manual.

The "Children's Activities Questionnaire" was duplicated for distribution to the parents whose children had been tested at the two child care centers and the Child Development Laboratory classes. The questionnaire was distributed to parents individually along with a brief explanatory letter as they brought their child to each respective center. In this way a personal contact was made with each parent to enlist her cooperation. The parents were asked to complete the questionnaire, place it in the pre-addressed manilla envelope and return it to the director of their child's center. Of the 69 questionnaires distributed 52 or 75% were returned. The questionnaires were forwarded by the directors to the author.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The method for statistically analyzing the information from the two evaluative tools was an unequal subclass analysis of variance which yielded F-ratio scores. This method of analysis was used because the sample groups were of unequal size. The F-ratio scores indicated any statistically significant difference between the means which had been calculated for each socioeconomic group on five "Children's Activities Questionnaire" categories and on four Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test categories. In addition, the differences between the "Children's Activities Questionnaire" and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test for boys and girls were also tested with the analysis of variance to determine any sex-related differences.

In studying the results the "Children's Activities Questionnaire" will be considered first. The respondents to the questionnaire were 25 lower socioeconomic parents and 27 middle socioeconomic parents. The children who were described on the questionnaire represented 25 male subjects and 27 female subjects.

Total Activities from "Children's
Activities Questionnaire"

The mean number of activities listed on this questionnaire participated in by the middle socioeconomic group was greater than the mean for the lower socioeconomic group. The mean for the lower socioeconomic group was 14.2 and for the middle socioeconomic group was 15.2. The difference was significant at the .01 level of probability. The F-ratio score was 5.904. This finding supports research data of Pines (1968), Bloom, Davis and Hess (1965), and Stern (1966). According to their research lower socioeconomic environments provide fewer activities for their preschool children than do middle socioeconomic environments. Thus the null hypothesis: the mean number of preschool activities of lower socioeconomic children will not differ significantly from the mean number of preschool activities participated in by middle socioeconomic children was rejected.

TABLE 1

TOTAL ACTIVITIES FROM "CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

	m.ses	l.ses	total	F-ratio
Total Activities	411	355	766	
Mean	15.2	14.2	14.7	5.904*

* significant at .01 level

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

Total Activities with Adults from "Children's Activities Questionnaire"

There was no significant difference between the means of the middle socioeconomic group and the lower socioeconomic group for the total number of activities, as listed on the questionnaire, in which each subject participated primarily with adults. The F-ratio score for this difference was 0.555.

TABLE 2

TOTAL ACTIVITIES WITH ADULTS FROM "CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

	m.ses	l.ses	total	F-ratio
Total Activities with Adults	151	127	278	
Mean	5.6	5.1	5.3	0.555*

* not significant

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

Total Activities with Other Children from "Children's Activities Questionnaire"

There was no significant difference between the means for the lower socioeconomic group and the middle socioeconomic group on the total number of activities in which each subject participated primarily with other children.

TABLE 3
TOTAL ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER CHILDREN FROM
"CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

	m.ses	l.ses	total	F-ratio
Total Activities with Other Children	112	101	213	
Mean	4.1	4.0	4.096	0.008*

* not significant

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

Total Activities Alone from "Children's
Activities Questionnaire"

There was no significant difference between the means of the lower socioeconomic group and the middle socioeconomic group on the total number of activities in which each subject participated primarily alone. The F-ratio score for this difference was 0.756. The means for activities in which the subject participated alone were 2.3 for the lower socioeconomic group and 2.9 for the middle socioeconomic group.

It is generally assumed that one of the reasons middle socioeconomic children surpass lower socioeconomic children in language ability is that middle socioeconomic children spend a larger proportion of their free activity time involved with adults. In contrast to this, it has been assumed that lower socioeconomic children spend a larger proportion of their free activity time with other children. At least for the groups studied there was no significant difference in time spent with

adults and other children for the middle and lower socioeconomic groups. The results supported the second hypothesis: middle socioeconomic status children do not spend more time in activities with adults than do lower socioeconomic status children.

TABLE 4
TOTAL ACTIVITIES ALONE FROM "CHILDREN'S
ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

	m.ses	l.ses	total	F-ratio
Total Activities Alone	77	58	135	
Mean	2.9	2.3	2.596	0.756*

* not significant

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

Total Additional Activities from "Children's
Activities Questionnaire"

The difference between the two socioeconomic groups in the mean number of additional activities was significant at the .01 level of probability. The F-ratio score was 6.016. The mean number of additional activities for the middle socioeconomic group was greater than for the lower socioeconomic group. The mean total of additional activities in which each subject participated was .6 for the lower socioeconomic group and 2.5 for the middle socioeconomic group.

TABLE 5
TOTAL ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FROM "CHILDREN'S
ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

	m.ses	l.ses	total	F-ratio
Total Additional Activities	68	15	83	
Mean	2.5	0.6	1.596	6.010*

*significant at the .01 level

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

Activities Participated in by Sex

No significant difference was found between the mean number of activities participated in for boys and girls. The mean number of activities in which each subject participated was 14.9 for boys and 14.5 for girls. No significant difference was found between the mean number of activities participated in primarily with adults for boys and girls. The mean number of activities in which each subject participated primarily with adults was 5.9 for boys and 4.8 for girls. No significant difference was found between the mean number of activities participated in primarily with other children for boys and girls. The mean number of activities participated in primarily with other children was 4.2 for boys and 4.0 for girls. No significant difference was found between the mean number of activities participated in primarily alone for boys and girls. The mean number of activities in which each subject participated primarily alone was 2.7 for boys and 2.5 for

girls. No significant difference was found between the mean number of additional activities participated in by boys and girls. The mean number of additional activities in which each subject participated was 1.8 for boys and 1.4 for girls.

TABLE 6
TOTAL ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN BY SEX FROM
"CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE"

Activity Means by Sex					
	Total	With Adults	With Children	Alone	Additional
Boys	14.9	5.9	4.2	2.7	1.8
Girls	14.5	4.8	4.0	2.5	1.4

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Results

As expected, the means on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test favored the middle socioeconomic group. The children from the middle socioeconomic group produced scores on the standardized language test that were significantly higher at the .01 level of confidence than those of children from the lower socioeconomic group. In all test categories the means for the middle socioeconomic group surpassed the means for the lower socioeconomic group. The means for the middle socioeconomic group were as follows: Raw Score -- 55.1; Mental Age -- 4 years 7 months; Percentile Rank -- 66.8; Intelligence Quotient -- 115.6; and Chronological Age -- 3.7. The means for the lower socioeconomic group were as follows: Raw Score -- 41.3;

Mental Age -- 3 years 2 months; Percentile Rank -- 34.2; Intelligence Quotient -- 94.9; and Chronological Age -- 3.3. These findings support research previously done by Deutsch (1965) and re-affirm the fact that children from lower socioeconomic environments fail to meet middle socioeconomic standards on standardized language tests. These results lead to rejection of the third hypothesis: the level of vocabulary development of children from middle socioeconomic status homes will not surpass that of children from lower socioeconomic status homes.

TABLE 7
PEABODY PICTURE VOCABULARY TEST RESULTS

	r.s.	m.a.	%ile r.	i.q.	c.a.
l.ses	41.3	3.2	34.2	94.9	3.3
Means m.ses	55.1	4.7	66.8	115.6	3.7
F-ratio	20.7*	18.0*	16.0*	22.3*	

*significant at the .01 level of probability

l.ses = lower socioeconomic status

m.ses = middle socioeconomic status

r.s. = raw score

m.a. = mental age

%ile r. = percentile rank

i.q. = intelligence quotient

c.a. = chronological age

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Results by Sex

The differences between boys and girls on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test were not significant in any category. These results were surprising because it is usually found that

girls are more highly developed linguistically than boys. The difference in the chronological ages of the boys and girls may account for the results. The average age of the boys was approximately three months greater than that for the girls. The first hypothesis: that the mean number of preschool activities of lower socioeconomic children does not differ significantly from the mean number for middle socioeconomic children was not supported. The second hypothesis: that children from middle socioeconomic homes do not spend more time in activities with adults than children from lower socioeconomic homes was supported. The data indicated no significant difference between the groups in the number of activities primarily participated in with adults, with other children or alone. The following are examples of the types of activities listed on the "Children's Activities Questionnaire": jumping rope, riding tricycles, playing records, painting, coloring, pasting, building with blocks or boxes, reading or looking at books, using puzzles or small toys, taking responsibility for jobs at home, watching television, playing pretend games, playing in dirt or sand, visiting the library, visiting relatives, visiting the zoo or park, attending movies, plays, golfing, fishing, taking walks, taking special lessons, going to church or a church class. The data failed to support the third null hypothesis: that children from middle socioeconomic homes do not surpass children from lower socioeconomic homes in vocabulary development.

The data from the "Children's Activities Questionnaire"

appears to be contradictory. Children from middle socioeconomic homes scored higher on total activities and total additional activities participated in, but there was no significant difference between groups on the three sub-categories, activities with adults, those with other children and those done alone. This may be attributed to a flaw in the directions given on the questionnaire. Parents did not understand that only one category could be marked "most of the time." This would need to be corrected before such a study were tried again.

Data on sex differences contradicted expected results -- that female subjects will score higher than male subjects on most standardized tests at any age. The data revealed no significant differences in vocabulary test results or activities participated in between boys and girls.

TABLE 8
PEABODY PICTURE VOCABULARY TEST RESULTS BY SEX

	r.s.	m.a.	%ile r.	i.q.	c.a.
Boys	48.6	4.0	51.3	104.5	3.65
Girls	47.9	3.8	49.7	106.0	3.33
F-ratio	0.051*	0.125*	0.039*	0.122*	3.168**

* not significant

**significant at the .05 level of probability

r.s. = raw score

m.a. = mental age

%ile r. = percentile rank

i.q. = intelligence quotient

c.a. = chronological age

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this research was two-fold. The first purpose was to evaluate quantitatively the language development of children from lower socioeconomic homes and children from middle socioeconomic homes. The quantitative evaluation was then used to compare statistically the language development levels of the two socioeconomic class homes. This study involved a second aspect -- a determination of activities participated in by children of each socioeconomic class outside of a structured group care situation. The goals were to describe the socioeconomic class differences in these areas and, if possible, relate, either positively or negatively, language development levels to activity scores, i.e. preschool experiences.

Participants in the study were 32 children enrolled in two day care centers located in Topeka, Kansas and the parents of these children and 36 children enrolled in the Kansas State University Child Development Laboratory located in Manhattan, Kansas and their parents. Instruments used in the study were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, American Guidance Service, Inc., and the "Children's Activities Questionnaire" developed by the author. An unequal subclass of variance was used to

yield F-ratio scores. These scores indicated any statistically significant differences between the means which had been calculated for each socioeconomic group on five "Children's Activities Questionnaire" categories and on four Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test categories. There were statistically significant differences at the .01 level of confidence, in six categories. These differences existed in the following categories: (1) total "Children's Activities Questionnaire" activities, (2) total "Children's Activities Questionnaire" additional activities, (3) raw scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, (4) mental age scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, (5) percentile scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, (6) intelligence quotient scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Three hypotheses were postulated. The first hypothesis: the mean number of preschool activities of children from lower socioeconomic homes does not differ significantly from the mean number of preschool activities of children from middle socioeconomic homes was not supported. The second hypothesis: that there is no difference in the amount of time spent in activities with adults between children from middle socioeconomic status homes and children from lower socioeconomic status homes was supported by the findings. The third hypothesis was not supported as the statistical analysis revealed that the level of language development of children from middle socioeconomic homes surpassed the level of language development of children from lower socioeconomic homes.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study supported research cited earlier which described language development of children from lower socioeconomic homes as lower on standardized tests than children from middle socioeconomic homes. The results from the language evaluation tool placed the lower socioeconomic participants at a level significantly lower than that for the middle socioeconomic participants. All of the categories of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -- raw score, percentile rank, mental age and intelligent quotient showed the difference.

Results from the "Children's Activities Questionnaire" imply that children from lower socioeconomic homes could profit from increased activities in the preschool years and increased language stimulation and expansion. In the category of additional activities the children from middle socioeconomic homes did participate in more and a greater variety of activities. Each respondent was given the opportunity to list activities their child enjoyed in addition to those on the questionnaire. Numerically, sixteen parents from the middle socioeconomic group listed additional activities as compared to eight parents from the lower socioeconomic group. Some of the activities listed by both groups were the same: swinging,

going to the store, singing, being read to, helping cook, bake or clean the house, and picking flowers and collecting rocks. Examples of activities listed by only the middle socioeconomic parents were: play table games like "Hi Ho Cherry-O", just sit and visit with an adult, study alphabet and number and practice writing, telephone friends, type, "play" piano, work in garden. In addition to the activities listed for both groups lower socioeconomic parents listed racing model cars, likes to fight, likes to eat. The activities of the middle socioeconomic children were of greater variety and parents from the middle socioeconomic group were more verbal in their response to this category. The difference in this category was statistically significant.

It is highly probable that a child from a lower socioeconomic home would score higher on language tests and activities questionnaires if they were built on lower socioeconomic standards and language patterns. The inevitable middle socioeconomic class bias must be weighed in evaluating the research.

A bias in testing situations may have existed in this research. The examiner had been acquainted with one-half of the children from the middle socioeconomic group as a graduate teaching assistant in the Child Development Laboratory from which the research participants were drawn. The examiner spent several mornings at the other centers before beginning testing. However, a time discrepancy did exist and may have been partially responsible for the degree of difference between the two groups. In addition, the children who were

better acquainted with the examiner may have performed better than those less well acquainted.

The adequacy of the physical surroundings for the testing must also be considered in weighing the results of the research. In the case of the middle socioeconomic group a room was provided a great enough distance from the normal play activities of the children to assure quiet and concentration on the task at hand. One of the lower socioeconomic groups was tested in a quiet upstairs room. Finally, half of the last group of participants was tested in an adjoining building free of disturbances from children's play. The other half was tested, because of scheduling, in an upstairs room directly above the children's play area and there was considerable noise and disturbance during the testing.

It is recommended that if research similar to this study be attempted that the examiner be equally acquainted with the participants, the physical surroundings of the testing situation be standardized and that some means for eliminating a major portion of the middle class bias be utilized. Although the scope of this study was limited it did reveal many of the limitations in research involving human beings and the near impossibility of standardizing such research.

APPENDIX

May 8, 1969

Dear _____,

Your name was given to me by Dr. Ivalee McCord, Director of the University Nursery School. I have played a picture-word game with your child at his school. Now, I need your help with the work I am doing. As a part of my work I want to find out what things children like to do at home and with whom they participate. This information will help us to better understand young children.

Here is a paper for you to fill out and bring back to the University Nursery School by May 16, 1969. If you have any questions please ask _____. And thank you so much.

The directions for the questionnaire are on the first page of the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Donna McCleskey
Graduate Student
Kansas State University

Approved by:

Dr. Marjorie Stith
Head, Dept. of Fam. & Child Dev.
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Dr. Ivalee McCord
Dept. of Fam. & Child Dev.
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

May 8, 1969

Dear _____,

I need your help with some work I am doing. I have had a chance to play a picture game with your child at his school. As a part of my Master's Degree work I am studying about things children like to do at home.

Here is a paper I would like for you to complete and bring back to the _____.

If you have any questions please ask _____.
I will be at the center _____.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Donna McClesky
Graduate Student
Kansas State University

Approved by:

Mrs. Rinehart
Director
East Topeka Day Care Center

Mrs. Mary Wilson
Director
North Topeka Day Care Center

Dr. Ivalee McCord
Director
University Nursery School
Kansas State University

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS:

1. Answer for your child, _____.
2. Check if your child ever does the activity at home:
yes or no.
3. Check how often he does this activity with adults: most
of the time, some of the time, very little of the time,
never.
4. Check how often he does it with other children.
5. Check how often he does it alone.

EXAMPLE

a. Does your child jump rope? Yes _____ No _____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

1. Does your child ride tricycles? Yes _____ No _____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

2. Does your child play records? Yes _____ No _____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

3. Does your child paint, color, or paste? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

4. Does your child build with blocks or boxes? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

5. Does your child read or look at books? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

6. Does your child use puzzles or small toys? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

7. Does your child have jobs at home? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

8. Does your child watch television? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

9. Does your child play pretend games? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

10. Does your child play in dirt or sand? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

11. Does your child visit the library? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

12. Does your child visit relatives? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

13. Does your child visit the zoo or park? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

14. Does your child go to movies, plays, golfing,
fishing, etc.? Yes____ No____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

15. Does your child take walks? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

16. Does your child take special lessons? Yes ____ No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

17. Does your child go to church or a church class? Yes ____
No ____

Does he do this with--	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very Little of the time	Never
Adults				
Other Children				
Alone				

Is there anything that I've left out that your child likes to do?

Write it here: _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

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LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASS CHILDREN
AND ITS CORRELATION WITH PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCES

by

DONNA ANN DODGE LOMAX

B. S., Kansas State University, 1966

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Differences in language development have existed between children from lower socioeconomic status homes and children from middle socioeconomic status homes and these differences have favored the children from middle socioeconomic status homes. Standardized language tests, as well as school achievement records, have revealed this difference. The importance of the preschool years as a prime language learning time and the equally essential need for a variety of experiences to stimulate this learning have emphasized the relationship of language and experience, the basis of this study.

The literature review suggested that preschool children from lower socioeconomic status homes have fewer experiences during the preschool years and because of this the level of their language development is lower than for children from middle socioeconomic homes. Based upon this assumption, the study was designed to investigate the relationship between preschool experiences and language development for children of lower and middle socioeconomic status homes. The objectives were: (1) to quantitatively describe the activities the children from lower and middle socioeconomic status homes participated in outside of a child care center and determine if a difference existed for the two groups, (2) to describe the number of activities participated in mostly with adults by children from the lower and middle socioeconomic status homes, based upon the assumption that language development can be stimulated by greater time spent with adults and (3) to evaluate the language development of the children from lower and

middle socioeconomic status homes and compare the two groups to determine if there was a difference in language development. It was hypothesized that there was no difference between the two socioeconomic groups with regard to total activities participated in, number of activities participated in mostly with adults and language development level.

Sixty-eight preschool children in three child care centers were tested with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and sixty-eight parents responded to the Children's Activities Questionnaire. The children and parents represented two socioeconomic status groups, lower and middle.

There did exist statistically significant differences in the total number of activities participated in by each group, total additional activities participated in by each group and in all categories on the language development tool: raw score, mental age, percentile rank and intelligence quotient. Thus, the first and third hypotheses were not supported. The second hypothesis was supported, revealing that there was no significant difference in the total number of activities participated in with adults. The results of the study analyzed by sex revealed no significant difference in any area between boys and girls.