

**Psychology 453Fall 2012**  
**Child Language and Social Disadvantage**  
**Tuesdays 12:30 – 2:20 p.m., HH 334**

**Instructor**

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**Course Objectives**

What factors impact children's language development, both positively and negatively, among children growing up in more socially and economically disadvantaged situations? This is the question we will explore in depth in this course via primary readings in relevant fields. The issue of accounting for differences in early language ability observed among children is extremely complex. Whether the differences noted in research studies are best interpreted as individual differences, differences in styles of talk, differences in parental attitudes and beliefs, and/or differences due to socio-economic deprivation has provoked much discussion and argument among researchers. But the issue of why some children are far behind other children with respect to language development, particularly upon the age of school entry, is of great importance in many countries around the world who seek to assure that all children receive the best start they can and develop to their full potential, especially with respect to educational attainment. Topics will include seminal and recent work investigating child and parent-child interactions in different socio-economic and cultural groups; examination of variables such as maternal education level and SES; discussion of different theoretical approaches to explain variability observed among children; and possible differences between the language of home and school.

Each week, we will read and discuss original articles on a common topic, supplemented by material presented in class by the instructor. The focus will be on trying to bring together a vast amount of literature, across different fields and decades, to generate positions regarding the role and extent of the contribution of different factors, to generate new research ideas, and to see connections and evaluate the feasibility of potential solutions to applied applications.

This course also has the goal of developing several professional skills important within and beyond academia: The (1) reading and reviewing empirical and theoretical contributions, (2) developing and expressing ideas concisely and clearly in both oral and written form, (3) preparing oral presentations and engaging others in constructive, focused discussion, and (4) critiquing research and ideas in a productive way.

**Course Readings**

There is no text for this course. A set of required readings is listed below.

**Class Structure**

This course has no midterms or exams. Your grade will be determined solely by weekly written assignments due in class, in-class oral presentations, and in-class participation. For some classes, you may be given additional ad-hoc mini applied assignments to do and to report on (orally and/or in written form) in class the following week. Should you know at the beginning of term that you will need to miss more than one class, you may wish to consider withdrawing from the course as there are no alternative grading options.

Each week, a set of readings is assigned as listed in the class schedule. Be prepared for a heavier reading load in this class given that there are no midterms or exams and your understanding of the readings and ability to join in class discussion and express your ideas in writing about them in a meaningful way is paramount. You will need to read carefully all the required material before class and with enough lead time to allow you to develop your thoughts about the material in sufficient depth (don't leave them until the day before class!). On Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, I will be out of town,

and you will receive a separate mini-assignment for that day due the following week (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>) in-class in addition to the regular assignments due on Oct 9th.

You will need to have the relevant readings for each class handy in class as well as hardcopies of any written work that will be handed in to me at the end of class (i.e., weekly assignment(s); article leader/discussion notes when it's your turn).

### **Article Leaders**

Each assigned reading each week will have an associated discussion leader, assigned via a lottery system. Each week, the discussion leaders will be asked to open discussion of the assigned article by presenting a very brief **(3-5 minute – please time yourself when preparing this)** overview of the main hypothesis and a selective review of findings reported in the article (e.g., about 4-6 points perhaps). This is not to be a simple reproduction of material in the article, but rather an integration of the main question(s) and what you feel the evidence in the article had to say about the answer(s) to the(se) question(s). That is, it is your attempt to integrate the main questions/issues addressed with the data provided in the chapter, and your interpretation of this data, in a few succinct points. Your main points may or may not line up entirely with the main points presented by the authors should you feel that the article actually addresses different/other questions than those highlighted by the original authors. Your presentation should serve as a brief reminder to the rest of us of these key points, as you should assume everyone has read the material carefully and is familiar with the details. **You must present this information verbally to the class from your notes without external visuals** (i.e., powerpoint is not an option) as this is an opportunity for students to develop their oral communication skills when external aids are not available (as is very often the case in situations outside a classroom and university setting). If you want or need to direct students to graphs, tables in the article then this will be possible verbally as all students are expected to have the readings available and/or with them in class.

For the articles for which you are assigned to be a discussion leader, you will hand in a hardcopy of the material/notes you prepared for your presentation at the end of class. Because there are more readings than students in the course, some of you may be randomly selected to do this twice.

### **Weekly Written Assignments: Discussion Paper based on Assigned Readings**

Each week, each student will prepare a one- to one-and-a-half page discussion paper (**730 words MAXIMUM – sans serif font please like Helvetica or Arial, single or one-and-half line spacing**) relevant to the readings for that week. These papers should present an issue for discussion, and students will regularly be called on to present and read their papers as part of the class discussion. Your peers may also be asked to speak to the strength and weakness of points you raise, or your paper as a whole. **You will need to bring a hard copy of this page to class, as you will be handing it in to me at the end for grading.** The issue(s) you choose to write and talk about should be substantive. For example, if you are posing a question, you need to frame it with background as to why you've raised it, or what is interesting about it, and also go further than your question, by proposing an answer, possible answers, problems that might be encountered in trying to answer it, a study proposal, and so on. Remember that this discussion paper is meant to be a reflection of your work in reading and thinking about the material assigned from class, and so should be focused on this material. If you are incorporating material outside of the assigned readings, limit this to 5-10% of the content.

**In the header of your paper, please place, in format below:**

**Week # (Word count: ###)**

**Your first/last name**

Your discussion paper should not contain a summary of any reading. You should assume everyone has read them carefully. You want this to be an opportunity to describe your thought(s) on the material to the class and have your peers follow what you are saying and feel interested (maybe even compelled!) to offer further comments, questions, thoughts etc. that would help you strengthen your piece.

Development of these discussion papers (and discussion of them in class) is the central focus of this course, so it is expected that some considerable time and thought be put into them each week. The critical mindset required to produce a good discussion paper is an important research skill, and in turn requires a different approach to reading the target articles. You'll probably want to read each article at least twice: once for a basic understanding of what the authors are arguing, or the study they carried out, or their conclusions; and, a second time with a greater focus on the bigger picture and a careful look at data tables, how the arguments, data and conclusions compare across other studies in the readings for any week, or what might have been done differently and how that might have affected the conclusions drawn from the study.

When preparing the topic of your discussion paper, keep the notion of usefulness and importance in mind. For example, don't focus on formulaic changes to methodology (e.g., increased sample size, use of more realistic stimuli, change in subject population) to argue a point unless a clear case can be made for why it would help to address some interesting aspect of the results or the research question. There are many comments /ideas/ proposals that one can make about any given study – you need to choose your strongest and develop this (you have only 730 words!). The ability to write concisely is also an important professional skill. Single spacing is acceptable, but please use at least an 11 point sans serif font and a space between paragraphs. You don't have a lot of space or words (730 words maximum), so do not use any of it summarizing the articles as noted above.

Students will be asked to regularly share their discussion papers with the rest of the class. It is intended that discussion of these papers will form a major part of discussion in the seminar. In addition, discussion will include information beyond the readings presented by the instructor and, for some weeks, discussion of ad-hoc mini assignments that students will be notified of in class the week before.

Article discussion papers are due in class (see above) the day for which they were assigned. Penalties will apply to late submissions.

### **In-Class Participation and Mini-Assignments**

Students are expected to actively contribute to the seminar discussion each week. This means not only presenting your article discussion paper, but also commenting on the papers of other students. For all classes, you are, of course, expected to have read all the assigned articles, even if your discussion paper focuses more on one article than the others.

For some classes, you may be given additional ad-hoc mini applied assignments to do and to report on (orally and/or in written form) in class the following week. These ad-hoc mini-assignments will NOT appear on the syllabus and will only be described in class as they are meant to tie into issues that come up in discussion and to be more flexible in terms of addressing topics of specific interest to the class. There will be 5 such mini-assignments during the term.

By definition, you need to attend the seminar in order to participate in the discussion. Absences (except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies) will result in loss of participation credit. If you do have to miss a class, you can still submit your Discussion Paper (and/or the Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment or Mini-Assignments if relevant) (due before the class begins) by e-mail to the instructor, so that you do not lose credit for the assignment as well as for participation.

### **Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> Applied Assignment: Learning More about Children's Lives**

I will be out of town on Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>. You can take this opportunity to catch up on your readings! However, there is also a mini-assignment for this week. The readings at this point in the course are providing a sense of how disparate the language environment may be for some children compared to others. For this mini-assignment, the goal is to learn more about the lives of children who are living in different environments that *negatively* affect the *quantity and/or quality* of speech children are encountering. The goal, more specifically, is for you to learn something about the lives of these children that you did not know before and that comes perhaps even as a surprise (or even shock). The aspect of children's lives that you focus on *must* relate to the topic of language acquisition and the quantity

and/or quality of speech children are encountering. In written (and oral) form you will want to describe the aspect of children's lives you have learned about, discuss how this negatively impacts the quantity and/or quality of the child's linguistic environment (with appropriate references), and perhaps try to think how this particular aspect of children's linguistic environments could be improved. Note that you are not limited to considering children living in low-income or low socio-economic status homes. Language input can vary across SES levels for many reasons. Children with language impairment however are not the focus of this assignment. This assignment may take you beyond the usual journals and articles of psychology, to the fields of sociology, social work, early education, government and policy or beyond. Indeed, you may find this mini-assignment more rewarding if you go outside of your comfort zone in psychology to other disciplines that may be new to you. You may also want to consider this topic from beyond North America to consider findings and work from other countries on this topic.

You should present your findings in written form to be handed in on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> in class. **The maximum length for this assignment is 2 pages (1460 words).** On Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, and over the remaining 7 weeks, you will be asked (random selection!) to present what you discovered in class.

### **Evaluation**

Discussion Paper (10 @ 6%)	60%
Article Leader	7%
In-Class Participation (10 @ 2% plus 5% for Mini-Assignments)	25%
Oct. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Mini-Assignment	8%

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Note: Readings are listed chronologically within each week.

**Week 0** (Sept. 11): **Course Introduction** - No readings.

**Week 1** (Sept. 18): **Introductory Overview of Effects of SES**

**Introduction and Ginsborg Ch. 1 (2006)**. The effects of socio-economic status on children's language acquisition and use. In *Language and social disadvantage: Theory into practice*.

**Hart & Risley (1995) Chapters 3 to 7**. In *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young children*.

**Roseberry-McKibbin (2008)**. Ch. 2. Language skills and behavioral characteristics in children of families of low socioeconomic status. In *Increasing language skills of students from low-income backgrounds*.

**Week 2** (Sept. 25): **Overview of Variability in Home Environments**

**The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2008. Ch. 4** Social and Economic Factors that Influence our Health and Contribute to Health Inequalities. Access at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cphorsphc-respcacsp/2008/fr-rc/index-eng.php>

**Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo & Garcia-Coll (2001)**. The home environment of children in US. Part 1: Variations by age, ethnicity, and poverty status. *Child Development, 72*, 1844-1867.

**Forget-Dubois, Dionne, Lemelin, Perusse, Trembley & Boivin (2009)**. Early child language mediates the relation between home environment and school readiness. *Child Development, 80*, 736-749.

**Roulstone, S., Law, J., Rush, R., Clegg, J. & Peters, T. (2010)**. Investigating the role of language in children's educational outcomes. Research Report for Department for Education.

**Week 3** (Oct. 2): I am out of town. No class. See Mini-Assignment for Oct. 2 described below and due in-class on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>. Begin Week 4 readings.

**Week 4** (Oct. 9): **Diagnostic Issues and Outcomes for Children with Speech and Language Difficulties**

**Clegg Ch. 4** Childhood Speech and Language Difficulties and Later Life Chances in *Language and social disadvantage: Theory into practice* (2006)

**Justice, L., Bowles, R. P., Turnbull, K. L. P., & Skibbe, L. E. (2009)**. School readiness among children with varying histories of language difficulties. *Developmental Psychology, 45*, 460-476.

**Whitehouse, A. J. O., Line, E. A., & Bishop, D. V. M. (2009a)**. Qualitative aspects of developmental language impairment relate to language and literacy outcome in adulthood. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 44*, 489-510.

**Whitehouse, A. J. O., Watt, H. J., Line, E. A., & Bishop, D. V. M. (2009b)**. Adult psychosocial outcomes of children with specific language impairment, pragmatic language impairment and autism. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 44*, 511-528.

**Ketelaars, M. P., Cuperus, J., Jansonius, K., & Verhoeven, L. (2010)**. Pragmatic language impairment and associated behavioural problems. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 45*, 204-214.

### **Week 5 (Oct. 16): Parent-Child Interactions: Role of Joint Attention & Routines**

**Snow, Dubber, & De Blauw (1982).** Routines in mother-child interaction. In *The language of children reared in poverty*.

**Rowe (2000).** Pointing and talk by low-income mothers and their 14-month-old children. *First Language, 60*, 305-327

**Cross, J. R., Fletcher, K. L., & Neumeister, K. L. S. (2011).** Social and emotional components of book reading between caregivers and their toddlers in a high-risk sample. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 11*, 25-46.

**Fuligni, A. S., Howes, C., Huang, Y., Hong, S. S., Lara-Cinisomo, S. (2012).** Activity settings and daily routines in preschool classrooms: Diverse experiences in early learning settings for low-income children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27*, 198-209.

### **Week 6 (Oct. 23): Parent-child Interactions: Early Conversations**

**Hoff (2003).** The specificity of environmental influence: Socioeconomic status affects early vocabulary development via maternal speech. *Child Development, 74*, 1368-1378.

**Rowe, Pan & Ayoub (2005).** Predictors in variation in maternal talk to children: A longitudinal study of low-income families. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 5*, 285-310.

**Pungello, Mills-Koonce, Iruka & Reznick (2009).** The effects of socioeconomic status, race and parenting on language development in early childhood. *Developmental Psychology, 45*, 544-557.

**Florez, I. R. (2011).** Developing young children's self-regulation through everyday experiences. *Young Children*, (July Issue), 46-51.

### **Week 7 (Oct. 30): Parent-child interactions: Fathers and the Role of Setting and Context**

**Hoff-Ginsberg (1991).** Mother-child conversation in different social classes and communicative settings. *Child Development, 62*, 782-796.

**Rowe, Coker, & Pan (2004).** A comparison of fathers' and mothers' talk to toddlers in low-income families. *Social Development, 13*, 278-291.

**Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb (2004).** Fathers and mothers at play with their 2- and 3-year-olds: Contributions to language and cognitive development. *Child Development, 75*, 1806-1820.

**Panscofar, N., Vernon-Feagans, L., & The Family Life Project Investigators (2010).** Fathers' early contributions to children's language development in families from low-income rural communities. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 450-463.

### **Week 8 (Nov. 6): Parent-Child Interactions: Simple vs. Complex Language**

**Tough (1977).** Ch. 13 Language and disadvantage in school. In *The development of meaning*.

**Tough (1977).** Ch. 14 The development of meaning. In *The development of meaning*.

**Raikes et al. (2006).** Mother-child bookreading in low-income families: Correlations and outcomes during the first three years of life. *Child Development*, 77, 924-953.

**Kang, Kim & Pan (2009).** Five-year-olds' book talk and story retelling: Contributions of mother-child joint bookreading. *First Language*, 29, 243-265.

**Dickinson, D. K., Griffith, J. A., Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2012).** How reading books fosters language development around the world. *Child Development Research*, Article ID 602807, doi:10.1155/2012/602807.

#### **Week 9 (Nov. 13): Parent-child Interactions: Role of Age and Maternal Education**

**Dollaghan et al. (1999).** Maternal education and measures of early speech and language. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 42, 1432-1443.

**Lacroix, Pomerleau, & Malcuit (2002).** Properties of adult and adolescent mothers' speech, children's verbal performance and cognitive development in different socioeconomic groups: A longitudinal study. *First Language*, 22, 173-196.

**Oxford & Spieker (2006).** Preschool language development among children of adolescent mothers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 27, 165-182.

#### **Week 10 (Nov. 20): Role of Parental Beliefs and Attitudes**

**Hammer & Weiss (2000).** African American mothers' views of their infants' language development and language-learning environment. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 9, 126-140.

**Johnston & Wong (2002).** Cultural differences in beliefs and practices concerning talk to children. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, 45, 916-926.

**Ball & Lewis (2005).** *First Nation Elders' and parents' views on supporting children's language development.* Report presented at the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Regina, SK.

**Simmons & Johnston (2007).** Cross-cultural differences in beliefs and practices that affect the language spoken to children: mothers with Indian and Western heritage. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 42, 445-465.

#### **Week 11 (Nov. 27): Language for School**

**Gee (2004).** Ch. 3 Language and identity at home. In *Situated language and learning. A critique of traditional schooling.*

**DeThorne, Petrill, Schatschneider, & Cutting (2010).** Conversational language use as a predictor of early reading development: Language history as a moderating variable. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*, 53, 209-223.

**Cristofaro, T. N., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2011).** Mother-child conversations at 36 months at pre-kindergarten: Relations to children's school readiness. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 12, 68-97.

**Nelson, K. E., Welsh, J. A., Vance Trup, E. M., & Greenberg, M. T. (2010).** Language delays of impoverished preschool children in relation to early academic and emotion recognition skills. *First Language*, 31, 164-194.

## **The Fine Print: Statements and Links Included on all Course Outlines in Arts and Psychology:**

**The Official Version of the Course Outline:** If there is a discrepancy between the hard copy outline (*i.e., if students were provided with a hard copy at the first class*) and the outline posted on LEARN, the outline on LEARN will be deemed the official version. Outlines on LEARN may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

**Requests for accommodation for course requirements:** Students who are requesting accommodation for course requirements (*assignments, midterm tests, final exams, etc.*) due to illness should do the following:

- seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed UW Verification of Illness Form: [http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html)
- submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours.
- (preferably) inform the instructor by the due date for the course requirement that you will be unable to meet the deadline and that documentation will be forthcoming.

In the case of a missed final exam, the instructor and student will negotiate an extension for the final exam which will typically be written as soon as possible, but no later than the next offering of the course.

In the case of a missed assignment deadline or midterm test, the instructor will either:

1. waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to circumstances and the goals of the course, or
2. provide an extension.

**In the case of bereavement**, the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required.

Students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances should also inform their academic advisors regarding their personal difficulties.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Concerns About the Course or Instructor (Informal Stage):** We in the Psychology Department take great pride in the high quality of our program and our instructors. Though infrequent, we know that students occasionally find themselves in situations of conflict with their instructors over course policies or grade assessments. If such a conflict arises, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies (*Myra Fernandes from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2014*) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor. Contact information for Dr. Myra Fernandes is as follows:

Email: [mafernan@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mafernan@uwaterloo.ca)

Ph 519-888-4567 ext 32142

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. See Policy 70 and 71 below for further details.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>.

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

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