

Centre of Research Excellence in Child Language

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The social context of language development and difficulties

Acknowledgements

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like ‘fish out of water’

“some of these boys are struggling with the demands of formal education even at this early age. There is a fundamental mismatch between their experiences and lives at home and what is required of them at school”.

BOYS AND SCHOOLING IN THE EARLY YEARS, PAUL CONNOLLY 2004

SOUTH PARK: Interviewer (discussing reading) : Is it not interesting?

Harry: No!

Keith: You say words and words, even if you don’t know them you have to say them.

Interviewer: Don’t you find some stories interesting? ... What about if it was about Star Wars!

Cameron: [excitedly] Yeah!

Keith: Yeah! Yeah!

Nathan: I’d be interested to that!

NORTH PARADE: Interviewer: What about reading, do you like reading?

Jamie: No

Cameron: No

Interviewer: No? Why not?

Cameron: I don’t.

Jamie: It’s wick! It takes my memory away.

Contrast in baseline assessments

Area of Development	Stage achieved	North Parade	South Park
Language development	PT**	8	-
	1 st	84	12
	2 nd	8	84
	3 rd	-	4
Personal, social and emotional development	PT**	32	-
	1 st	64	20
	2 nd	4	80
	3 rd	-	-

re-definition of roles in the early years

“[Our aim] is to develop the children’s ability to socialise and to not introduce them to formal education until they’re ready. Not to force them into picking up a pen and pencil and writing until they get the basics and principles behind things. ...

What we’re moving towards, especially in P1, is a lot of games to develop turn taking and sharing. A lot of physical development to develop their gross and fine motor control before they even pick up a pencil. ...

And also in the afternoons then there’s three days of PE – two days with equipment and one with the dance. I think it really helps, especially up here where they don’t play games really at home and they’re not used to sharing and taking turns and talking and they don’t, you know, their oral language is very important and trying to get them to express themselves better.”

[Mrs Lee]

Millennium Cohort Study – England

11,533 Families 11,695 Children

Born from September 2000 to August 2001

Surveys at 9 months, 3 and 5 years

Over-representation of children in disadvantaged areas and from Ethnic minority communities

Linkage to Foundation Stage Profile data

Teachers observation of development over foundation year

Collected by Department for Children, Schools and Families

95% complete linkage to survey data

Communication, language and literacy

Language for communicating and thinking

1: Listens and responds



3: Talks activities through, reflecting on and modifying actions.



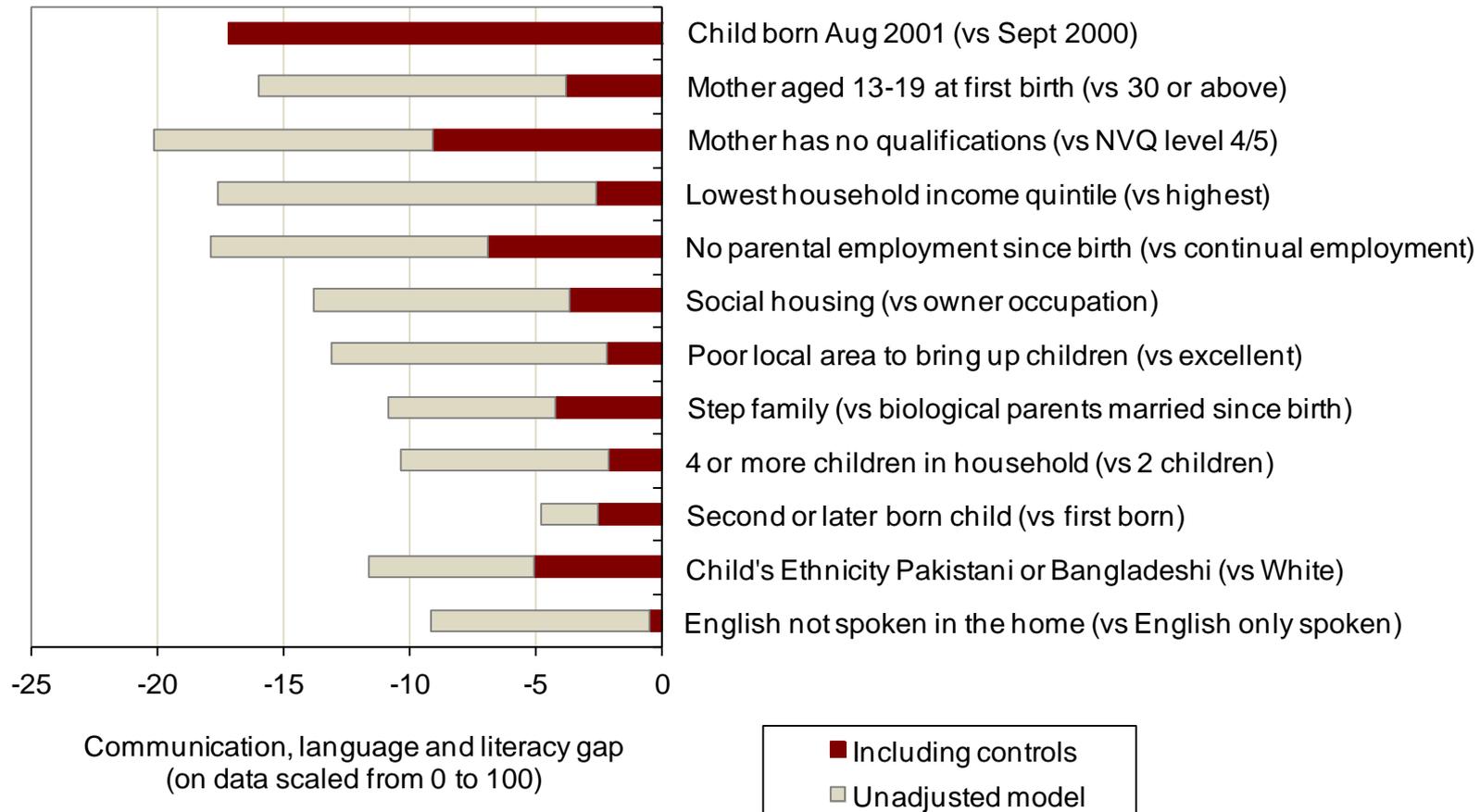
6: Interacts with others in a variety of contexts, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation.



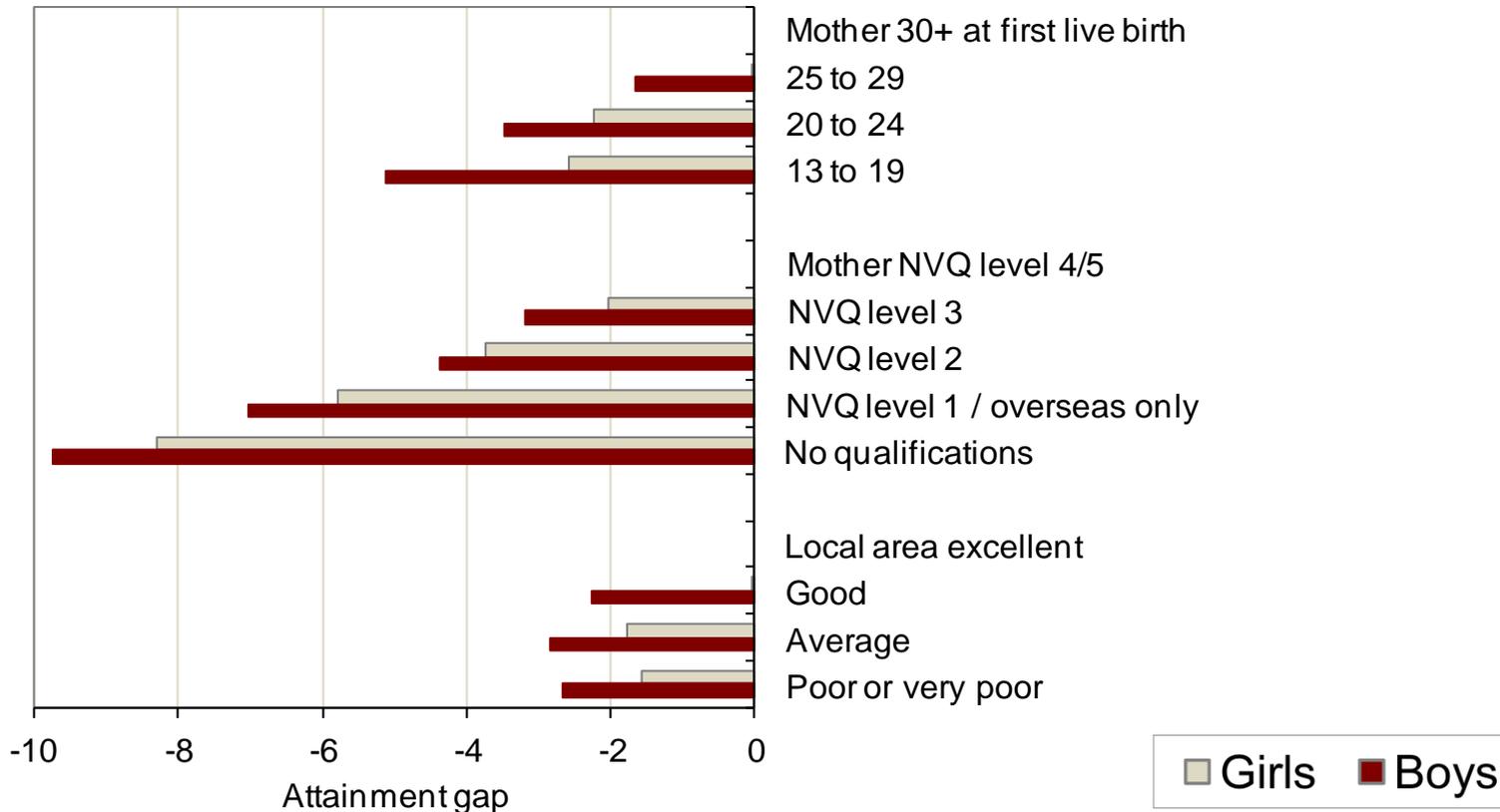
9: Talks and listens confidently and with control, consistently showing awareness of the listener by including relevant detail. Uses language to work out and clarify ideas, showing control of a range of appropriate vocabulary.

Similar scales for: Linking sounds and letters, Reading, Writing

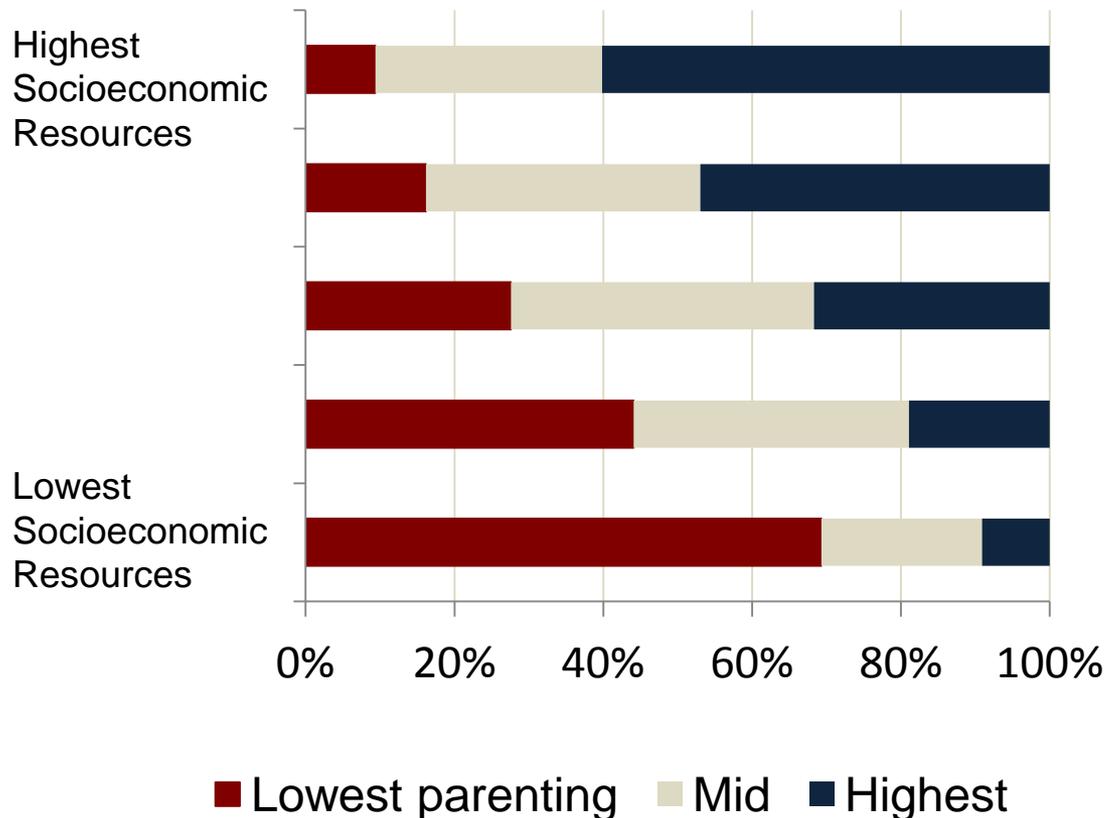
Communication, language and literacy gaps



Are these gaps greater for boys?



Mechanisms? Parental investment



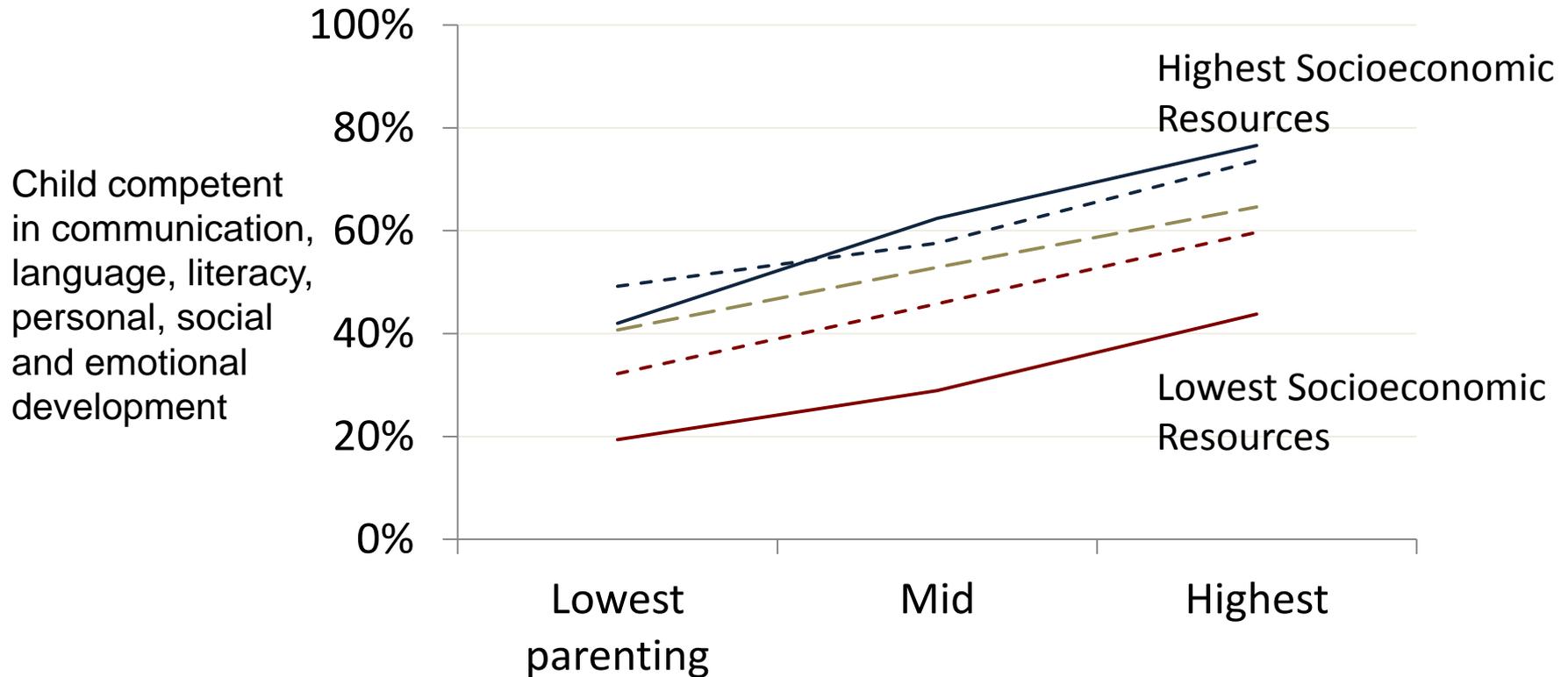
Reading and learning: reading, home learning activities, visiting library, attending parent's evening

Relationships: warmth, positive interaction, friends with other children & parents

Physical care and nutrition: breastfed, regular bed and meal times, servings of fruit

Harsh discipline and absence of discipline: telling off, ensuring instructions followed, reasoning, shouting, negative interaction

Parenting, family resources and competency



How do parents matter?

- 1) Nurturance
- 2) Language
- 3) Discipline
- 4) Materials in the home
- 5) Monitoring
- 6) Management of home
- 7) Direct teaching of skills to children

BROOKS-GUNN & MARKMAN, *THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN*. 2005;15(1):139-168.

The Early Language in Victoria Study

- began in 2003 with 1910 Victorian Infants
- 9 waves to age 9 years to date (1166 children participated at 9)
- NHMRC funding to continue to ages 11 and 13
- Reports and assessments of children's language, speech, development, behaviour, IQ, Health related quality of life, academic attainment , service use and costs
- Family background and social characteristics



www.mcri.edu.au/projects/elvs

Direct language assessments

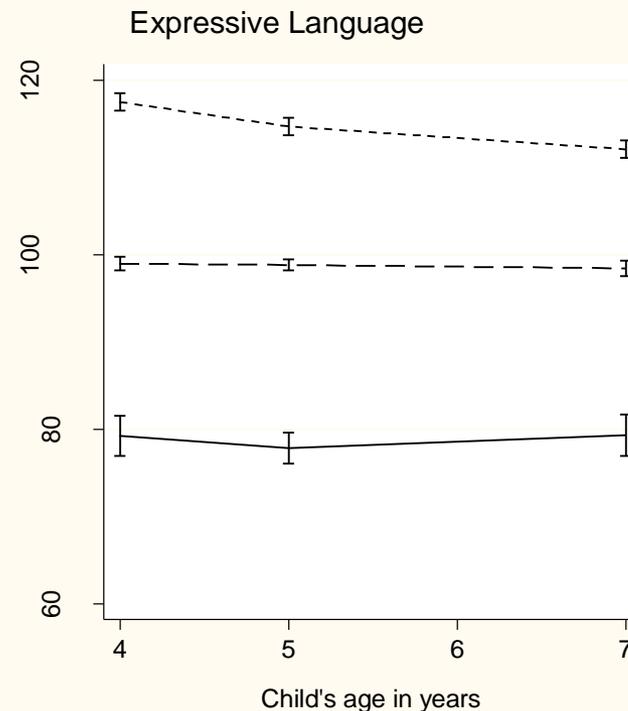
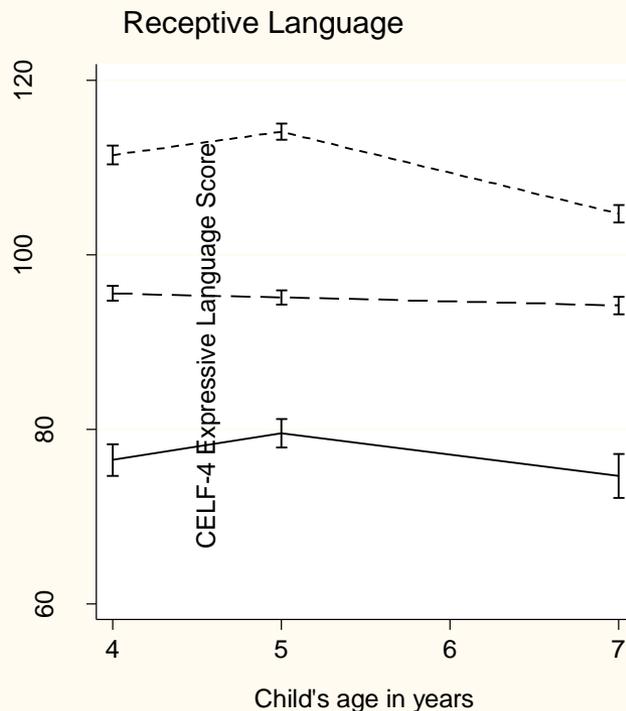
Children's receptive and expressive language

- CELF 4 assessment at ages 4, 5 and 7 years

Parent's language

- Mill Hill assessment at child age 1 year (Mother and Father)
- WRAT 4 reading score at child age 4 (Either parent, 97% Mother)
- Adult non-word repetition (memory) test

Language groups over ages 4 to 7



--- High (32.7%) - . - Medium (53.1%) — Low (14.2%)

--- High (27.1%) - . - Medium (57.9%) — Low (15.0%)

Mean score and 95% confidence interval presented, groups derived by Latent Class Analysis

Parental literacy and children's language

Receptive Language Group (Age 4-7)	High	Medium	Low
Mothers' Mill Hill Score (mean)	29.3	27.7	25.6
Fathers' Mill Hill Score (mean)	29.4	27.5	26.0
Parent Non-word Repetition Score (mean)	21.9	21.2	20.5
Parent WRAT-4 Reading Score (mean)	98.7	95.7	91.9

Expressive Language Group (Age 4-7)	High	Medium	Low
Mothers' Mill Hill Score (mean)	29.7	27.8	25.4
Fathers' Mill Hill Score (mean)	29.6	27.7	25.9
Parent Non-word Repetition Score (mean)	22.3	21.1	20.2
Parent WRAT-4 Reading Score (mean)	99.4	95.9	91.0

Predictors of language difficulties

	Odds ratio for low receptive language			
	OR	OR	OR ¹	95% CI
Area disadvantage (per sd)	1.8	1.2	1.0	(0.6, 1.7)
Family literacy (per sd)		0.6	0.6	(0.4, 0.8)

¹adjusted for child factors including non verbal IQ, identified autism and developmental delay, and birth order, and maternal education, maternal age, and Non-English speaking background (all models adjusted for child gender)

	Odds ratio for low expressive language			
	OR	OR	OR ¹	95% CI
Area disadvantage (per sd)	2.0	1.4	1.2	(0.8, 2.0)
Family literacy (per sd)		0.5	0.5	(0.4, 0.7)

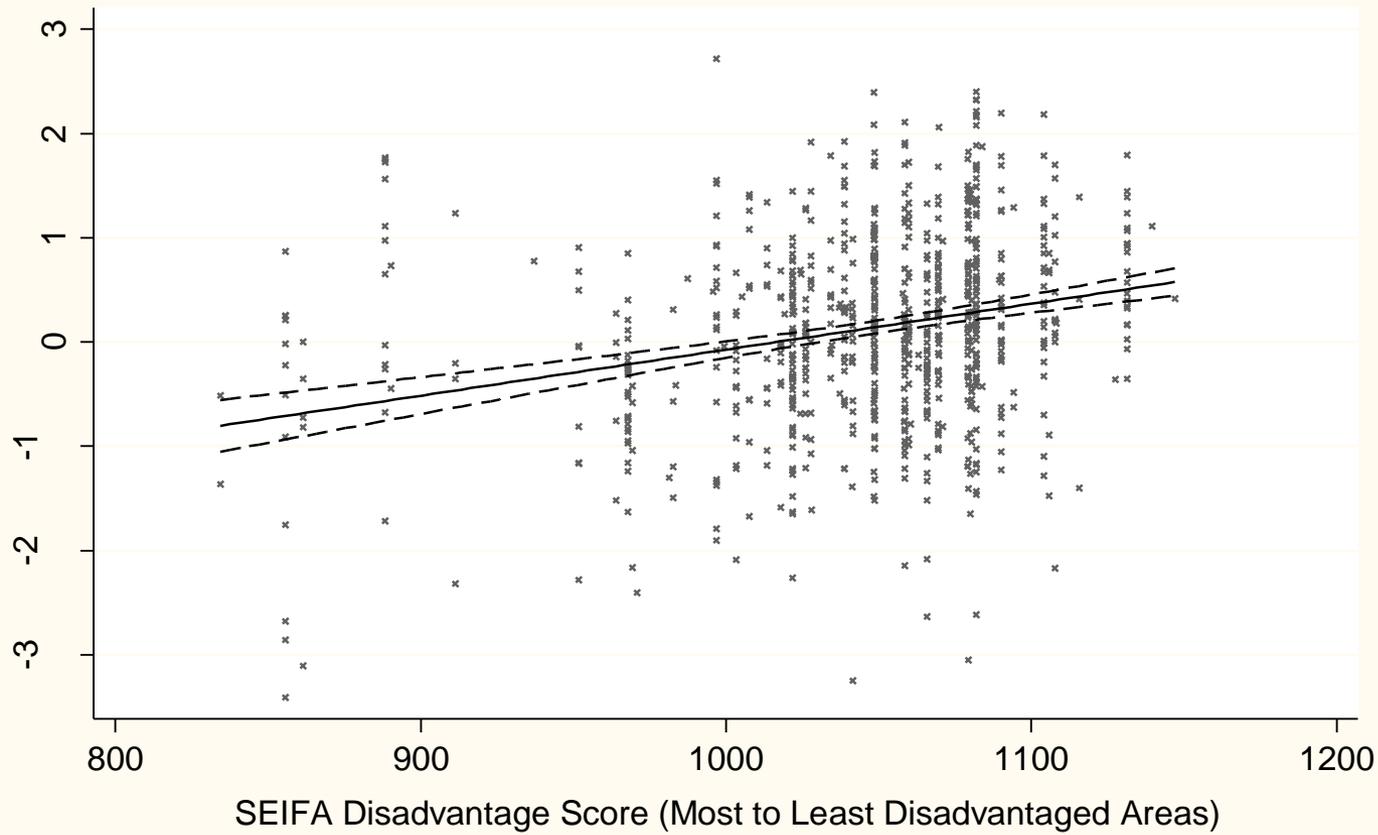
Predictors of high language competency

	Odds ratio for high receptive language			
	OR	OR	OR ¹	95% CI
Area disadvantage (per sd)	0.5	0.6	0.8	(0.5, 1.1)
Family literacy (per sd)		1.6	1.4	(1.2, 1.7)

¹adjusted for child factors including non verbal IQ, identified autism and developmental delay, and birth order, and maternal education, maternal age, and Non-English speaking background (all models adjusted for child gender)

	Odds ratio for high expressive language			
	OR	OR	OR ¹	95% CI
Area disadvantage (per sd)	0.7	0.9	1.0	(0.7, 1.5)
Family literacy (per sd)		2.0	1.7	(1.4, 2.1)

Family literacy by area based disadvantage



Fitted line and 95% confidence interval calculated by linear regression

Social and biological interplays

