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Beyond Vocabulary: Examining the Unique Traits of Late Talkers and their Families

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'Late talkers' are 18–30-month-old toddlers with delayed expressive language skills in the absence of any explanatory condition. While some will catch up to their peers, 20-30% of these late talkers will demonstrate pervasive language difficulties into their academic careers and beyond. What's more, Speech-Language Pathologists cannot currently differentiate late talkers from late bloomers: a puzzling and frustrating predicament. My study is examining the unique skills of late talkers and their parents to determine if they possess specific traits that might help clue clinicians into the likelihood that they will experience further challenges. By examining the behavioural, temperamental, environmental, and linguistic characteristics of late talkers and their families, we can better define this population, identify possible sub-types, and ultimately gear intervention to their specific needs. This, in turn, will help to mitigate long term social and academic difficulties, minimize familial concern, and optimize language outcomes in this population.