

Will My Child Speak? Predicting Speech and Language in Individuals with CdLS

By Janette Peracchio, M.Ed., CdLS Foundation Family Service Coordinator

Since 1982, the CdLS Foundation has had the good fortune to have Marjorie Goodban, Ph.D., CCC- SLP, as a dedicated professional and advisor to families who have children with CdLS. She has travelled all over the world, providing therapy and assessment for hundreds of individuals with the syndrome.

She was the first to document successful speech therapy in a child with CdLS and show the presence of speech apraxia (impaired ability to speak) in many children with the syndrome. Dr. Goodban also put together factors that can predict, in many cases, whether a child with CdLS will talk.

Dr. Goodban completed two studies of children with CdLS—one in 1993 and another in 2007. She found that children who do not talk at all, or who are severely delayed in talking, tend to have at least one of the following characteristics:

- Moderate-to-severe hearing impairment
- Upper limb malformations
- Severe motor delay (sitting up later than 25 months or walking later than 30 months)
- Deficits in social relatedness (autistic-like behaviors, no eye contact, unable to relate to people)
- Birth weight under 5 pounds (probably the least important factor)

Overall, among the children she studied, 53 percent who were older than age four combined two or more words into sentences. From this research, she divided communication abilities into four different groups: Talkers, Late Talkers, Limited Talkers, and Non Talkers. (Please keep in mind that there are exceptions in all of the groups.)

- Talkers are three to four percent of the group. They have normal or near normal development of speech, and they begin talking on their own.
- Late Talkers are 35 to 40 percent of the group. First words can occur between 12 and 48 months, but for some as late as eight years old.





- Limited Talkers are 20 to 25 percent of the group. First words come at 7 to 10 years and as late as 12.
- Non Talkers make up 20 to 25 percent of the group. They usually do not develop language. Instead, they use other means of communication such as gestures, sign language, and objects and pictures.
- Dr. Goodban found that children with CdLS have the ability to understand language much more than the ability to produce language. Even children with highly developed vocabularies talk very little. Oftentimes, children have higher cognitive abilities than their language skills demonstrate.

Communication is a basic human need for everyone. It is important for parents and school professionals to provide children a method for communicating when they are at home and school. Even a child who develops language in later years needs a way to communicate while they are working on speech skills.

