

3RD EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF LE LANGAGE PARLÉ COMPLÉTÉ (LPC)

IN BELGIUM, 2ND & 3RD FEBRUARY 2002

A Summary of the Congress

This summary is a personal view of the Congress by Anne Worsfold of the Cued Speech Association UK, after attending the Congress and from translations of the French presentation texts. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that this gives an accurate flavour of the Congress, a copy of the official Congress Report is now available (in French) for those who would like the full and precise wording. A list of the speakers, giving their professional experience and the titles of their presentations, is shown on the back page of our article. Our grateful thanks go to Pat Coves for her translation of information.

LPC is the name for the French-language version of Cued Speech and the terms 'Cued Speech' and 'LPC' are interchangeable in the context of this report.

INTRODUCTION

This international Cued Speech (LPC) conference in Brussels was attended by 180 people and was truly international with Cued Speech users from France, Switzerland, Spain, USA, Canada and the UK.

After 30 years of use, there is a substantial body of research which demonstrates the effectiveness of Cued Speech, although details of it are not widely known in the UK. Much of this research comes from Belgium and knowledge of it, as well as confidence in the effectiveness of Cued Speech, formed an invisible background to the Congress.

Secure in the knowledge that Cued Speech use allows easy and complete access to the sounds of spoken language, and that children exposed to consistent Cued Speech at home develop age appropriate language and literacy levels, the researchers were free to look at **how** Cued Speech is effective, at ways in which its effectiveness can be maximised, and at how it can be best used in different circumstances.

The Congress covered two very full days. It was excellently organised by the Association LPC Belgique, with the support of the French Community Commission, and was aimed at everyone concerned with the problem of deafness – parents, deaf youngsters and adults, and professionals – doctors, paediatricians, speech & language therapists, psychologists and teachers.

There were a number of presentations by professionals and researchers and two sessions by those who use Cued Speech at the practical, family level. In the first of these informal sessions, parents gave first hand accounts of their children who were talking, cueing and, in some cases also signing, expressively with great pleasure. In the second of the informal sessions, young adults who had been brought up with Cued Speech told their stories. All the presentations were transliterated by skilled Cued Speech users, signed and made available in text. The hospitality of the Belgians was wonderful with many of the international visitors accommodated by local Cued Speech-using families.

The information provided during the Congress is summarised briefly within the following themes. Summaries in English of some of the specific presentations will be available shortly from the Cued Speech Association UK – let us know which particular presentation you are interested in. Others will be made available at a later date.

EARLY LANGUAGE

The importance of access to full, early language ran through the whole Congress. Cued Speech gives almost instant visual access to sound-based languages, invaluable in a hearing home. **Professor Marc MONFORT**, Director of the Centre "Entender y Hablar" [Hear and Speak] in Madrid said: 'The child must also have easy access to the external shape of speech, at the age where he is most capable of understanding the phonological structure of oral language without effort: that is the role of LPC'.

The vital importance of early access to language when the brain is at its most receptive was echoed in the discussion sessions by both professionals and parents and was most dramatically underlined by **Murielle D'HONDT's** research into hemispheric specialisation. This rather dry-sounding topic is important because it demonstrates that deaf children who have access to early language (before age 3) develop language in the left hemisphere of the brain, like those of hearing children, but differently to those of deaf children who access language later. A summary of her presentation is enclosed.

LITERACY

One of the most important presentations of the Congress concerned the theme of literacy and was given by **Professor Jesus ALEGRIA** of the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at Université Libre in Brussels who looked at LPC and the deaf child's acquisition of reading.

He said that it was difficult for young deaf people to reach the same level of reading as their hearing counterparts of

the same age. However, research on children who had been exposed to LPC (*Leybaert [2000] and Leybaert & Lechat [2001]*) have shown that **deaf children with early exposure to LPC in a family environment attain similar levels of reading to those of hearing children of the same age.**

Professor ALEGRIA went on to ask: 'Why do deaf people generally read so poorly? What explains the success of LPC children 'at home'? Is it an accident? What do they do to read?'

He looked at the deaf child's need to understand oral language before learning to read and at the importance of phonology to successful reading. He demonstrated that all written languages, including Chinese, have a phonological element and that people who have problems with phonology (e.g. dyslexics) are weak readers. He also looked at research which demonstrated that young hearing babies link lipread words with spoken language.

Professor ALEGRIA then looked at six other pieces of research specific to Cued Speech which demonstrated that:

- the use of Cued Speech effectively provides phonological information which is used to advantage by all the deaf children studied within the research programme.
- deaf children who have had the benefit of Cued Speech early and at home have a much better understanding of grammar than children who were brought up orally
- deaf children brought up with Cued Speech early can accurately identify rhyming words
- deaf children brought up with Cued Speech at home were much better at reading words they encountered for the first time than were children who only had the benefit of Cued Speech at school or who were brought up orally.

He concludes that all the above indicate a high level of phonological awareness amongst deaf children who were exposed to Cued Speech within their family and that this explains the exceptionally high performances in reading and writing observed.

This summary is necessarily brief for the purposes of this report, but will be revisited in more detail in a future article.

Jérémie BOROY, a young Frenchman of 25, profoundly deaf from birth, linked literacy and knowledge of the French language (acquired through LPC) with **choice**: 'To be really free to choose, I needed an essential item: the French language. I needed the possibility of understanding French, of making myself understood in French, to read and write in French, to think in French; this ability itself is very obviously the *sine qua non* condition of my freedom of choice. You will observe that everyone has the same problem, deaf or not....' Excerpts from **Jérémie BOROY's** presentation are printed in the Summer 2002 edition of the Cued Speech Association Newsletter.

Stéphanie COLIN, who is currently in her 2nd year of a Doctorate in Cognitive Psychology, presented her new research into the effect of LPC on deaf children who are learning to read. This is summarised by the author below:

'Our study aims to investigate the link between early phonological skills and later reading performances of severe and profoundly deaf children exposed or not exposed to Cued Speech.

Two tests were administered:

1. rhyme judgement and rhyme generation tasks in Nursery School
2. written word recognition tasks (using Ecalle tests) in first grade.

The first results show that the performances of Cued Speech users in both of the two tests are significantly better than deaf children educated orally. It seems that Cued Speech, which provides visually all the phonological contrasts of speech, may allow the development of early phonological representations and consequently, the use of accurate phonological de-coding to recognise written words at an early stage in learning to read.'

This research was carried out under the supervision of Madame **Annie MAGNON**, Professor at the Université Lumière in Lyon, and **Madame Jacqueline LEYBAERT**, Lecturer at the Université Libre in Brussels.

SIGNING AND CUEING – ACCEPTANCE OF BOTH

One aspect of the Congress was the obvious respect for and acceptance of the value of sign language. This was evident, practically, in the continual presence of sign language interpreters side by side with Cued Speech transliterators and, intellectually, in the repeated references to the use of sign language. There was an underlying acceptance of the compatibility of Cued Speech and sign and the Congress looked at ways in which they best complemented each other.

A talk by **Anne-Marie GERMAIN** was particularly interesting here, looking at the work of her and her colleagues at an education centre for parents of deaf children. They were using LPC and French Sign Language (LSF) with very young deaf children, the majority of whom had deaf parents. The professionals had been concerned for many years that deaf children starting school at the age of 5 or 6 often arrived with no structured language, either verbal (oral) or signed. **Anne-Marie GERMAIN** writes: 'It seemed therefore elementary to us that very small children must be given the basis of a language that they could then use to acquire indispensable skills at school, allowing them to achieve a correct educational level.'

The roles of Cued Speech and sign were also addressed in the talks given by some parents of deaf children, including looking at the use by some people in Belgium and France of Complete Signed and Cued French

(FCSC) - some with criticism, some adapting comfortably to the use of two languages together. FCSC uses some French signs mixed with LPC in the same sentence. The rationale is that children can benefit from being able to access spoken language, with all the attendant advantages, but can also benefit from being able to communicate in sign. In education it is normal to move from the mixture of cued French and signs to 'purer' LPC in order to encourage literacy and allow full access to the French-based curriculum.

There was discussion from the floor as to which language to use first: French, clarified by LPC, or sign, with the consensus being that in a hearing home it was preferable to use French first, thus giving the child full access to the family language and paving the way for literacy.

LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

Brigitte CHARLIER, Director of the Centre "Comprendre et Parler" (Understand and Speak) in Brussels, gave a presentation concerning the different systems of memory needed for the acquisition of language and the particular role of LPC in supporting the efficient verbal memory of deaf children.

She said that whatever language is used (spoken or signed), not just one memory, but a number of different types of memory are needed and that, whilst most deaf people memorise faces, journeys and lists of instructions correctly, those who do not use LPC have difficulty in memorising a new 5-syllable word, even if they are capable of repeating it immediately.

Brigitte CHARLIER looked at the different types of memory needed for language tasks and concluded that words imprecisely perceived through lipreading are imprecisely or incorrectly stored in the short-term memory, leading to short-term memory problems and future problems with language. On the other hand, if the word is presented in a clear and exact way to the child, the short- and medium-term memory will be efficient. Therefore, the child using LPC has a very efficient short-term memory thanks to the exact and precise representation of words which he can perceive. A good short-term memory is essential for the growth of vocabulary, knowledge of syntax and full literacy. She asks why we should deprive ourselves of LPC when it offers a child the guarantee of receiving the accurate, precise representations of spoken language which seem essential for efficient memory development.

Many topics were covered in **round-table discussions** and one interesting question from the floor was related to **Speech**. One questioner asked: why, when there were so many examples of excellent speech from deaf people brought up with Cued Speech, was this benefit not highlighted at the Congress? Congress President, **Karin VAN der STRAETEN-DRUART**, replied that, whilst most people brought up with Cued Speech acquired good speech, some did not, and that Cued Speech should not be seen as a magic route to speech.

COCHLEAR IMPLANTATION AND CUED SPEECH

A number of presentations at the conference concerned the use of Cued Speech together with cochlear implantation.

Parents' stories of the excellent progress made by their children when supported by Cued Speech prior to and after a cochlear implant were echoed by Speech and Language Therapist, **Alina MILLS'** presentation of two American case studies. She gave test results showing that the two children, with the use of Cued Speech prior to receiving their cochlear implants, had achieved age-appropriate levels of receptive and expressive vocabulary skills and had internalised the grammatical structures of English, enabling them to read at grade and age-level, to successfully communicate orally and be mainstreamed with hearing peers.

Doctor Denise BUSQUET from the Cochlear Implant Team, Armand Trousseau Children's Hospital, Paris looked at the two different routes for deaf children to the use and understanding of the French language - the visual (LPC) and the auditory (the implant). She said that each route has both strengths and limitations. Children in varying circumstances may benefit from the auditory and visual input in different amounts, and **Dr. BUSQUET** contrasted the use of LPC with the support offered to children using different communication methods. She listed the benefits of the use of LPC pre-implant and concludes: 'LPC and implants are certainly necessary to each other in optimising oral language development in all its dimensions for the deaf child, but it is essential to adapt plans for each child and re-adjust them as he progresses'.

There was an underlying acceptance by presenters from continental Europe that LPC has been, for some years, the route to understanding spoken language. They asserted that implantation should be seen as complementary to LPC, not an alternative. **Professor Marc MONFORT** touched on this topic in his wide-reaching presentation when he said: 'The cochlear implant must not make us step backwards: it does not mean that we should abandon our work tools. The young deaf child with an implant hears very well, but is not a hearing person. There is still significant work involved in acquiring the first stages of communication and language, and these are the most important. The deaf implanted child becomes once again deaf many times a day at the swimming pool, on the beach, at football, when the aid is being repaired,...'.

CONCLUSION

At the close of the conference **Brigitte CHARLIER** drew delegates' attention to the fact that spontaneous and efficient communication was made possible by LPC throughout the weekend. She emphasised the importance of taking pleasure in language - and the pleasure that was demonstrated by native deaf users of LPC.

As a visitor from the UK, it was apparent to me that there is a difference between parents' access to Cued

Speech in the UK and in Belgium. In the UK, Cued Speech use is largely parent-led but Belgium has a body of professionals who inform and help parents. These professionals encourage parents to make the French language available to their deaf children rather than taking on the role of speech and language therapists.

It was a pleasure to see so many international users of Cued Speech accessing – so completely – different spoken languages. Congratulations to the organisers for bringing together so many professionals and parents to share their experiences of the success of Cued Speech.

THE SPEAKERS AND THEIR PRESENTATIONS

Jesus ALEGRIA - Reading, and learning to read, for the deaf child: the role of LPC.

A psychologist at the Université Libre in Brussels (ULB) since 1968 when he became a member of the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology there. He gained his Doctorate in Psychological Science at ULB in 1975 and is currently Professor of the Faculty of Psychological and Educational Sciences. He teaches and carries out research into linguistic development in written and spoken language, as well as into the difficulties experienced by some children, particularly deaf children, in these areas.

Jérémie BOROY - Personal Story.

Profoundly deaf since birth, Jérémie is now 25 and studied Political Communication, ending at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. After 2 years in political journalism, he has been a Parliamentary Assistant at the National Assembly for 3 years, reaching the second round of the regional elections last year.

Denise BUSQUET - LPC and cochlear implantation: complementary or incompatible?¹

ENT Doctor specialising in linguistic development and also a child psychologist attached to the cochlear implantation team of the Trousseau Hospital, Paris. For a number of years, she has had a dual role. Her hospital-based work allows her to closely evaluate hearing loss and linguistic problems associated with deafness. She also works in educational centres for deaf children outside the hospital with diverse educational approaches (auditory-oral - verbal-tonal method, French sign language, LPC) which has allowed her to follow day-to-day progress of these children up to adulthood, and to closely follow the impact of medical and technological progress (cochlear implant in particular) on the children's development.

Brigitte CHARLIER -The memory or the memories: how the child can accumulate linguistic information and use it!¹

Working in the field of deafness for more than 20 years and a Speech & Language Therapist for 12 years, she is a Doctor of Psychology, a psycho-linguistic researcher, lecturer in ULB, and Director of the Centre "Comprendre et parler" [Understand and Speak] in Brussels.

Stéphanie COLIN - Phonological skills and identification of written words by the deaf child: the effect of LPC.

Currently in her 2nd year of her graduation thesis for a Doctorate in Cognitive Psychology, she is researching the characterisation of phonological codes in deaf people and more precisely the effect of LPC on deaf children who are learning to read. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Madame **Annie MAGNON**, Professor at Lumière University, Lyon and Madame **Jacqueline LEYBAERT**, Lecturer at Université Libre in Brussels.

Murielle D'HONDT - Neurological foundation in language: effects of linguistic experience on left hemispherical specialisation. Data showing the importance of an early linguistic model in the child's development.²

Doctor in Psychological Sciences and Speech and Language Therapist, currently combining research at the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at Université Libre in Brussels, looking at putting into place an evaluation tool for French/Belgian sign language, with work as a Speech and Language Therapist at the Wavre Medical Centre.

Anne Marie GERMAIN - The contribution of LPC to deaf children of deaf parents.¹

Clinical Psychologist who has worked at the Centre d'Education D'Aide aux Parents d'Enfants Déficit Auditifs (CESDA) in Montpellier, France, for over 20 years and is responsible for children between the ages of 0 –6.

Alina MILLS - Cued Speech pre- and post-cochlear implant.¹

With a Speech & Language Therapy Masters Degree gained at the University of North Carolina (USA), she worked for 5 years as an independent speech therapist and in two American specialist centres in charge of deaf children and adolescents. At the time of the conference, she had worked for nearly 2 years as Speech & Language Therapist at Bridgend Cochlear Implant Programme, Wales, ensuring the multi-disciplinary co-ordination of children and adults having cochlear implants, as well as undertaking research. In 1999, she produced and directed a video "An Adventure in Cued Speech" for parents and professionals. She is an active member of the English and American Cued Speech Associations.

Marc MONFORT - Access to communication for deaf children: between the form and the content.

Speech Therapist, Professor and Director of the Centre "Entender y Hablar" [Hear and Speak], Madrid. Co-ordinator of the deaf children's programme of integrated schooling "Three Olives" in Madrid and lecturer in various Spanish universities for training speech therapists and specialist teachers.

¹ Summary available shortly

² Summary available now