Cued Speech Association UK Newsletter supplement

Spring 2006
Transliterator special

Complete spoken language through vision

Deaf clients can use Cued Speech Transliterators wherever they need the language of a third person clarified by Cued Speech; this can include schools, theatre, meetings etc. The profession of Cued Speech Transliteration (CST) is in its infancy and international practice varies. Currently in the UK there are no qualifications or specific training for CSTs - although there are Certificates of Competency in Cued Speech - however training for CST is under development.

This Newsletter Supplement contains very personal accounts of current practice by people working in the field. Its aim is to inform discussion about the role of CSTs in the UK.

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Supporting Will with Cued Speech in the Classroom by Bev Harman

'I am a Learning Support Assistant working full-time with a profoundly deaf boy called Will, who uses Cued Speech. Will has just turned six and goes to a very small mainstream school on Dartmoor in Devon, which has mixed-age classes and a strong family atmosphere. It provides a really secure and supportive setting for his development and learning. He is now in Year 1. He is a delightful boy who is generally happy and confident, has a great sense of humour, and is very willing and keen to communicate with people around him.

Before I started working with Will, I attended an intensive training course run by the Cued Speech Association. I am also attending an evening class in BSL because Will has also been brought up with some signing, and because I wanted to be able to communicate with other deaf people who I might meet through working with Will.

This is my first job working with a profoundly deaf child, although my background and experience has been working with a variety of children in different settings with a wide range of additional needs. When I first started working with him, I felt quite daunted, as this experience was very new to me. It was a real challenge when I began to use Cued Speech with Will, who I have to say was very patient with me, as I was incredibly slow! But with the continued training and support from The Cued Speech Association, I've managed to become quite fluent and I now feel I have excellent communication with him and consequently he can access most of the curriculum.

Will had a cochlear implant when he was two and a half, when it became clear that he couldn't get any benefit at all from hearing aids. It turns out that he has a very rare type of deafness, associated with his auditory nerves, which means that although the implant works well for him, he can't hear as well or as clearly with the implant as many other implanted children. That is one of the main reasons that Cued Speech is still so important for him at school. His hearing with the implant would not be good enough for him to cope in a mainstream school if he was having to rely on listening alone to access the curriculum.

I try to strike a balance between Will being a part of whole class teaching, and small group work and one-to-one work. It is very important that he is fully included and importantly that he feels included in class activities, since this is a crucial element in his social development and the development of his learning skills. In whole class sessions or school assemblies I try to cue everything that the teacher and other children are saying to complement and support his listening and to make sure he's not missing anything. He also uses a radio aid and a soundfield system. I sit next to the teacher facing him and the class, so he can choose whether to look at me or the teacher. He has become

more and more assertive, asking what people have said if he thinks he has missed anything, which I think is one spin-off of the Cued Speech because he now expects to be fully included and to access the speech around him. With the consistent use of Cued Speech he is able to access all the language used and so access the curriculum fully without it being too tiring, slow or laborious for him.

I have encouraged his teachers and other children to talk and listen to him directly. His language is developing amazingly fast, and his articulation is becoming much clearer. He is now talking directly and independently to other children and they understand him. In fact, he now just talks and talks all day – you just can't stop him! He uses syntax in his sentences, which include pronouns and possessive pronouns. He is a very popular member of the class and is completely accepted and included as just one of the gang.

Bev in the classroom (left)

His self-assurance is growing all the time, which is helped by small group work. These groups look at building confidence and self esteem, developing concentration and listening skills and developing basic language skills. A high level of positive reinforcement is used and Will responds with excellent focus and expresses real enjoyment. Will, of course, is not the only child to get a lot out of these sessions. The groups are selected to include other children who provide a good language model for Will, but they too have got a real boost out of being part of these groups.

A Jolly Phonics group is run three times a week for Will and the other ten or so children in Year 1. This group targets letter sounds, blends, CVC words, rhyming words etc. Lots of participation with singing and games, Will loves this. This is all supported with Cued Speech, and so Will has complete access, and is able to enjoy all the language, including nonsense words and rhymes. His progress with literacy has amazed everyone. He got to grips with the phonics more easily than many of his hearing peers, and he has now progressed to Stage 4 of the Oxford Reading Tree, which he is whizzing through. He absolutely loves books and reading and writing – in fact he's become something of a compulsive reader, reading every sign, book title, whatever he comes across.

Playtimes are a very tricky place for all children and even more difficult for children with communication difficulties. Early on we decided to ensure that Will is supported in the playground as well as in the classroom. Initially I started by setting up simple games, which included other children, such as hide 'n' seek, trains, spinning, ring a ring of roses, running races etc. We often make use of the play equipment too such as the balls, hula hoops, bean bags, skipping ropes and tennis rackets. All the children benefited from this support, and Will's confidence has grown and increasingly he will now initiate games himself and I am able to completely fade back and observe.

Cued Speech is playing such a crucial part in Will's development at school, along with careful, sensitive and dedicated support to ensure his full inclusion and to create as many opportunities and positive experiences for him as possible. He is clearly benefiting from all the support in place and enjoying school very much and is certainly very much fully part of our school community. It's also been lovely to see other children as young as four and five having a go at using Cued Speech when speaking to him, and apparently using it at home too!

I've also been lucky to receive continued support from Will's parents, his teachers and the head teacher, and the other professionals working with him. I am very aware that this support is not always available in all schools.

I feel really privileged to be working with Will, and I know that in the coming years he will continue to make great progress at school, and I look forward to being part of that.'

Bev Harman Learning Support Assistant & Cued Speech Communication Support Worker
December 2005

LPC, the French version of Cued Speech, is very widely used in France and 'coders' have been used in schools for many years, although most children are supported for part of the day only.

A professional degree-level qualification for coders is in the early stages; the university of Jussieu in Paris will deliver the first LPC degree in July and a new degree will be created at the university of Lyon in September.

This summary is from a translation of an article originally published in the newsletter of the LPC Association. Whilst every effort is made to be true to the original absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The original is available in French.

Personal experiences from France by coders Céline Kohler and Armelle Moreau

Terminology:

LPC - the French version of Cued Speech
ALPC – Association LPC
Coding – cueing (using LPC to clarify French)
Coder – someone who cues

I – INTRODUCTION

The profession [of coder] really saw the light of day in 1987 when ALPC created the coding Certificate. Its objective was to allow profoundly deaf children to be educated in mainstream school with the support of a coder whose role was to repeat the teacher's message silently with LPC.

Over the years, the profession has changed a great deal. The number of deaf children accepted into classes has enormously increased because of the wide use of cochlear implants and coders have had to adapt their support to the particular needs of each deaf child.

Céline Kohler writes that she works as a coder in Strasbourg in a small support service which deals with 10 integrated children, 6 of whom have implants. She looks at the changes in coding practice from her personal experience.

The children helped by the support service vary in their background. They include: a girl implanted at age 15 who had only received coding since the age of 12, after her hearing deteriorated; an 8 year old who had received coding since birth; three year olds who had little or no coding before their implants and a child implanted at 22 months who had received coding since the age of one year.

II - CHANGES IN METHODS OF PRACTISING CODING IN KINDERGARTEN.

Armelle Moreau writes that when they started coding in kindergarten they only had 2 short sessions of about 20 minutes each a day. They prioritised stories, rhymes, songs, work instructions and routines (calling children into class, weather, canteen menus). This practice has changed. They now have one session per day of around 45 to 60 minutes, and they code verbally as much as possible to stimulate the hearing abilities of the deaf children. This allows teachers, who also hear them, to appreciate better the language level of the children and to adapt their lessons when the coders are not there.

1) Storytime
The language structures and vocabulary used in stories in kindergarten are not always within the children's capabilities so they no longer code the sequence of the story simultaneously, but prefer to code it to the child directly and individually perhaps accompanied by a hearing child from the class. This allows the coder to speak without upsetting the class, using images from the book as a visual support, at a speed suited to the child, but keeping the intonation and rhythm. She says that they can also improve comprehension by explaining syntax structures and vocabulary if necessary. If the teacher later reads the same story to the whole group, the deaf child, knowing the story, can follow without help from the coder simply by using hearing, lip reading and visual support.

2) Routines
Armelle reports that they always emphasise the routines, which are coded simultaneously. Repetitions are always beneficial to establish language structure and vocabulary.
For example, time: YESTERDAY WAS WEDNESDAY TODAY IS THURSDAY, TOMORROW WILL BE

FRIDAY, THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW…. etc

3) Coding the lesson instructions
They stay with the child after the teacher has given work instructions:

- this allows them to repeat the directions verbally when they are alongside the children
- they can verify that the instructions are understood as, for example, in an elaborate instruction such as: COLOUR IN RED THE TRIANGLES WHICH ARE INSIDE THE CLOSED LINE, COLOUR GREEN THE TRIANGLES WHICH ARE OUTSIDE THE CLOSED LINE.

They can explain an instruction that is linguistically difficult and make sure that the child does not complete the instruction by imitation (by copying from his neighbours) but that he understands what is being asked of him through the coded message.
She writes that it is always the teacher who checks the accomplished work objectively. The coder does not intervene except to teach language. The child has to be allowed to make mistakes.

Céline Kohler writes that their practices followed exactly the same development as Armelle's. She describes a typical case: an implanted child in the first year in kindergarten who is familiar with LPC from home but still developing comprehension and expression in her language. She uses her implant well (capable of replying to questions from the teacher even before we have finished coding), but she uses the coder's presence in a clear way; she looks systematically to them for rhymes, songs or new stories. It seems that when confronted with new words, she needs coding to integrate them, to be certain she has properly understood them. So, they code the new words several times for her and she repeats them spontaneously, whilst watching them and looking for approval, as if to make sure that it is really the right word. 'Remember that in a noisy situation an implant does not allow full comprehension, and those kinds of situation are very frequent in a kindergarten!'

'Things are different for children who started kindergarten not having had the benefit of LPC, or having had very little, and who were only implanted towards the age of three. These children have considerably delayed language. At four years of age they only said a few words, like daddy, wee wee, cat, apple; had the greatest difficulty in comprehension and expressed themselves for the most part by mime.'
Their work consisted, then, for the most part in helping them to acquire language, in coding words repeatedly, and in a clear voice. In this case they say that their role and the teachers' were equally essential and cooperation between them fundamental. They created liaison booklets to facilitate their work together with the children.

III – CHANGES IN OUR CODING PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Armelle Moreau writes that they code for about 4 to 8 hours a week, usually without voice. In the early years they adapt their coded message to the child's linguistic level but with the objective of simultaneous coding in later years, when the child has acquired the required level of language. For each child they determine the linguistic content of the message they are coding.

By using *'Reception Tests, TERMO', they measure* the quality of the reception of the message given to the child, using different modalities:

A: hearing only
B: hearing + lip reading
C: hearing, lip reading + LPC
D: lip reading only
E: lip reading + LPC
Syllables, words and phrases are tested.
The results obtained from these tests, notably for long and complex phrases as well as narratives, allowed them to spot language difficulties.

Coding of preparatory sessions
Where discourse is long and complex with few pauses, they code preparatory sessions so that they can explain vocabulary or structures which would otherwise be poorly understood by the child.

Coding of French sessions
During French sessions once the structure is coded the coder can go back over the complex linguistic structures or vocabulary that the child does not know.

Coding mathematics lessons
Armelle writes that they used not to give priority to coding of mathematics lessons. However, they now think it essential to code geometry sessions, formula and specific vocabulary to prevent setbacks for the deaf pupils.

Céline Kohler describes some experiences which were challenging: she explains that for one of the children, the coders' action has really had an impact for reading: code helped the child to decipher syllables, his comprehension clearly improved and his

expression was enriched very quickly. But as he began to use his implant autonomously, he started to say to us: "but I understand, I understand..". He became reluctant to watch the coders. 'His parents insisted that he paid attention, which to my way of thinking, only led to his rejection of code. What we learned from this experience was the importance of giving the child a liking for code, so that it did not become something which was imposed on him, and constraining'.

She writes that another child was incapable of understanding the most simple exercises such as "do you hear the sound I in the word?". Learning to read did not help. He repeated exactly what we said to him and preferred sign language. This child was placed in a signing school, since it seemed fundamental that he should be able to express himself.

For a third child, they were presented with equally great difficulties: he learned to decipher in a very simple way, and was capable of reading, but understood nothing that he read. He still had very little vocabulary and no access at all to phraseology; he was incapable of completing an exercise like putting the words in a sentence in the right order. After much hesitation they decided (against their principles of integration) to take him on one side to work with him on vocabulary and meaning. This bore fruit; 'he is repeating his year but he can follow the class curriculum'. They had even added more code for him in the afternoons, since he really used it.

Armelle's conclusion, for primary classes, is that LPC is necessary, and that they must try to adapt their help to the child and his family and find the most flexible ways of transmission.

IV – CHANGES IN THE USE OF CODIING AT COLLEGE /SECONDARY SCHOOL

Armelle Moreau writes that before implanted children arrived, they used simultaneous coding. Their practise has been changed for coding in a foreign language. The attempts at Cued Speech have not been conclusive in most cases. In reply to the questionnaire sent out in 2004 to coders working with foreign languages, only 29 coded in the foreign language. Amongst those 29, only 9 used the code of the language concerned.

Céline Kohler explains that the children they support at college and secondary school are children who received late implants, and therefore had used code before. The children have to choose between watching the teacher or the coder. Most of the time for implanted children they do not code all the teacher's discourse simultaneously. They usually help by repeating what the teacher has just said and by reforming it. It is clear that young people often demand their autonomy. 'It is up to us to show them that their implants will not give them the message in its entirety, and that they are at a disadvantage in a noisy situation and that they do not grasp everything that others say.'

V – CODING PRACTICES AT UNIVERSITY

Armelle Moreau writes that for some years, they have answered demands for coding from deaf students in higher education. At this stage, pupils are no longer followed by a care service; the coder is then the sole deafness professional. There can be technical difficulties; For example, the coder may need to make a résumé if the pupil is also taking notes. She tells us that the coder may also act as a notetaker during the course in some circumstances.

VI – CONCLUSION

Céline Kohler writes that the coder's presence is 'a precious tool' in facilitating reliable, continuous, individualised work with children. In addition, the implant alone is not sufficient in noisy situations or when the children have not attained a sufficient level of language. She says that it is important to give implanted children, from a very early age, a taste for LPC. They should understand its usefulness and that it can be a comfort to them to be able to profit from it in class, as well as in everyday life.

Armelle Moreau writes that the profession of coder is continually changing. The coder can guarantee the best help and implanted children can benefit from access to language from both the audio and visual channel. She says that their first objective, in collaboration with the multi-disciplinary team, is to adapt themselves to each deaf child's profile.

Our grateful thanks to Pat Cove who translated the original French document.

Further information about the French degree-level programs for LPC coders (Cued Speech Transliterators) will be available in the coming months.

Thomas Shull is a nationally certified cued language transliterator and transliterator educator for Language Matters, Inc. of the U.S.A.

He has worked in the field of transliteration for 15 years in educational settings ranging from pre-school through post-graduate programs. He currently lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Throughout the U.S., new 'transliterators' are hired by school districts each year and these new employees vary from being highly skilled to the untrained. In the following article Tom looks at the problems of using unskilled transliterators and the standards which should be every transliterator's - and every employer's - goal.

Cued Language Transliteration in the U.S.A.
by Tom Shull

'The problems of using unskilled transliterators

Often times a school district knows little about the field of transliteration and sometimes the people they hire know less. Willing and well-intentioned, individuals are hired to learn Cued Speech with the intent that they will be ready after 20 hours or so of instruction. At which time, administrators expect these people to begin working as educational cued language transliterators facilitating communication for deaf students. However, those who cue know better.

After a foundation class in Cued Speech, one generally has a rudimentary understanding of the system and how to cue any utterance in the English language. However, at first, these new cuers may still rely on instructional materials (like a chart of cues) as they spit out words dysfluently like a new typist at a keyboard. For these "new cuers", the primary goal is fluency. "How can I get faster?" is the common lament of these under-qualified people who cannot imagine the day when they'll match the brisk speaking rate of a classroom teacher. More often than not, information is sacrificed in this backwards model of a transliterator receiving on-the-job training. Opportunities for social interaction, observation of turn-taking, and the natural repetition that occurs during instruction are often casualties of this model. A common, and unconscious, compensatory technique for these cuers is to cue only the first few words of each sentence, stalling out midway, then picking up with the next thought. This technique allows the transliterator to appear to be keeping up, all the while, giving the deaf student an ungrammatical, nonsensical version of what is actually being said.

How can this be the case? Despite advances in ensuring that people with disabilities receive access to the world around them, how does this model persist and what can be done to reverse it?

Equal Access as a Realistic Goal

The field of cued language transliteration was defined by Earl Fleetwood and Melanie Metzger and codified in their seminal work The Cued Language Transliterator Code of Conduct (©1989). Within that document, the authors identified 8 tenets of professional behaviour to guide transliterator decision making. These interdependent principles help to define and ensure equal access for deaf individuals. The 8 tenets are:

1. Facilitate communication between deaf/ hard-of-hearing cued language consumers and hearing consumers.

The objective of the transliterator is to facilitate (not replace) communication between deaf and hearing people. Provided that deaf consumers are able to receive a verbatim service, transliterators cue everything that is said in the mainstream environment. This includes what the teacher says, student comments, jokes, laughter, inappropriate remarks, correct and incorrect answers, and profanity.

To some the idea of cueing wrong answers may seem unnecessary and potentially harmful to the deaf child. Could filtering out mistakes actually improve the educational environment of the deaf child? Anecdotal evidence suggests that it would not. Mistakes are a necessary and natural part of learning. The freedom to take intellectual risks and make mistakes indicates a safe learning environment. Being exposed to others' mistakes can be reassuring to students who had come up with the same incorrect conclusion. Further, a cleansing or filtering out of mistakes (and their subsequent corrections) could lead to inconsistencies in the information received by the deaf consumer. To delete the mistake would require omission of a correction and possibly subsequent discussion. Indeed classrooms are not sterile environments and learning is

not a perfect process. Interaction and the sharing of information (correct or not) contributes to the community of the classroom.

How do we justify the suggestion that transliterating profanity is ever acceptable to a deaf child? Does the fact that it is being transliterated not imply to the children that the transliterator condones such behaviour in a classroom? Again, while it is possible to censor the deaf child's version of a classroom experience, there is no analogous filter for the ears of hearing children. Further, anecdotal evidence demonstrates that transliterators who choose to police behaviour become pegged by other children as disciplinarians. This re-classification from communication facilitator to role-model subsequently means that children may choose not to socialize with the deaf child in order to avoid the accompanying disciplinarian. Those children who do continue to interact with the deaf child may alter their behaviour because of the presence of the transliterator. Over the span of years during which the deaf child receives transliteration services, these can add up to social interactions that are severely limited both in number and scope.

2. *Provide sound-based environmental information to deaf/hard-of-hearing consumers of cued language.*

The qualified cued language transliterator will not only provide access to spoken text in terms of what people say, but also other environmental sounds. Has your stomach ever growled during a silent prayer in church? How did others react around you? How did you feel about their reactions? What does it mean when if you hear a /sssssssss/ sound from a tank of hydrogen gas? Using techniques like onomatopoetic and phonemic representations, transliterators strive to give true renderings of environmental sounds.

3. Provide appropriate training to deaf/hard-of-hearing consumers to allow for proper transliterator utilization.

4. Provide hearing consumers with appropriate demonstration/explanation of the transliterator role.

It is the job of the transliterator to train both the hearing and deaf people in the mainstream classroom in terms of how to properly use his/her services. Teachers and other adults may not be accustomed to a transliterator and may assume that other more familiar roles and responsibilities of adults apply. Does the transliterator also work as a tutor, an aide, a disciplinarian, or chaperone? The unique role of the transliterator must be explained so that adults understand that none of these other job descriptions apply.

Also, deaf children do not come with an innate ability to use a transliterator. From the earliest age it is important to demonstrate proper transliterator role. Students who grow up with this model from an early age are more likely to be self-reliant, acquire assistance from appropriate sources, socialize with peers, and seek approval from individuals other than the transliterator. Therefore, the deaf student may be more likely to initiate interaction with students, teachers, and other school personnel.

5. Demonstrate and implement ongoing reverence for the preservation and promotion of complete and equal access.

Equal access is the core belief behind cued language transliteration. Embedded in this ideal is the notion that transliterators will strive to give a representation comparable to that received by hearing people.

As an example, consider the hearing child in a classroom who hears someone call out an answer from the back of the room. The hearing student will know from acoustic information alone whether the person speaking is male or female and whether he or she is an adult or child. Further, if these students have been classmates for sometime, the hearing student is likely to know who exactly spoke the answer, just by the sound of his or her voice. The transliterator cannot then simply cue with one hand and point with the other and expect to achieve equality of access. While pointing will give an approximate location of the speaker, gender and identity information will be lost. The qualified cued language transliterator will begin by pointing to him or herself while silently cueing speaker characteristics like "male" or "Bobby" depending on the context of the situation and the knowledge of the deaf consumer. If the deaf child would recognize Bobby's voice upon hearing it, the transliterator will indicate "Bobby" when Bobby is speaking. This is one technique to ensure that acoustic information is not lost in the cued representation.

Further, transliterators strive not to give greater or improved access than that received by hearing people. For example, consider the deaf person in the back of a crowded auditorium. The transliterator as well as those sitting around the deaf person are only

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able to make out bits and pieces of the speaker's message. Should the transliterator move to a location toward the front to be able to hear better? No. Transliterators in this situation will convey the bits and pieces that are heard, leaving the deaf person to re-locate, ask the speaker to use a microphone, or perhaps to engage in a private conversation in the back to pass the time. In this case, the lack of access is what is shared by those people in the back of the room. Only by truly being involved in the situation can the deaf person make an informed decision and take part in either remedying or ignoring the situation.

Tom Shull

6. Promote the progression of events as if circumstances do not necessitate transliterator presence.

What would happen if the deaf person were hearing and there were no transliterator present? By striving to minimize one's presence, transliterators ensure that the deaf child will have access to each classroom environment as it would naturally occur. Imagine someone in your own life who has a strong influence over the way people interact, behave, or speak to one another. How would your schooling have been affected if this person attended each one of your classes? The transliterator in an educational setting should be as innocuous as a cultural anthropologist, having little effect on the interaction of others.

7. Adhere to the ethical standards of transliterating for deaf/hard-of-hearing consumers.

The Code of Ethics is the document set forth by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) that guides signed language interpreters in the United States. This entire document is included as one tenet of the transliterator Code of Conduct and includes such principles as keeping all assignment information confidential, wearing appropriate dress (patternless and contrasting to the interpreter's skin tone), requesting appropriate compensation, and only accepting those assignments for which the interpreter is qualified.

8. Support the profession of cued language transliteration by striving to improve related skills and knowledge and the application thereof.

Transliterators, like the unsuspecting one in our first example, must participate in ongoing professional development and assessment in order to advance their abilities. Transliterators should interact with other practitioners as well as qualified trainers. Through self-evaluation and reflection transliterators can also advance their skills in order to ensure that in addition to cueing rapidly, they also truly provide equal access for deaf children in educational settings.
This model of cued language transliteration is used around the United States by trained and talented transliterators. By ensuring equal access and striving to diminish their effect on the behaviour of others, transliterators help to provide equity in the communication environment. This model can be counter-intuitive to those who believe that helping deaf children requires constant intervention, but it helps to ensure that deaf people reach their potential and have the same opportunities afforded to hearing people. There is no doubt that learning to cue is not learning to transliterate. Mastering the ability to cue is only the first part in the challenging, but incredibly rewarding profession of cued language transliteration.'

The Testing, Evaluation, and Certification Unit (TECUnit) serves as the official cued language testing organization in the United States. The TECUnit oversees standards for cued language transliterators and administers standardized testing for practitioners. For more information visit their website: www.tecunit.org

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