

Cued Speech in education



Complete spoken language
through vision

Information Sheet 4

A personal view by Daniel Koo (from America)

Taken from 'Volta Voices'

'On the first day of school in September, 1982, I walked into a mainstreamed fifth grade class with a Cued Speech Transliterater (CST)* and since then have never looked back. Prior to that, I had been enrolled in oral programs in the Montgomery County Public School System since I was an infant. By the end of fourth grade, my teachers and parents had decided that I was progressing too slowly with my language development and was having difficulty understanding instructions. I was performing at a level below my hearing peers and was slowly falling further behind. The teaching material was becoming increasingly difficult and fast-paced, and an alternate solution for my education was long overdue.

The moment I was exposed to Cued Speech was the beginning of my linguistic and academic success. During the course of my fifth grade school year, my reading performance jumped from C's in below-grade level classes to B's and A's in on-grade level courses. Since then, I have consistently maintained that level of performance in my language development.

My vocabulary has expanded, and

English has become an internalised language - a foundation waiting to be built on throughout the lifeline of my daily and academic experience.

One of the delights opened up to me by Cued Speech transliteration is an appreciation of poetry. In a college English class we had to read poetry aloud. There was a line by John Donne that I read to the class, "that I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend..." My teacher pointed out that the word "o'erthrow" would sound like "or-throw" instead of "overthrow" for the sake of iambic metric pattern. I cannot overemphasize the importance of rhyme, meter, alliteration, and ultimately the complete versification of poems in the English language. Through Cued Speech, I am able to see the same rhyme, meter, and alliteration of Shakespeare, Donne, Poe, Yeats, and countless other poets that my classmates hear. How beautiful it is.

Although I am fluent in American Sign Language (I learnt signs from my deaf peers when I was in seventh grade) and am capable of having a sign language interpreter, I still prefer to have certified Cued Speech Transliterators in academic settings. There is only one reason for this - the ability of Cued Speech to give me unmitigated *(continued overleaf)*

Cued Speech is a simple sound-based system comprising eight handshapes used in four positions near the mouth together with the lip patterns of normal speech so as to make all the sounds of spoken language fully comprehensible to deaf babies, children and adults

More information?

Video, booklet and more information sheets available.

Learn to Cue

Regular courses (some residential) are arranged, with low cost or free tuition.

Contact us at:

Cued Speech Association UK
Tel, voice and text: 01803 832 784
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Call an experienced user now to discuss the benefits of Cued Speech

A personal story (continued)

and unequivocal access to English. Spoken English that has not been able to reach my ears has now found a new channel into my head. It is through Cued Speech that I am able to see spoken language clearly, without any doubt in ambiguous passages that could be misread through lipreading alone. Because the nature of Cued Speech is to convey accurate visual representations of language phonemes, all auditory information can be transmitted to me through a Cued Speech Transliterator. The decoding of the information is left solely to me, not the interpreter. Essentially, the power of learning rests in my head, not in an interpreter's.

Instead of depending on an interpreter's knowledge of the subject material, I have the opportunity to use my own knowledge to learn new things. For instance, my Transliterator would not be expected to know much about the growth of microorganisms in a biology class, or about derivatives in calculus. Instead of creating signs or fingerspelling words such as *phylogenetic*, all my Transliterator has to do is to cue and mouth each word as it is pronounced. Sometimes I will have read and studied the material beforehand, or my teacher will write a new word on the board and thus support the vocabulary building process that continues as long as I have a Cued Speech Transliterator who is able to cue clearly (and mouth) every single syllable uttered.

I have never regretted the decision to use the services of qualified Cued Speech Transliterators. Time and time again, I have been reminded how much difference Cued Speech makes in my access to spoken language. For example, I was in a panel where a Cued Speech Transliterator and a sign interpreter sat at different ends of the panel. I happened to glance at the ASL interpreter momentarily and saw her sign-interpret a panelist's remark as: "I know." But when I looked over to my Cued Speech Transliterator, she repeated what I had missed while glancing at the sign interpreter: "I knew she would say that." Apparently for the sake of brevity, there was information the sign interpreter omitted in the translation from English to signs. Being proficient in American Sign Language and having prior experience with a sign language interpreter, I understand the difference and find that, more often than not, the true meaning of the message becomes slightly altered or even lost in the translation from English to signs. With Cued Speech, there is no

translation from one language to another, but rather, messages are converted from one medium to another - from auditory to visual - while retaining the original utterances of the original language. I get the same linguistic input that my hearing counterparts do, and as a result, am able to share the same information.

Foreign language has also been readily accessible to me with Cued Speech as a communication vehicle. Once in high school, I had taken Latin in hopes of improving my vocabulary base. I found that mainstreamed experience easier than my deaf classmate who used a sign interpreter, because words from other languages are not necessarily pronounced the way we would pronounce the same group of letters in English. For example, the Latin word *vicinia* is pronounced as *wee-kee-nee-ah*. In this case my Transliterator cued the precise pronunciation that my hearing peers heard. While sign language interpreters are supposed to spell out such words, they do not always know the spelling, and the deaf student does not always get the same linguistic input that hearing people do.

The use of foreign words and phrases has not been limited solely to my foreign language classes. Teachers of English, math, science, etc., sometimes use them. Phrases and words such as *faux pas* (pronounced as /foepah/) occur in everyday academic and even social discourse. As a result, with Cued Speech, I decode language the same way my hearing classmates do. Should I come across a new word, it is up to me to learn the definition by asking the teacher, by approximating its meaning through the context it was used in, or by later consulting a dictionary.

In short, I prefer to have a Cued Speech Transliterator simply because of the access furnished to raw English. The auditory information my hearing colleagues hear is the same information I can see with the proper utilization of Cued Speech. I think that the importance of the phonemic information provided by Cued Speech is highly underrated. It is an important element in successful language acquisition in deaf children - equally as important as it is for hearing students.'

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Cued Speech within the classroom

What are the advantages of using Cued Speech within a mainstream classroom?

Cued Speech:

- ◆ will allow a deaf child to see exactly the same language, at the same time as hearing children
- ◆ represents English sound-for-sound and therefore has a direct code relationship with both written and spoken language. All teaching takes place using the same language - it is only the mode of conveying the language which changes
- ◆ is uniquely helpful for literacy because it represents the sounds of English
- ◆ has no limitations of vocabulary – once you know the system you can say anything!
- ◆ can be used with foreign languages
- ◆ can be used with technical vocabulary
- ◆ will reinforce oral/aural work
- ◆ will help the child's ability to lip-read
- ◆ is quick to learn
- ◆ will allow new vocabulary to be accurately 'cue-read'; whereas it is almost impossible to accurately lipread new words because so many sounds are ambiguous.

In education Cued Speech has some important advantages over the use of either auralism (listening) or sign alone.

The use of British Sign Language (BSL) or sign systems within education

There are some problems associated with the use of BSL as a first or main language in education. BSL is very different from English, with very different grammar. It is not easy to learn to read and write correctly if the child has to access written English via BSL. For this reason educationalists have developed a number of non-language sign systems (Sign Supported English, Signed English) based on the vocabulary of BSL but using the word order of English to help children use and understand English.

Whether BSL or a non-language sign system is used there is no direct sound-based relationship between the sign and the written word as there is between speech (and Cued Speech) and the printed word. Many children supported at a mainstream

school which uses BSL or a sign system will have a teacher who speaks English which is then interpreted into sign by an assistant. The child will then have to re-interpret back to written English and to do follow-up reading in English. They must learn to associate each and every written word individually with its sign. Learning English through sign can be very hard work.

However, Cued Speech can be successfully used to provide full visual access to English in a bilingual program which also uses sign language. Please see our supplementary leaflet, *Bilingualism through BSL and Cued Speech*.

Accessing lessons through listening

A child who can hear all the sounds of speech with a hearing aid can be successfully educated aurally if they can continue to hear all the sounds of speech in a noisy classroom. However, children who cannot hear all the sounds of speech usually have problems with grammar and literacy. Children who cannot clearly hear the teacher, or who can hear them only when the class is quiet, are greatly disadvantaged. Cued Speech will solve these access problems by representing all the sounds visually.

It is common when teaching deaf children who do not have Cued Speech support to pre-teach (explain what the teacher is going to cover before the lesson) and/or post-teach (go over misheard work after the lesson). Both these are strategies which compensate for lack of access and should not be necessary if the child has consistent access to Cued Speech.

Cued Speech is not an alternative to auralism. It is important to continue to use residual hearing to the full and to receive speech and language therapy to make the most of the excellent English skills Cued Speech children can acquire.

Cued Speech should not be exclusive

Cued Speech can be used within a package which includes other support. It would be expected that Cued Speech would be used to clarify English-based teaching for much or most of the time in class. Additionally a child should have appropriate hearing aids, speech therapy and, where necessary, intensive listening practice. Children who are being brought up bilingually could have additional input from a first-language user of BSL.

Cued Speech is used in schools with children who have been brought up with Cued Speech and those who have not

Children brought up with Cued Speech

Parents who use Cued Speech consistently in the home and from an early age can give their child an understanding of English which is very similar to hearing children. Deaf children brought up with Cued Speech can therefore arrive at school without the delayed and damaged language common amongst non-cueing children.

Just as Cued Speech enables a young child to acquire language, so it can also give full access to language within a classroom. In continental Europe and the USA children may be educated within a program where Cued Speech is consistently used by all staff but in the UK it is more common for children to be supported by a learning support assistant who uses Cued Speech within a mainstream (hearing) school. The support assistant can act as a Cued Speech Transliterater (CST)* or - often as a temporary measure with very young children unused to school - can cue selectively, omitting the least important parts of a lesson. Selective cueing should be used with extreme caution because it undermines the unique ability of Cued Speech to give access to every sound of every word spoken but may be helpful at times, for example when a child (unlike hearing classmates) is unable to look at work or an item under discussion while looking at the CST.

Children who receive Cued Speech later

There are some differences between the use of Cued Speech with children who have been brought up with it and who therefore have age appropriate understanding of language and those who come to it later in life.

Children brought up with Cued Speech can be expected to be able to make full use of a CST and

have very few problems with access within the class. Some children who are struggling but who have a reasonable understanding of English flourish as soon as Cued Speech is made available. On the other hand children with severely delayed language may not be able to make full use of a CST because they do not have a sufficient language base. Intensive language development work should be undertaken using Cued Speech to narrow or close the linguistic gap. Meanwhile the CST should give support at the language level at which the pupil can benefit.

For more information see 'The Cued Speech Resource Book for Parents of Deaf Children' available from the Cued Speech Association UK.

Are there any limitations to using Cued Speech in school?

Very few! Deaf adults and children who use their eyes to 'listen' (either with sign or Cued Speech) do get tired and may need more breaks than hearing children who are listening. It is, however, much less tiring than trying to lip-read.

A continual use of a CST may limit the one-to-one contact that the deaf pupil will have with others (as will the use of a sign interpreter) and it is important to give the child some time to communicate directly.

Almost all children brought up with Cued Speech use speech expressively (although their diction may be poor initially) and are good lip-readers, but Cued Speech does not teach diction. It is important to have help from a Speech and Language Therapist, preferably one who uses Cued Speech. Similarly, while research shows that the use of Cued Speech helps children to use their residual hearing, for best results listening skills must still be specifically taught.

*What is a Cued Speech Transliterater (CST)?

Within a family, Cued Speech is usually used as an accompaniment to and clarification of normal speech. However an experienced user of Cued Speech can cue and mouth silently the speech of a third person. This is similar to translation but because it does not involve translating one language into another but

represents the same language sound-for-sound in a different medium it is called transliteration. CST's can be used in education, meetings, medical examinations, theatres, etc. They should always cue exactly what is said, using clear lip patterns, at the speed of the source speaker.

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