Cued Speech

Literacy, deafness and Cued Speech

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A parent writes:

"Our son was born profoundly deaf and we started to learn Cued Speech (CS) before he was one year old. It took a few months before I could cue fast enough to cue everything that I said, however, because CS is a sound-based system once you have learnt the system you can say anything.

'Our Teacher of the Deaf didn't cue; it would have been a support if she had, but it didn't really matter because our son learnt enough English through us. It's not important for everyone to cue because CS is just English and it helps deaf children understand the English all around them.

'By the time he was two years old he understood a lot of simple sentences and by three years old he was talking, using long sentences (but with poor diction at this stage). He could also recognise some written words, like his name and that of his brother. We had a 'eureka' moment with a phrase in a story book: 'Boo, hoo, hoo, what a to do' when he realised that the cue for /oo/ sound tied in with the letter o. He was then on the lookout for /o/ words and found them in zoo, moo and poo. The letters 'm' and 'p' were also in his name and that of his brother and he suddenly realised that cued English and written English were based on the same units – and that there was a system linking them. He demanded to know how other letters and cues linked up and he very quickly made the association between the sounds that he could not hear, but knew existed because of the cues, and letters (or combination of letters like 'sh').

'When he started at his local mainstream school aged four and a half he could de-code any word and link it to words that he knew through cueing – the teacher had to go to year 3 class to get reading books of the right level for him.

'Crucially, for a deaf child who can't hear speech well enough to recognise and learn words, he was starting to learn new words through reading. He had a Cued Speech Transliterator at school so he didn't miss any of his education. Also a Speech and Language Therapist helped with his diction so he became easily understandable even by people who didn't know him. As he got older, because he knew so much English through being, he understood complex written sentences and thrived at school.' **Name available on request.**"

Learn Cued Speech in about 20 hours

Parents and professionals can learn Cued Speech in various ways:

- One- or two-day Workshops
- Bespoke courses
- Free e-learning website at: www.learntocue.co.uk
- Our annual cueing weekend
- 'Skype' sessions for yourself or a small group. The first session is FREE.

Training for professionals is low-cost and can be adapted to your needs.

Please enquire about our bursary fund for parents.

Professionals write:

A senior teacher of the deaf writes about parents and professionals using CS with children who have English as a second language: 'In Manchester Cued Speech is successfully used with pupils aged from 6 months to sixteen years both in schools and in the home. The pupils' home languages include British Sign Language (BSL), Polish, Arabic, Nigerian dialects, Somalian and Urdu. The benefits include: improved lip reading of both their home language and English and the production of spoken English. …..Cued Speech significantly improves the spelling skills of deaf pupils regardless of their home language as it enables them to see the phonic sounds within words, which previously they had no access to through audition. Subsequently reading skills develop as the child is able to read phonetically.'

Rachel Rees of UCL writes about H.V., a deaf nine-year-old who had been brought up with CS, but who, even with an implant, could not understand common phrases by listening alone. However:

- **his reading accuracy and comprehension were around 2 years ahead of hearing peers**
- **his score on the British picture Vocabulary Scale (presented without CS) was in the 93rd centile.**

She summarises: [the results of her research] suggests CS was helping H.V. to perceive and store novel words and that this effect could have contributed to his development of vocabulary, phonological awareness, and literacy skills that were generally in advance of those expected for his age.'

Research: Effects of English Cued Speech on Speech Perception, Phonological Awareness and Literacy.
Rachel Rees UCL, & Judith Bladel Deafness & Education International vol 15 No 4, 2013 182-200.

For training and more information about the use of Cued Speech contact:

Cued Speech Association UK (CSAUK),
The Forces, Forces Cross, Blackawton, Devon TQ9 7DJ
Tel: 01803 712853
Email: info@cuedspeech.co.uk
Webs: www.cuedspeech.co.uk &
www.learntocue.co.uk

Health & care information you can trust
The Information Standard Certified Member

CSAUK is a national charity run by users of Cued Speech (both professionals and parents).
CSAUK - 2015 - a3 - literacy
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What do children need to be literate?

Whole libraries of books have been written on this subject but most educationalists agree that there are two things which are very important – probably essential - when learning to read.

- An understanding of the **language** you are trying to read
- An understanding of the sounds that make up that language and a knowledge of how the sounds tie in with letters – which is known as **phonics**.

Poor readers may have problems with either **language comprehension** or **phonics** or –at worst – both.

To help their young pre-school child to learn language, parents talk to them about day-to-day activities, read to them and play games with them.

To help their child be aware of the individual sounds which make up words many parents tell their child nursery stories (like 'fee, fie, foe, fum' ….etc.) and sing songs (like 'Miss Polly had a dolly'…etc.) which have rhymes.

How does this work for deaf children?

Some deaf children will have enough hearing (with aids or implants) to learn English fully through listening, but many will not. Over the years deaf children who can't fully 'hear' with aids, and who don't have Cued Speech (CS), have struggled with literacy. It's immediately obvious why:

- Without CS deaf children get less English language 'input' – simply because of their deafness; if they need quiet listening conditions and good light to speech-read they will just see/hear less language. So they will understand less language than hearing children; sometimes they don't understand English at all.
- For most deaf children the sounds within the words are less distinct; or they can't hear some of the sounds or maybe they can't hear any sounds. So their understanding of phonics will be weaker than hearing children – or even non-existent.

Deafness can cut deaf children off from spoken language in its entirety and – inevitably - the sounds which are the building blocks of spoken language. No wonder they struggle with literacy.

Common ways to help literacy (without CS)

Teachers may use various systems of 'visual phonics' which can teach the sounds of English, but without an understanding of English deaf children can't apply these sounds to a language they know. They may suggest using British Sign Language (BSL). This will give deaf children a language which they can use to think and to communicate but it has no direct relationship with spoken or written language.

The combination of BSL and visual phonics can give deaf children 'language comprehension' and a knowledge of 'phonics' but the 'phonics' is in English and 'comprehension' is in BSL! The two do not tie up, which is the whole point of learning phonics.

What do deaf children need for literacy?

Deaf children need a way to fully access and understand all of the sound-based spoken English in day to day interaction and one which also ties in with the individual sounds of spoken English. They need 'language comprehension' and understanding of 'phonics' in the same language. This is a prescription for Cued Speech (CS).

CS is a simple system which uses just 8 handshapes in 4 positions to clarify the lip-patterns of normal speech. It is a visual version of English, or other spoken languages. It gives access (by clarifying the speech of others) to the English language in its entirety and consequently to reading. CS is commonly used in many countries and there is now a wide body of international research which demonstrates its effectiveness.




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CS Evidence

As long ago as 1989 American research (Wandel) found no significant difference in reading achievement between the matched groups of hearing and CS-using profoundly deaf pupils. Since then research has mainly looked at how this can be explained and at the mechanics of how CS-using deaf children learn to read. The following is a fraction of the research available.

Cued Language and the Alphabetic principle - Children who have been brought up with CS bring to school a very different skill set to most deaf children. They consistently see the 'spoken' language which surrounds them in a clear, unambiguous, visual form i.e. cued language, a full visual mode of spoken language in which all the phonological contrasts are clearly marked. As Laybaert, Colin and LaSasso say in the book *Cued Speech and Cued Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children* (details opposite): 'The advantages [of this] are threefold:

- Once children have learnt the correspondences between graphemes and the manual cues from Cued Speech, they can be autonomous readers (Jorm and Share, 1983) in the sense that they can get the meaning of words they have never encountered in print before (for evidence see Alegria, Aurouer, & Hage 1997).
- Children exposed to Cued Speech will be able to use grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences for reading printed words and phoneme-to-grapheme correspondences for word spelling (for evidence, see Leybaert, 2000; Leybaert & Charlier, 1996; Leybaert & Lechat, 2001).
- The use of correspondences between graphemes and corresponding visual 'phonemes' (i.e. manual cues and mouthshapes) makes possible the development of phonological awareness (Charlier & Leybaert).'

Rhyming - Hearing children who perform well on rhyming tasks do markedly better in early reading than those with poor rhyming ability. Dr Cornett devised CS in order to 'ensure that the deaf child comes to think in the phonemic equivalent of spoken English'. If he was successful then deaf child brought up with CS should be able to develop rhyming skills before learning to read, as do hearing children, and their rhyming judgments should not be affected by spelling or by lip-reading similarity. Research (Leybaert and Charlier 2000) showed that in French-speaking children this was indeed the case with CS-users achieving a high level of accuracy in rhyme judgment about pairs of pictures which was not influenced by spelling and was within the range of hearing children. In contrast deaf children from oral or signing backgrounds relied on spelling and lip-reading and therefore made many more errors. American research (Crain, 2003) found similar results with emerging readers of English whose rhyming abilities were comparable to their hearing peers.

Parents are vital!

Crucially, to give deaf children the best chance of full literacy, it's families who have the most important role by making sure that their child learns the home language before they even reach school. Research illustrates this, (including Leybaert and Charlier, 1996 & Leybaert and Lechat 2001).

CS will give all children access to English regardless of what they hear, and it's quick and easy to learn, with only 12 different cues for the 44 sounds of speech.

A parent writes:

"When Z. was first diagnosed as deaf, one of my greatest fears was about whether he would be able to learn to read. As it turned out I really had nothing to worry about. Z. at three years seven months has just had a reading test with an Educational Psychologist and has come out with a reading age of seven and a half!'

If I hadn't witnessed it myself I'm not sure if I'd actually believe it possible. Undoubtedly Z. has a love of and talent for the written word, but I know this talent would not have been realised if he hadn't had access to Cued Speech."

Name available on request.

References: Jorm, A., & Share, D. (1983) *Phonological recoding and reading acquisition.* Applied Psycholinguistics, 4, 103-147. Wandel, J. *(1989). Use of internal speech in reading by hearing and hearing-impaired students in oral, total communication and Cued Speech programs. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.* Alegria, J., Aurouer, V., & Hage, C., (December 1997) *How do deaf children identify written words encountered for the first time: Phonological representations and phonological processing.* Working paper presented at the International Symposium 'Integrating Research and Practice in Literacy' London. Leybaert, J., (2000) *Phonology acquired through the eyes and spelling in deaf children.* Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 75 291-318. Leybaert, J. & Charlier, B., (1996) *Visual Speech in the head: The effect of Cued Speech on rhyming, remembering and spelling.* Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 1, 234-248. Leybaert, J. & Lechat, J., (2001) *Variability in deaf children's spelling: the effect of language experience.* Journal of Educational Psychology, 93, 554-562. Crain,K., (2003) *The Development of phonological awareness in moderately-to-profoundly deaf developing readers: The effect of exposure to cued American English.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Gallaudet University, Washington DC. Charlier, B. & Leybaert, J., (2000) *The rhyming skills of deaf children educated with phonologically augmented speechreading.* Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 53A, 349-375

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Access to full language

Parents who bring their child up with Cued Speech (CS) are, just like the parents of hearing children, able to surround them with a language-rich English-based environment and one complete with stories and rhymes.

Through CS deaf children can learn and understand the whole of the English language, acquired naturally, day-to-day in the same way as hearing children acquire language – but visually. Because CS conveys whole language sound-for-sound by clarifying the ambiguous lip-patterns of speech it also gives access to the individual 'sounds', or phonemes, which make up language. Deaf children who have had access to Cued Speech can then bring their understanding of language to learning to read; they can make the association between the words they already know and the sounds these words contain.

Hearing children acquire their understanding of language through listening to the speech of others – which is made up of sounds.

Deaf children brought up with CS acquire their understanding of language through watching the cued speech of others – which is made up of the sound-based cues.

Deaf children brought up with CS and hearing children can both bring the same skills to learning to read.

It is not surprising therefore that research shows that children brought up with CS have reading levels which equal those of hearing children and that they learn to read using the same phonetic techniques.

For a summary of research compiled by Kelly Lamar Crain, Ph.D. The University of South Florida , go to the CSAUK website.

A parent writes:

"Our son is now 14 years old, and was diagnosed profoundly deaf at 9 months. Hearing aids didn't seem to help and MRI scans revealed that he had no auditory nerve on one side, and very little, if any, on the other. With lengthy assessment for a cochlear implant (CI) underway with no guarantees of the likely outcome, we faced the very difficult challenge of how to support his language and communication skills through his vision alone……..'

'It seemed unbelievable and miraculous to us that we could cue to him nonsense words, silly sounds, nursery rhymes, read stories to him, chat to him, to say to him whatever we liked in English with every bit of syntax, grammar and vocabulary fully, simply and easily represented as though speaking normally. In fact, after only one week of CS training, we were capable of cueing perfectly and accurately every single one of the 30,000 or so words in our own vocabulary and any word or phrase ever published or spoken in the English language – something that wouldn't be even remotely possible for us in BSL even after a lifetime of immersion in sign language. The discovery of CS and what it could do for our son and for us as a family was profoundly liberating and life-changing, and continues to be thirteen years down the line....'

'He took very easily to reading and writing – more easily than many of his hearing peers – perhaps helped by already having a visual phonic 'map' in his head from his early exposure to CS. By Year 2/3, he was using spoken English as his first language; by age 6 he had a reading age of 10; he achieved Level 4/5s in his English SATs in Year 6; and now, at 14, he has a reading age of 16+.'"

Name available on request.

Where can I learn more?

The book **'Cued Speech and Cued Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children'** (2010), LaSasso, Crain & Leyaert (available from Amazon) has forty two international contributors (including 25 professors or assistant or associate professors) and draws on twenty years of international research to inform the four chapters which are devoted to the effects of CS use on the development of reading. Included in the chapters are theory and research around reading in the narrow sense (de-coding), in a broader context (comprehension), phonological awareness, short-term memory, and rhyming ability.

Also relevant is a chapter entitled 'Experiences and perceptions of cueing deaf adults in the US', a survey which gives insights into the achievements and opinions of 32 deaf adults brought up with Cued Speech – including the fact that 31 of them reported finding the English language subjects 'easy' in elementary school.

For more information about the book referred to above go to: http://www.cuedspeech.org.uk/uploads/documents/New%20Cued%20Speech%20Book.pdf. It can be bought from Amazon.