

Achieving Success

Personal experiences with Cued Speech Cued Speech Outcomes



Anne Worsfold, parent of two deaf children (now adults) and Director of the Cued Speech Association UK writes:

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I was at a meeting a couple of years ago and a professional working in a school for the deaf told the rest of the meeting that they had used CS once a week for a whole session [less than a couple of hours] for over a term but that “the kids just didn’t get it; it didn’t work. It doesn’t suit some children.” She was apparently expecting that in that time-frame these deaf children would understand English. Imagine applying that logic to a hearing baby; talk to the baby once a week for 13 weeks for a couple of hours at a time and assume they ‘don’t get it’ and can’t communicate in English? So stop talking to them! The hearing baby would probably be taken into care!

This really brought home to me the fact that some people label CS a failure on entirely incorrect assumptions and that the use of Cued Speech to deliver whole language early and consistently should not be confused with its intermittent use at an older age or on a non-language level.

Don’t get me wrong: using CS later or for limited purposes can be very useful but it will not deliver the same outcomes as using it to clarify all language, consistently and in a time-frame comparable to hearing children.

So I’ve jotted down some notes about the different ways CS is used, why and what to expect:

The system of Cued Speech can be used in different ways from giving full access to language to occasional use for a specific purpose. Its use will vary:

- over time, e.g. lessening as a child matures and becomes more language-competent
- according to situations, e.g. sometimes just clarifying a word where the rest of the sentence was well known and easily lip-read; other times giving full language access.

Also the aims of the person using it may also be very different. They may aim to use it:

- to support language acquisition in the home from diagnosis (either monolingually to support oral language acquisition or with BSL). When used at a language level it can then be referred to as cued language.
- with BSL for older children who do not have any intact language (yet) – in this case it may be learnt together with written language.
- to meet a specific purpose, e.g. to teach phonics or the phonetic composition of a word – (although teaching phonics is of very limited use unless the deaf child also has a knowledge of sound-based language – which can be acquired through Cued Speech).

The results will vary according to the use. It will not give deaf children a full understanding of the whole of the English language if it is used for only a few hours a week. Also although it can be invaluable for phonics lessons, if it’s **only** used for phonics then that’s where the deaf child’s understanding will stop. The use of Cued Speech to deliver whole language early and consistently should not be confused with its intermittent use at an older age or its use on a non-language level – these will give different outcomes.

Cued Speech will give access to full language whenever hearing parents and teachers use it to clarify full language. Whilst it can deliver huge improvements in understanding of English when used at any age, it can be hard to catch up if used late. I have been involved in CS now for nearly 30 years and whenever I’ve seen it used consistently in the early years it has been 100% successful. In these early years the language-learning window is fully open and children are given an intact language in which to think and, as our case studies show, a very easy way into written English.

So my advice would be: for best results, talk to a deaf child as you would to a hearing child and use Cued Speech at the same time to guarantee that the whole of the English language is accessible.

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

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

