

Achieving Success

Personal experiences with Cued Speech Cued Speech in Education



Daniel Koo, now an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Gallaudet University, was exposed to Cued Speech at a late stage. In the American magazine, 'Volta Voices', published in 1994, a young Daniel shared his experiences on how Cued Speech helped him achieve his potential. After this publication, Daniel went on to achieve a highly respected and renowned career in the field of Psychology, with interests in adult language processing of cued and signed languages, the effect of modality on language processing and cognition, and the acquisition of cued and signed languages.

“ On the first day of school in September, 1982, I walked into a mainstreamed fifth grade class with a Cued Speech Transliterator (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 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



>> *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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