

The Cued Speech Association UK

Telephone 01803 712853
email info@cuedspeech.co.uk

Background information on Cued Speech for examination candidates taking the Certificate of Proficiency in Cued Speech, Level 1

What is Cued Speech?

Cued Speech is a simple sound-based system which uses eight handshapes in four different positions ('cues') in combination with the natural mouth movements of speech, to make all the sounds of the English language look different and clearly understandable to hearing-impaired people of all ages.

Cued Speech is a phonemic language tool which provides a dependable visual code of all the individual and combined sounds of speech, such as syllables, in face-to-face verbal communication in the real time of speech, for use with and by totally and profoundly deaf people. Originally devised for use with profoundly deaf children, it has been beneficial to people of all ages with any type and degree of hearing loss.

It is based upon the hypothesis that if the profoundly deaf child could see every sound-based unit of language as it is spoken, as clearly as a hearing person can hear every sound, then they could acquire an understanding of spoken language through the eyes instead of through the ears. Because Cued Speech clarifies all the 'sounds' of spoken language and removes all ambiguities in lipreading, hearing-impaired people who have residual hearing can also benefit from Cued Speech by seeing sounds that they cannot see or discriminate due to the gaps in their auditory reception. In other words they are able to benefit from Cued Speech by encoding and decoding sounds of speech correctly, which they as individuals would not otherwise recognise due to the personal nature of their hearing loss.

Cued Speech is not a philosophy and is compatible with both oralism and manualism. The word 'speech' in its title means spoken language in its broadest sense, based on the concepts of sounds of speech and language structures. Cued Speech has been adapted for use with 64 languages or dialects to-date.

Background to the Introduction of Cued Speech

Cued Speech was devised in 1966 by Dr R Orin Cornett while he was Vice-President of Long Range Planning (from 1965 to 1975) at Gallaudet College (now University), Washington DC. Until his death in December 2002, Dr Cornett was Professor Emeritus of Audiology at Gallaudet University where he served as Director of the Cued Speech Programs from 1975 to 1984.

Prior to taking up his position at Gallaudet he held several positions in the United States Office of Education. He held a degree in Physics and Applied Mathematics from the University of Texas and was the recipient of several honorary degrees. Dr Cornett adapted Cued Speech into 58 languages and dialects and created instruction material in over 30 languages before his death. He received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Council on Communication Disorders, USA, in 1992. He was the co-author, with Mary Elsie Daisey, M.Ed, of *The Cued Speech Resource Book for Parents of Deaf Children* published by The National Association for Cued Speech, USA (1992: ISBN 0-9633164-0-0).

The introduction of Cued Speech into the United Kingdom and the establishment of The National Centre for Cued Speech

In 1970 Dr Cornett gave a talk on Cued Speech at the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Stockholm. As a result of this, Cued Speech was introduced into schools for the deaf in every state in Australia. Mrs Winifred Tumim, now Lady Tumim, went to Gallaudet College to learn Cued Speech from Dr Cornett and, with him, adapted it into Standard English. She then taught it to June Dixon, now June Dixon-Millar, who used it from 1971 to instruct Mrs Tumim's daughter and other deaf children. Encouraged by the increased ease of communication combined with the rapid acquisition of vocabulary and linguistic acceleration, and rapid growth in reading ability of her pupils, June Dixon sought assistance to establish The National Centre for Cued Speech in 1975.

The National Centre for Cued Speech was officially opened by Jack Ashley, CH, MP (now Lord Ashley) when it was generously launched and incorporated into KIDS for a 2-3 year period, the registered charity for children with a disability. The National Centre for Cued Speech became an independent charity in 1980 as a result of the growing interest in Cued Speech. The Centre helped to establish Cued Speech in a number of overseas countries and made adaptations of Cued Speech into several languages with the assistance of Dr Cornett.

In the mid 80's the National Centre for Cued Speech was moved from London to Canterbury in Kent, where The Centre provided an excellent venue for courses in Cued Speech and a base for visitors from the Continent. The work of The National Centre for Cued Speech was recognised by The Commission of Enquiry into Human Aids to Communication in 1992. This recommended that Cued Speech Translitterators should be trained and certified and that they should receive equal status and remuneration as Sign Language Interpreters, and also that they should have equal status to other Human Aids to Communication.

In 1999 the Centre moved to Devon with Anne Worsfold as Executive Director and was renamed the Cued Speech Association UK to reflect the fact that the new registered office is used for administration and not as a teaching centre. Training courses are held, whenever and wherever they are required, using external facilities.

The aims and objectives of Cued Speech

Cued Speech was specifically designed to overcome the following problems encountered by a large majority of deaf children:

- the problem of limited communication in the early years, resulting in retarded personality development and delayed social maturation
- the lack of basic language skills with which to learn to read.
- the problem of delayed acquisition of verbal language development
- failure to acquire an accurate mental model of spoken language. Such a model is indispensable for accurate speech patterns as well as for maximum development of speed reading ability
- the lack of a convenient method of clear communication in the classroom and elsewhere for use in instruction, for clearing up misunderstandings, and for clarifying pronunciation.

Cued Speech was not devised to teach deaf children speech and articulation *per se*. However, teachers of the deaf, and speech therapists, have found it a very useful supportive tool as they use the cues as analogies for speech sounds in their teaching of speech with both deaf children and with children who have speech and language difficulties. The speech of many, though not all, deaf children is improved with Cued Speech. It very much depends at what age the deaf child is introduced to speech and how it is used with them. However, most profoundly deaf children, including those who do not have clear speech, attain high levels of inner language and literacy.

Cued Speech facilitates the growth of unrestricted oral vocabulary, conversational fluency and with this, the opportunity to communicate by spoken language within technical and specialised areas which have a more specialised vocabulary. Dr Cornett designed Cued Speech in such a way that the basic skills can be learnt within twenty hours by average parents without making unreasonable demands upon them. Young profoundly deaf children acquire the skills of Cued Speech, vocabulary and syntax by absorbing them, without tuition, thus releasing their parents from being language teachers. Deaf children over the age of six years require instruction in the skills of Cued Speech in order to decrease their linguistic retardation gap and to go on to attain the language levels equivalent to their hearing peers. The Cued Speech Association instructs both deaf and hearing people on the same courses.

Points borne in mind by Dr Cornett when he devised Cued Speech

Cued Speech had to:

- be an oral language tool
- make clear all the elements of spoken language, phonemes, syllables, duration stress, intonation and rhythm in the time of speech. It also shows dialects
- be able to be learnt by deaf and hearing adults without making unreasonable demands upon them
- be absorbed by young deaf children through observation without formal instruction.

How does Cued Speech achieve its results?

The basic rule of Cued Speech is that words are cued as they are pronounced and not as they are written.

Twelve cues are used. Cues for groups of vowel sounds which look alike to the lip reader such as - /ee/, /e/, /i/ and /ur/ are placed in four different positions near the mouth: respectively at the side of the lips, on the chin, at the throat and at the side of the jaw. Similarly, cues for two other groups of vowels are placed in the same positions thus focusing the attention of the lipreader on both the cues and the lips. Eight handshapes each represent on average three consonant sounds. The consonant sounds that look alike on the lips look different on the hands and the group of consonants of each handshape look different on the lips. This may sound complicated on paper but when it is demonstrated it is simple and clear. The combination of the visual information on the lips and that on the accompanying handshape makes each spoken sound instantly recognisable.

Similarly, spoken syllables that look alike such as /ma/, /ba/, /pa/ are clarified when a consonant handshape is placed at one of the vowel positions. Isolated syllables are virtually impossible to lipread because they are either hidden in the mouth cavity or they look like other syllables. When the appropriate cues (mouth patterns combined with the relevant handshapes) are added, they immediately become distinguishable. Because of this nothing is left to chance.

The lip-patterns should never be over-emphasised. This is because one of the objectives of Cued Speech is to train the deaf person to be able to lip-read the natural speech patterns of hearing people. However, full use of speech-reading, body language, facial expression and natural gesture are essential. Hearing-impaired people using Cued Speech should also continue to make the maximum use of their hearing aid.

The success of Cued Speech

Cued Speech is a verbal language tool. This is made evident by the title given to it in the French-speaking countries of Belgium, France and Switzerland where it is known as Langage Parlé Complété, The complete spoken language (of Cued Speech devised by Dr R Orin Cornett).

Cued Speech has been adapted into Standard English, Scottish English, Welsh English and Northern Ireland English. It is used around the United Kingdom by parents, teachers and other professionals to help deaf children, hearing children with speech and language difficulties, and hearing-impaired and deafblind children and adults. Profoundly deaf pupils raised with Cued Speech in the UK have taken degrees in Maths, Physics, Computer Studies, Aeronautical Engineering and Foreign Languages among other subjects.

Practical evidence based on tests and research has been forthcoming over the years and has proved that Dr Cornett's aim of alleviating problems encountered previously by the deaf can be and is being achieved, namely:

- that Cued Speech is an effective system for the development of verbal language in deaf children (M. Peterson, 1991).
- that profoundly deaf children accustomed to Cued Speech receive spoken language at a very high level of accuracy which is comparable to that of children with normal hearing (Nicholls, 1979).
- that Cued Speech allows deaf children to apply similar skills to hearing children to decode and encode oral and written material when learning to read. Hearing children who are successful readers are able to have 'phonological access' to written words and are able to code and decode words based on how they sound. Cued Speech gives deaf children this kind of access as each sound within a word is represented by the combination of cues and lipshapes. This means that deaf children can sound-out words they do not know and also to work out how to spell new words that they have seen cued (J. Alegria et al. 1988).
- that the reading comprehension levels of profoundly deaf children who have grown up with Cued Speech in the home can be on the same level as those of hearing children (Jean E Wandel, 1989).
- that profoundly deaf children with whom Cued Speech is used can think in the spoken language of hearing society (J. Leybaert et al. 1996).

Information about this and other research can be obtained from www.cuedspeech.co.uk

The use of Cued Speech at home and at school

It is obviously highly beneficial that parents should use Cued Speech with their deaf children from as early an age as possible. This is not only for communication purposes within the family but also to provide their deaf children with a broad vocabulary and sound basis of language structures with which to start their schooling. Their children will be in a stronger position to continue to develop linguistically and academically at school, and even more so if the school also uses Cued Speech. The use of Cued Speech relieves stress in communication, enhances comprehension, enables lessons to be taught in the same time as those given to hearing children, enables unrestricted language to be used and develops confidence in deaf children in their ability to succeed. If Cued Speech has not been used by parents of a deaf child in their home, the school should still use it to gain the benefits just stated and vice-versa.

Once a deaf child has acquired facility with spoken language, he or she acquire a greater ability to lip-read people who do not cue because they have inner language with which to reason and deep awareness of the sound formations within words and the structure of language. Cued Speech need not be used continually if this is so. However, it will still be essential to the introduction and re-

enforcement of new vocabulary, speech correction and the clarification of verbal misunderstandings.

Cued Speech Transliterators

A Cued Speech Transliterator is someone who has attained a high standard of cueing ability and who is able to faithfully repeat and cue all the verbal proceedings in such situations as in the home, in classrooms, lectures, conferences, church services, medical examinations and court-room settings. This enables deaf people to 'see', follow and understand every sound of every word in the time in which it is spoken as clearly and as dependably as a fully hearing person can 'hear' every sound within every word. This has never been possible in the past.

Cued Speech Transliterators are being used in mainstream schools by some Education Authorities. At present there are no examinations leading to the certification of Cued Speech Transliterators in the UK.

Cued Speech use with hearing children who have speech and language difficulties

Northern Ireland has set an example by using Cued Speech with hearing children who have a wide range of communication problems, as it provides visual clues and kinaesthetic recall for those who have difficulty processing sounds.

Cued Speech and cochlear implants

In the United States of America cochlear implants were first provided for people who once had hearing, and who, therefore, had a knowledge of sounds of speech. The second group to receive cochlear implants were deaf people who were familiar with Cued Speech because they too have an internalised knowledge of speech sounds. French research indicates that 'the more the young deaf child has developed oral communication by the visual channel (Cued Speech) prior to implantation, the more analysis of phonetic and linguistic elements by auditory means will occur rapidly after implantation'.

Summary

All this confirms what those who have used Cued Speech extensively are already aware of: that Cued Speech primes the process of verbal language acquisition, and of reading, speaking and lipreading. Cued Speech will enable many deaf children to be integrated into hearing schools and colleges with the ability to communicate through the medium of language as spoken and written by hearing society. It will enable a considerable number of them to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, including that of learning a second language. This can be seen in French-speaking children who are able to learn spoken and written English, in addition to their mother tongue, which is an essential requirement of the Baccalauréat exam.

For further information about Cued Speech at home and at school see the booklet "An introduction to Cued Speech" available from CSAUK or download from our website "Publicity and resources – information about Cued Speech".

The services of the Cued Speech Association UK

The Association provides information, advice, speakers, instructors and learning materials on Cued Speech:

1. Instruction Programmes

Courses in Cued Speech at Foundation, Improvers and Advanced levels are regularly conducted at locations around the country. Basic skills in Cued Speech are learnt within 20 hours. Teaching materials and a free to use e-learning website (www.learntocue.co.uk) are also available. An accompanying free e-learning booklet is available from the Cued Speech office on request.

2. Certificate of Proficiency in Cued Speech, Levels 1 and 2

The Level 1 Certificate of Proficiency requires the candidate to have accurate cueing skills, the ability to be able to read back (cueread) the cueing of another person and a fundamental theoretical understanding of Cued Speech.

Level 2 requires that the candidate can cue with greater speed and fluency than at Level 1, cueread more complex language, and be able to speak with authority on Cued Speech.

3. Information

The Association makes use of research, case studies and articles to compile printed information which is then made available free of charge to all enquirers and to other organisations. It also sells books and videos about Cued Speech. In addition the Association attends exhibitions in order to increase awareness of the benefits of Cued Speech.

Further Information

Please contact the Cued Speech Association UK for any further information that you may require.

Cued Speech Association UK
The Forces, Forces Cross, Blackawton, Devon
Anne Worsfold
Executive Director

Updated in July 2009.

References and further reading:

Conrad, R. *The Deaf School Child*, 1979.

Nicholls, Gaye, *Cued Speech and the Reception of Spoken Language*, School of Human Communication Disorders, McGill University, 1979.

Cornett, R Orin. *Four Milestones*, 1989.

Alegria, J., DeJean, C., Capouillez, J.M., & Leybaert, J. *The Role Played by Cued Speech in the Identification of Written Words Encountered for the First Time by Deaf Children*, Annual meeting of Belgian Psychological Society, 1989.

Wandel, Jean E. *Cued Speech Centre Lines* (Cued Speech Centre Inc., Raleigh, N Carolina, Vol VI, Nos. 2 and 3, Oct 1989 and Jan 1990).

Choices in Deafness: A Parents' Guide to Communication Options, Edited by Sue Schwartz, Published by Woodbine House 1996

The Cued Speech Resource Book For Parents of Deaf Children by R Orin Cornett, Ph.D. and Mary Elsie Daisey, M.Ed.