

Language & communication; literacy & phonics

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The workshop had two complementary themes:

1. Language and communication: Research and case studies from the US and Europe provide further proof that the system of Cued Speech – used in day-to-day communication by hearing family members - will give deaf babies and children access to grammar, vocabulary and syntax of the English language.
2. Literacy and phonics: The workshop also looked at the classroom use of Cued Speech for literacy.

Language and Communication.

After 40 years Cued Speech is still misunderstood even by some teachers and many find it hard to explain to parents. With research showing that with Cued Speech lip-reading is 96% accurate it's obvious that it gives access to every phoneme of English. But it's hard to make the mental leap to realising that it therefore gives access to the whole of language.

This might help explain Cued Speech to parents:

- speech is not language – a parrot can speak; but has no language.
- language is what we think in, but it doesn't have to be 'sounds in our head'; sounds are not necessary for language.
- speech, in English, is made up of just 44 phonemes; Cued Speech, in English, is made up of the same 44 phonemes.
- speech is an audible phonetic 'code' for spoken language and through it language can be learned.
- Cued Speech is a visual phonetic 'code' for spoken language and through it language can be learned.

So many hearing parents are encouraged to 'just communicate' and whilst communication is a vital first step it is not language. Cued Speech gives a tool to communicate – but through complete language; the English language that hearing parents already know.

There is a large body of research which shows its effectiveness. Professor Kelly Crain of the University of South Florida, referred to just some of the research when he wrote:

'Deaf children of hearing parents who cue their native spoken language have been found to develop that language according to the same milestones as hearing peers (Kipila, 1985; Anthony, Moseley, & Williams-Scott, 1991; Metzger, 1994). Hearing parents can learn to cue at a rate and accuracy level sufficient to deliver linguistically complex information to their deaf children within 2-3 months of learning the system (Torres, Moreno-Torres, & Santana, 2006). Deaf children exposed to multiple languages by fluent models of those languages can develop both languages and become bilingual in a fashion similar to hearing children (Earl, 2006). Cueing provides children with access to complete language, including such function words as prepositions, often missed by deaf children from

other communication backgrounds (Santana, R., Torres, S., & Garcia, J. (2003). Indeed, deaf children whose parents and teachers cue (and/or who work with skilled transliterators) have been found to develop the written forms of spoken languages in ways similar to hearing children of hearing parents (Cornett, 1990; Leybaert & Alegria, 1993; Leybaert, Alegria, & Foncke, 1983; Perier, Charlier, Hage, & Alegria, 1988).’

A new case study adds a further dimension to our understanding of Cued Speech. In a second-generation cueing family the deaf twins of deaf cueing parents reached normal English language milestones from birth to 18 months despite ‘minimal and inconsistent’ hearing aid use. They were implanted at 18 months. When they were four years and eight days their Test of Early Reading Assessment (TERA-3) found Hearing Age Equivalents of between 4 years 3 months and 6 years 4 months, an average of just over 5 years Hearing Age Equivalent – a full one year ahead of their chronological age. The case study is included in the new book: ‘Cued Speech and Cued Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children’ edited by Carol J LaSasso, Ph.D. Kelly Lamar Crain Ph.D. and Jacqueline Leybaert Ph.D.

Literacy and Phonics

The huge advantage of Cued Speech over any system of visual phonics is that it works at a language level AND at a phoneme level.

If deaf children who have been brought up with Cued Speech are taught phonics (using Cued Speech) they can make the connections between the words they know and the phonemes that the words consist of. They can learn to read as easily as hearing children and case studies show remarkable progress. As one cueing parent wrote: ‘When X 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. X 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.’

Cued Speech can also be used to teach phonics to children who have not had early access to cued language and work at Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (ERADE) showed huge progress with minimal input. An unpublished study of 6 sign language-using Deaf children (between 7 and 14 years, with very little English and 5 with additional problems, some very significant) found, after between 28 and 114 hours of exposure to Cued Speech in total:

- Attitude to English: all improved significantly (e.g. from ‘strongly disagreeing to ‘liking English’ to agreeing to ‘liking English’)
- Lipreading: improved by 66%
- Lip-pattern production: improved by between 23% and 73% (e.g. from 0 to 32 of the 44 phonemes and from 12 to 43 of 44 phonemes)
- Literacy: improved by an average of 6 months
- Phonetic awareness: improved by between 2 months and 6 years 5 months.

If you want to use Cued Speech to teach phonics take advantage of the free THRASS Phoneme Machine with Cued Speech option downloadable from

www.thrass.co.uk/teaching.htm. It teaches the 44 phonemes and 120 main spelling choices of English using 500 key words which are spoken, written and cued.

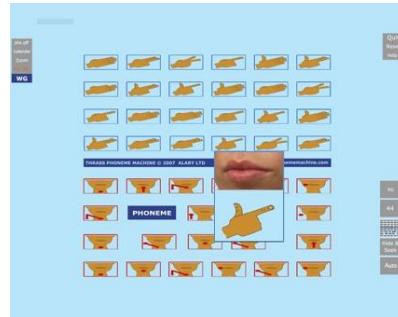
There are three main sections - all of which have a Cued Speech option.

1) Calendar (see **below/opposite**)

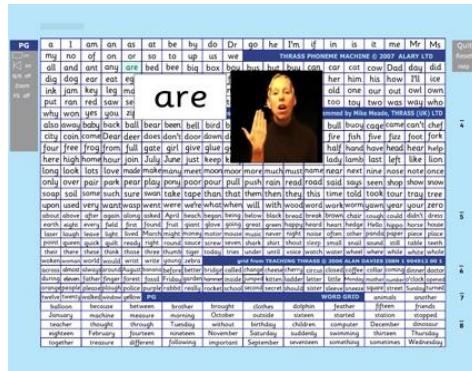


Clicking on each word in the calendar produces either a spoken or a cued version of the word – ideal for learning to read whole words. As shown above, it covers the days, dates, months, numbers, colours and letter names.

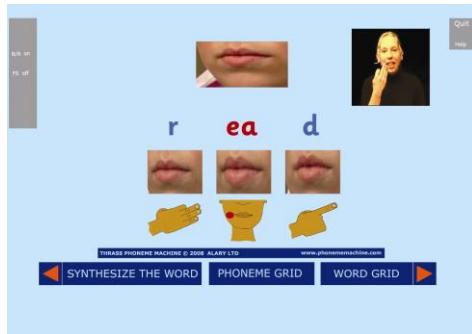
2) The Phoneme Grid has videos of moving lips pronouncing all the 44 phonemes of English – in the order of the THRASS charts. In the Cued Speech option (**below/opposite**) the videos of the lips are larger and the handshapes and positions of Cued Speech are added.



3) The Word Grid (**below/opposite**) which shows all the 500 key words – all of which have a spoken version and a video of the cued word.



Double clicking on a word on the Word Grid opens a new page (**below/opposite**) with videos of the phonemes, and videos of the whole word both spoken and cued.



More information?

The Cued Speech Association UK is a national charity which provides information about and training in Cued Speech. They offer face-to-face tuition, e-learning or a combination of both. Their annual Devon Summer Camp combines learning with a holiday.

Cued Speech uses eight handshapes in four positions near the mouth to clarify the lip-patterns of normal speech. It takes about 20 hours of study to learn the system; more practice is needed to become fluent.

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