



Bilingualism – American Sign Language and Cued English

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

The National Cued Speech Association (NCSA) recognizes the advantages of bilingualism in English and American Sign Language (ASL) for many people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The NCSA promotes the use of Cued Speech for the development of English language and literacy for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. A visual understanding of the phonemic structure of English, as well as its vocabulary and syntax, is critically needed as the foundation for reading and writing before a child begins elementary school. The development of receptive and expressive English through cued English using the system of Cued Speech should occur at the earliest possible age. Using cued English consistently and accurately allows children to acquire English naturally in everyday meaningful communication interaction and discourse.

The use of Cued American English (CAE) and ASL are not mutually exclusive. These separate and distinct languages can both be used at school, home, work, and in various social settings, depending on the user's preference. Unlike manually-coded English sign systems (MCE), CAE provides direct, clear, and complete visual access to English, thus keeping and conveying the multi-faceted components of the English language intact. Using Cued Speech to convey English similarly protects American Sign Language because it allows ASL to be rendered in its intact form as a language with its own grammar that is distinct from English. Conveying English through cued language and ASL through signed language separately and distinctly from each other allows for maintaining the integrity of each language, thus providing significantly enhanced visual access to both the languages for children who are deaf/hard of hearing. By using cues for English and signs for ASL, the distinction between the two languages is made completely clear.

The NCSA invites and encourages a continuing dialogue on bilingualism with and among the various organizations advocating for people who are deaf/hard of hearing.

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