



Cued Speech and Literacy

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

Literacy is the ability to proficiently read and write the print code of a corresponding spoken language, allowing one to understand and communicate complex ideas in a literate society. In English, the consonant-vowel print code for reading and writing represents the same consonant-vowel phonemic structure traditionally conveyed through spoken English. (At this writing, Cued Speech has been adapted to 70 languages and major dialects. This paper refers to English literacy; however, this principle applies to the use of Cued Speech with any spoken language.) The NCSA believes that the ability to comprehend and express oneself in the written language of one's country at a proficient level is critical to an individual's quality of life and self-esteem. Literacy provides increased access to educational options and career choices, as well as better employability, economic and social freedom, and full participation within society.

Many children who are deaf/hard of hearing without full access to spoken language have historically achieved literacy levels far below those of children with normal hearing. This results from a lack of full auditory access to *all* the phonemes (sounds that are building blocks) of spoken language. Without access to and fluency in all components comprising a language, many children who are deaf/hard of hearing cannot perform the multi-faceted and complex language processing functions required to be a proficient reader and writer. When Dr. R. Orin Cornett developed Cued Speech in 1966, his primary purpose was to create a visual system that would enable a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to clearly and unambiguously access spoken language visually in order to unlock that person's full potential to achieve literacy.

Literacy is dependent on having intact knowledge and proficiency in the language represented by the print code for that language. A child's English language level is the *foundation* which must first be intact before reading skills can ever be expected to develop fully. Language acquisition is most critical during a child's first three years, making parents the best early language models. Ideally, a child's first language should be the parents/primary caregivers' primary language(s); a parent/primary caregiver cannot learn another language rapidly enough to provide a proficient model in a new language. A parent/primary caregiver's primary language can be either spoken or signed language. A child's access to the parents/primary caregivers' native language allows for the natural acquisition of complete language and subsequent literacy skills through meaningful, age-appropriate parent-child interactions.

The Cued Speech system enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to visually acquire English (or another traditionally spoken language), including its phonemic structure, grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic usage. Cueing language in communication interactions consistently, referred to as cued English or cued language, at home and/or school, allows for internalization of the language and facilitates communication, vocabulary, language skill development, and interaction with equal ease among people who are hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing. Thus, cued language at home and/or at school gives deaf and hard of hearing children *clear and complete visual access* to the same language foundation that typically-hearing children access auditorily, and that is essential for development of proficiency in reading and writing.



Maximum attainment of proficiency in language and literacy depends on consistent and accurate use of cued language by family members, educators, and other supporting professionals. Use of cued language is most effective when begun at the time of early identification that a child is deaf/hard of hearing and when the following occur where a spoken or cued language is the native home language:

- The family uses cued language to provide the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing with visual access to the traditionally spoken language(s) of the home and to meaningful environmental sounds that others hear. (“Family” includes any long-term caregivers for young children.)
- A child’s educational program is accessed via teachers and service providers who always use cued language. If they do not cue or are not proficient cuers, a qualified cued language transliterator service should be provided. Transl iterators facilitate communication and learning, and also provide access to auditory environmental information.

When the language of the home is a signed language, Cued Speech may be provided in childcare/preschool/elementary school settings by native users of the spoken language. This provides complete visual access to the spoken language foundation necessary for becoming a proficient reader and writer.

Cued language using the system of Cued Speech can be effectively implemented in conjunction with listening and spoken language approaches and/or sign communication modes. As a multisensory supplement or reinforcement of auditory input, cued language can also be used to develop language and literacy skills in children with a wide variety of learning needs.

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