



## Understanding Cueing

By Amy Ruberl and Hilary Franklin

National Cued Speech Association, April 2022



You may have seen the terms *Cued Speech*, *cued language*, *Cued American English*, and *cueing*. But what do they really mean? Are they all the same thing? Well, yes...sort of.

### Cued Speech

Let's start with the term *Cued Speech*. Cued Speech was developed in the mid-1960s at Gallaudet College (now University) by Dr. Orin Cornett to make the *phonemes* of spoken English visible to deaf and hard-of-hearing children—and enable real-time communication—between parents and their children (and between teachers and students). (*In very general terms, phonemes are the building blocks of any language; in English, these are the consonants and vowels that can be combined to create syllables and words.*)

A cue is a handshape or hand placement in combination with the corresponding mouth shape that visually represents a consonant or vowel. When you combine cues with information on the mouth, every phoneme of a consonant-vowel language is conveyed visually. This means that cues work hand-in-hand (pun intended!) with spoken languages.

In the beginning, Dr. Cornett envisioned parents and teachers using cues in tandem with speech, which is why he named the system Cued Speech. However, is speech required when you cue? No, it's not! Can it be of help? Yes, especially for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who may benefit from acoustic input.

### Cued Language

When cues are complemented by facial grammar (expressions) and head and body positions/movements in communication, a complete visual language is conveyed: *cued language*. Cued languages follow the phonemic and syntactic linguistic rules of the corresponding spoken language by using mouth shapes and cues to visually represent consonants and vowels. This means that cued languages can be cued with or without voice.

For example, in English, we make nouns plural by adding phonemes to the end of the root word. We add /s/ to *cat* to make *cats*. We add /z/ to *dog* to make *dogs*. We add /iz/ to *fox* to make *foxes*.



And sometimes we change the word completely, as in *goose* and *geese*. When cueing English, these same rules apply.

In *spoken languages*, such as English, pitch, rhythm, and loudness indicate vital information—is the speaker asking a question, telling a joke, or making a statement? In cued languages, such as *Cued American English*, similar information is conveyed with a variety of visual indicators similar to those used in signed languages (e.g., facial expression, eyebrow movements, forcefulness of cues, and head thrusts). Native cuers (deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing) do not require the auditory information of spoken utterances to fully receive language. Further, deaf and hard-of-hearing native cuers tend to focus on the cues to understand the message, even when they wear hearing devices. A cued language provides all the linguistic components required to develop fluency. Children learn cued languages just as they would spoken or signed languages—through exposure and consistent language modeling.

Did you know that there are multiple cued languages and dialects around the world? If you want to learn more, check out Académie Internationale sur les Adaptations du «Cued» (AISAC) at <https://www.academieinternationale.org/>. AISAC is an international collaboration between the national cueing organizations of France, the United States, England, and Switzerland.

## **Cued American English**

Cued American English is a cued language that is a form of American English. Not all languages have the same phonemes (consonants and vowels). For example, English languages in other English-speaking countries (e.g., England and Australia) have phonemic differences from American English. When we discuss Cued American English, we are referring to the cued version of English used in the United States—a complete, visual language. The term “Cued American English” (CAE) captures the totality of the visual language and has cultural and legal considerations.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who receive Cued American English develop an internal understanding of American English comparable to their hearing peers, which enables them to learn to read, write, and communicate in American English. For some, Cued American English also aids in the development of American English speech and listening skills as they are able to visually see otherwise indistinguishable phonemes to match cued words to their corresponding spoken words. Children will also develop the same dialect/accents as their parents who cue!

## **Cueing and Cuers**

*Cueing* is a general verb that represents the act of using cues to convey a complete visual language with or without the use of speech. *Cuers* are people who cue expressively and/or receive cues receptively. Cuers can be deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing.

For the 90 percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing children with hearing parents, cueing at home can provide clear, direct, visual access to the parents’ language(s), laying the foundation for family communication and, subsequently, literacy development.



## Cueing Terminology

Below is a guide to using cueing-related terminology:

Incorrect Terminology Use	Correct Terminology Use
Cued Speech is their mode of communication.	<i>Cueing</i> is their mode of communication. They are cueing.
Their native language is Cued Speech.	Their native language is Cued [insert language]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their native language is <i>Cued American English</i>.</li> <li>• Their native language is <i>Cued Spanish</i>.</li> <li>• Their native language is <i>Cued Hebrew</i>.</li> </ul>
They use Cued Speech to communicate.	They use cues to communicate. They cue to communicate.

## More Information

To learn more about cueing, we recommend the following resources:

- The National Cued Speech Association  
<https://cuedspeech.org/>
- *Giving language a helping hand*, Cathy Rasmussen, TEDxFlourCity  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4KQfepEqWQ>
- *Cued Speech* (a mini-documentary)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plPw4H-ZsMg&t=6s>
- *Cued Speech and the Development of Reading in English: Examining the Evidence*; Beverly J. Trezek, *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Vol. 22, Issue 4, October 2017; <https://academic.oup.com/jdsde/article/22/4/349/4079921>