

American Sign Language and Cued Languages: Partners in Bilingualism

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Babies are born ready to learn

- Babies are born seeking visual information to match what they have heard and felt for the last 3 months in-utero
- All babies are born with a feature detector system for auditory information
- Infants show indications of speechreading abilities at the age of 5 months by noticing the correspondence of words and the movements of the mouth
- Babies remember what they heard in-utero, especially pitch and intonation information
- They respond to motherese around 5 weeks of age

The effects of a hearing loss

- Some babies are born with normal hearing and lose their hearing after birth for medical or health reasons but they still have memories of sound
- Some babies are born deaf or hard of hearing and are more reliant on visual information to process their world as their brains have been routing auditory information to the visual cortex

Making choices

- As soon as a hearing loss is diagnosed, parents begin the process of exploring communication choices plus considering whether to use amplification or pursue cochlear implants to provide access to language for their child
- They seek support from service providers and experts who will listen to their needs

Bilingual parents are usually hearing and speaking

- Choices are made by the child's parents about how to convey the languages of the home
- Families need information, resources, and full and consistent support from the many service providers working with their child who is deaf or hard of hearing

Bilingualism has many forms:

- Parents may be hearing and each use their own native cued (spoken) language (Dutch, Spanish)
- Parents may be Deaf and use different sign language systems (ASL and BSL)
- Parents may be deaf and cue in different languages
- One parent may be Deaf and sign, the other may be hearing and cue (or visa versa)

Advantages to being bilingual:

- Flexible thinking
- Additional vocabulary knowledge
- Increased cognitive function
- Diverse cultural awareness
- Codeswitching between two (or more) languages

Children need natural exposure to both languages from native users

- Children with hearing loss are fully capable of learning two languages simultaneously from birth
- Best if each parent uses their native language (system) to separate the languages and cultures for their child

What is ASL?

- American Sign Language is a 200 year old system of visual/gestural communication
- Uses a spatial structure consisting of the grammatical units of handshape, movement, palm orientation, and direction
- Speech is not used
- Check out: www.nad.org

Benefits of an ASL environment

- Provides visual access to a rich and distinct formal language with its own syntax, grammar, and culture
- Encourages manual babbling in infants
- Natural approach for visual/gestural communication and development
- Critical to the development and social/emotional well-being of learners
- Critical for access to signing Deaf community and the Deaf world

What is Cued Speech?

- Invented in 1967 by Dr. R. Orin Cornett who saw the high level of cognitive abilities of Gallaudet students who were deaf and wondered why reading levels were not as high.
- A speechreading system consisting of eight handshapes representing groups of consonant sounds and four placements around the face representing groups of vowel sounds
- Check out: www.cuedspeech.org

CUED SPEECH FOR AMERICAN ENGLISH



/d, p, zh/



/k, TH, v, z/



/h, r, s/



/ee, ur/



/aw, e, ue/



/a, i, oo/



/b, n, wh/



/f, m, t/
vowel alone



/l, sh, w/



consonant
alone



1/2" - 3/4" down
/uh/



1" forward
/ah, oe/



/g, j, th/



/ch, ng, y/



/ay, oi/



/ie, ou/

- Includes handshape, mouthshape, and hand placement/movement
- Facilitates literacy; cuers perform like hearing children in phonemic awareness, rhyming, writing, and spelling/invented spelling
- Eliminates ambiguity or guesswork typical of speechreading
- Provides a visually complete, pure representation of the consonant and vowel structures of more than 60 traditionally spoken languages

Benefits of cued language environments:

- Cueing parents (90% are hearing) provide child with access to the home spoken language and literacy experience
- Foster proficiency in reading and writing
- Provide access to phonemic awareness and sounds they cannot access with amplification or implants
- Strengthen speechreading skills for non-cueing situations
- Establish a mental model of the spoken language
- Provide multi-sensory information for children with additional learning needs such as autism, apraxia, CP

Codeswitching

- Occurs when a bilingual or multilingual individual switches from one language to another
- Children who are deaf are capable of codeswitching between cued English and ASL (Hauser, 2001; Kyllö, 2003) and between two different cued languages (Earl, 2006)

- Children in bilingual communities learn two languages plus the social rules (pragmatics) regarding when and how each language is used
- Some researchers believe there are developmental patterns in codeswitching
- Codeswitching reveals whether someone is bilingual
- Language proficiency influences a person's ability to codeswitch

Cued languages and ASL are successful partners

They can be used at home, at school, at work, and in varied social settings, depending on the user's preference and communication needs

Cueing provides complete, direct, visual access to spoken languages

Signing ASL provides access to the rich and beautiful structure and nuances of this gestural language

Where do you start?

- Embrace a paradigm shift in the way you teach children who are deaf/hard of hearing
- Read about the success of ASL/CS programs
- Find access points to the languages used in both the hearing and deaf communities
- Learn Cued Speech from a certified instructor of CS
- Take ASL classes, preferably from a native signer; avoid using PSE (pidgin signed English)
- Remember: language in-language out for all children
- Children must have language for successful learning.

Fostering bilingual practice

Facilitate direct discourse and immersion in the target languages with fluent users of each language

The child's choice of language depends on many factors including: the participants, the setting, and the social and communicative goals

Maintain a goal of bilingual development during the critical language –learning years, from birth to 3

Stay closely connected to the home and support the language(s) used by the parents

Research the successful use of ASL/cued languages

A video of a Minnesota program successfully using ASL and cued English

- Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers
– A Chance to Read
- www.ReadingRockets.org

For more information about the benefits of using Cued Speech and ASL:

- visit National Cued Speech Association booth in the Exhibit Hall
- Contact the NCSA at info@cuedspeech.org
- Contact Dr. Earl at mainecues@mfx.net
- Contact Ms. Kaftan at alli@volatilechemistry.com

Thank you for coming to this presentation!