

Would Galileo Have Cued?

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(June, 2000)

Are you ever amazed at the lengths to which some people will go in order to defend their perspective on a particular matter? To these people, it is as if common sense and research are simply inconsequential. To them the earth is the center of the universe because someone once said that it was. They interpret the sun's movement from a singular point of view and use this as evidence to support their perspective. In essence, they declare, "The earth does not circle the sun because it does not appear to." Their logic is cyclical rather than factual. Their approach is self-reinforcing rather than curious and seeking. It is as if they believe that the only knowledge to be had is that which they have. Consequently, they fail to progress beyond what they already know.

After spending a greater portion of the past dozen years examining Cued Speech from a linguistic perspective, we have become astounded at the lengths to which many hearing cuers will go in order to continue to live in an 'Earth Centered' universe. The following example is almost humorous with regard to the common sense that is shuns, let alone the research. Unfortunately, this example is real and is not isolated. Here are paraphrased highlights of a typical conversation between the Sun Centrists and the Earth Centrists.

SUN: Cued Speech is a visual system. It is accessed through the eyes.

EARTH: Cued Speech includes speech, you know, the information on the mouth.

SUN: The information on the mouth isn't speech to the D/deaf receiver.

EARTH: How do you know?

SUN: Speech is something that is heard. By definition, deaf people do not hear.

EARTH: But I produce information on my mouth when I talk and use Cued Speech.

SUN: Yes, but the fact that you are talking is incidental to the deaf person. The sounds that you utter are invisible.

EARTH: But I am cueing sounds. Through Cued Speech, the deaf person can see every sound that I speak.

SUN: By definition, sound cannot be seen.

EARTH: But Cued Speech is processed in the *Auditory Processing Center*. The deaf person encodes Cued Speech as sound.

SUN: *Auditory Processing* is only one function of that part of the brain.

EARTH: How do you know?

SUN: Because Cued Speech is received through the eyes; it is not *auditory* input.

EARTH: But it is processed by the *Auditory Processing Center*. Therefore, it is encoded as *auditory* information.

SUN: The term *Auditory Processing Center* was assigned to that part of the brain before it was known that certain visual information of a linguistic nature is also processed there. Research now shows us that the name of that part of the brain needs to be changed.

EARTH: Well, I've read studies which say that blind people process braille in the *Visual Cortex* of the brain.

SUN: Perhaps that is because the term *Visual Cortex* was assigned to that part of the brain before it was known that certain tactile information of a linguistic nature is processed there. Research shows us that the name of that part of the brain needs to be changed. Tea poured into a coffee cup doesn't suddenly become java.

In order to defend their position that cueing is somehow sound-based, speech-equated, and auditorily processed, the Earth Centrists are willing to say that eyes can hear and that fingers can see. To these people, it is as if common sense and research are simply inconsequential. Their logic is cyclical rather than factual. Their approach is self-reinforcing rather than curious and seeking. It is as if they believe that the only knowledge to be had is that which they have. Consequently, they fail to progress beyond what they already know.

Cued Speech is designed to by-pass the requirement that the receiver's ears be involved in the exchange of linguistic information. Without involvement of the receiver's ears, the sender need not include sound. In other words, because sound is not visible and because speech is the act of producing sound in meaningful ways, from the D/deaf receiver's perspective, speech is not a part of the cued message. This is a piece of common sense information that is currently ignored by a great many hearing cuers.

Do research findings (e.g. Fleetwood and Metzger, 1997) that are in keeping with the Sun Centered view give credence to common sense? History shows that before progress can be made people must first be willing to venture outside that with which they have become comfortable. They must see the value in something new before they are willing to step beyond their entrenchment. Often, they will first look to the Church to tell them that it is okay to glean from common sense and research. After all, it took a thousand years before scientists overcame condemnation for countering the Church's position on the center of the universe.

The use of cued English in the United States stands at a crossroads. Those who recognize that cueing isn't speech and that speech and auditory skills don't define cued English do so through the employment of common sense and research. In fact, they have paved a path upon which 25,000 members of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) might be willing to venture. However, as long as the National Cued Speech Association (the Church) in its definition of Cued Speech equates a visual system with sound, possibilities beyond the horizon will never be seen. At least one Earth Centrist and prominent member of the NCSA Board has said, "The NAD is irrelevant." Yes, it is amazing the lengths to which some people will go in order to defend their perspective on a particular matter.

Common sense and research beckon change. They allow us to progress beyond what we already know. They steer us beyond mere perception, helping us venture outside of an otherwise isolated, self-centered, and self-perpetuating universe. They lead us out of the Dark Ages. Unfortunately, history has shown that common sense and research are more likely burned at the stake.

It is unfortunate that even today history is being written with a lighted match as some are willing to forego common sense, research, and 25,000 new followers in order to maintain their perspective. It is at least ironic that the NCSA Board asks others to venture beyond their experiences, beyond their horizons, beyond their self-centered worlds, and adopt cueing, while the Board continues to shun that which in essence says the Earth circles the Sun.

The universe that we live in is given form by what we believe. Its value is given substance by that which we cherish. But eyes do not hear and fingers do not see, regardless of traditional doctrine. The universe is not Earth-Centered.

The sun is now poised to shine on a new day in the cueing community, ready to give substance to a new perspective, ready to shine on a more expansive and inclusive universe. But make no mistake about it — traditional doctrine tends to be most fervently defended during the dawn of change. Perhaps Schopenhauer says it best:

All truth passes through three stages:
First, it is ridiculed,
Second, it is violently opposed,
Third, it is accepted as self-evident.

Is the cueing community ready to see the universe in a new light? Certainly not those who are waiting to *hear* the sunrise. With common sense, research findings, and 25,000 souls at (the) stake, the time has come to ask, "Which universal perspective do I defend?"

Fleetwood, E. and M. Metzger. 1997. Does Cued Speech Entail Speech: A Comparison of Cued and Spoken Information in Terms of Distinctive Features. unpublished manuscript. Washington, D.C.:Gallaudet University.

Hauser, P. And C. Klossner. 1998. Prosody in Cued English. unpublished manuscript. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University.