

Jane Scaysbrook: Talking about real equality in learning with Dragon.

Profile

- Successful, highly experienced, independent educational assessor
- Forward thinking and progressive attitude
- Encourages students to embrace technology to enrich their lives

Challenge

- To help students with dyslexia and dyspraxia maximise their abilities and potential
- To increase her own personal productivity

Results

- Student success rates turned around; from struggling in class to Master's Degree achievers
- Near instant performance turnaround - with minimal training - when using Dragon

Can a product successfully address both accessibility and productivity requirements? In the opinion of Jane Scaysbrook, Specialist Teacher and PATOSS Assessment Practising Certificate, the answer to that question is a resolute 'yes', when the product in mind is Dragon, the best-selling desktop speech recognition software from Nuance Communications. In her role, Jane has seen time and again how the accessibility offered by the software benefits students with dyslexia or dyspraxia, while at the same time boosting her personal productivity.

During her career as an independent educational assessor, Jane has seen many products enter the assistive technology marketplace. While many have promised to transform the learning experience, they either fell short of their potential, or were too expensive or too complicated to be a feasible proposition for students or education institutions.

But in Jane's experience, desktop speech recognition software like Dragon is one technology that has not only stood the test of time, but has improved with every version, as she explains: "I work with university students and GCSE and A-level students and some people in the workplace. The majority of my students have dyslexia or dyspraxia, both of which are processing difficulties. Over years of conducting assessments and making recommendations, I have seen Dragon's accuracy and ease of use improve massively. Now, it is virtually perfect, and the more you use it, the more perfect it becomes. Today, it's far more intelligent."

Adding to that comment, Jane believes Dragon is now advanced enough to make a significant and discernible difference to the quality of a student's education whether they are producing home or course work, taking notes, carrying out research on the internet, or creating presentations, simply by talking to their computer. Indeed, Jane states that she has seen the lives of students with learning difficulties transformed by it, because desktop speech technology makes the power of today's essential learning and communication aid - the PC or Mac - accessible to students of all abilities. She illustrates this belief with one particularly uplifting anecdote: "I assessed one student who has dyspraxia and his handwriting was atrocious. You simply couldn't read it. I recommended Dragon. That night, he sent me an email using Dragon. He's now doing a Master's."

Such inspiring stories are probably unsurprising, as Jane states that in her opinion, for students with learning difficulties, "...Dragon enables them to access education and enables them to demonstrate their subject knowledge. It opens doors for them and is a huge confidence booster because they can get their thoughts across onto paper." She added: "Lots of people with dyslexic and dyspraxia have very good verbal skills but they can't put them into the language they want in the time they want. But using Dragon enables them to say what they want to say."

Speech invigorates the learning experience

It is Jane's belief that Dragon reinvents the relationship between people and technology as it eliminates the spelling worries that often prevent bright dyslexic students from using their advanced vocabulary, and it gives them the freedom to express themselves more fluently when creating documents. Therefore, Jane argues that "...every school should make speech recognition software available to those students that need it, not least because it is both affordable and it makes a big difference to a child's academic performance and their self-esteem." To that end, Dragon is available for the Education sector through Nuance's Education Partners - [click here to register your interest](#).

Correction made simple

Perhaps one of the most valuable functions that Dragon offers users with dyslexia in particular, is that it also offers the ability to read text aloud. This makes it far easier for students to identify errors and correct their work quickly, to ensure that they're submitting work for review that's free from the spelling or grammar errors that used to detract from the quality of their written work in the past. With Dragon, even web content can be read aloud, making online learning and knowledge gathering simpler and more rewarding.

Driving productivity

Jane is an ardent Dragon fan not just because she has seen how it transforms the lives of students, but also because of the productivity efficiencies she gains from it when preparing post assessment reports. Jane explains: "For me, it's a method of improving my efficiency. Using Dragon, I dictate at about 130 words per minute. That compares to me typing at 28 words per minute, which is seen as about average for university students. In my case, going from 28 words per minute to 130 words per minute speaks for itself from a productivity perspective."

Speech is everywhere

As computers are now at the heart of learning environments, Jane expects there will be a swell of interest in Dragon from the education sector, driven by the greater requirement to provide students with accessibility tools that are necessary to create an equal learning environment for students of all abilities. The interest from the education sector coincides with speech recognition finally 'coming of age'.

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Being multifaceted, it’s no longer seen as a niche technology now that it is available across multiple applications, platforms and devices, such as voice biometrics for banks, in the Connected Car, on Smart TVs or Smart devices. Jane has no doubt that Dragon has the ability to transform the learning experience for students, while at the same time driving tangible productivity improvements for teachers and school administrators. Not before time, there’s a loud and enthusiastic chorus of approval for Dragon from a new generation of speech technology users wowed by the tangible, real-world accessibility and productivity benefits it delivers.

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