

Understanding and Supporting Learning

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Rachel Ingham: How does ClaroRead benefit dyslexic learners?

The obvious benefits of using text to voice software, such as ClaroRead, need little explanation. It reads Word and PowerPoint documents, emails, the Internet and eBooks. This provides a wealth of educational and career benefits as well as providing a way to make reading a pleasure. However, like most technology, it can be underutilised. I would like to share some of the ways I have used ClaroRead to increase the learning potential for children and young people in the classroom. Its benefits in the workplace will follow in a future blog.

There were some compensations for being a teacher with dyslexia. One of them being I understood the difficulties of learning to read and the frustrations of being unable to read and comprehend in order to write and learn. Although I loved literature, the effort of reading lessened the pleasure and reduced the number of books I was able to read as reading was so laborious.

ClaroRead breaks down the barriers for the learner with dyslexic related reading difficulties by reading the unfamiliar words that cannot be easily decoded. It allows learners of all ages to independently access more complex informative text increasing the inclusive learning environment for individual or collaborative class based tasks. This independence allows the learner to choose areas of particular interest, motivating and enthusing them to research subjects further.

Problems with phonological processing for the learner with dyslexia are a well documented cause of reading difficulties. These difficulties can be ameliorated with good teaching increasing reading fluency and accuracy. Despite this, comprehension is often still negatively affected because of the level of cognitive processing required to decode, inhibiting the reader's ability to gain a full understanding of the text. When text is read aloud the listener does not have to focus on the decoding, providing greater opportunity for comprehension and critical assessment of the information being studied.

Less understood are the problems relating to language and language development in the learner with dyslexia. ClaroRead provides the opportunity for the vital exposure to new words, often subject related, that are not commonly used in speech. Without the facility of accessing reading material with automaticity, the dyslexic learner's vocabulary development is impaired which, in turn, affects their communication and writing skills.

A perpetual problem for some readers with dyslexia is the interference of other voices making it difficult to read with comprehension. With ClaroRead, the busy classroom is no longer an inhibitory factor as the learner can listen to the text through headphones. In addition, this provides an

advantage of their hands being free to record the relevant data without losing their place in the text and thus enabling them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

One of the greatest benefits of ClaroRead is as a proof reader. Learners, particularly those with dyslexia and or visual stress, miss many spelling errors and grammatical mistakes despite their dedicated efforts to seek them out. ClaroRead reads exactly what is written so the writer can hear what they have written 'Brian breaks reduce stress in the leaner' instead of 'Brain breaks reduce stress in the learner.' It can also identify homophones which is crucial for the proof reader with dyslexia who is often unsure which homophone is the correct option. Picture or context descriptors help the homophone selection.

Not only is this a more effective method of proof reading, it is less arduous for the writer who has already put considerable effort into engaging with the difficult skill of committing their ideas to paper.

I often wonder if this history student would have recognised their mistake if they had used ClaroRead.

“It was important for the king to have the support of the no balls in court ...”

Another advantage of ClaroRead for proof reading is that you can slow the voice of the reader supporting the slower verbal processing skills of the learner with dyslexia. Slowing the speed at which ClaroRead reads has an added advantage of providing time to record notes and to critically think about the reading material. Notes recorded for revision purposes can be revisited repeatedly without the constraints imposed by reading.

Everyone benefits from the use of ClaroRead in the classroom. Firstly, the learners are able to read more complex, informative text and gain more knowledge and understand with increased confidence. ClaroRead creates independence by reducing the anxiety and embarrassment caused by having to ask classmates and friends for help. Class discussion and collaborative learning settings are a lot more rewarding for all involved. Secondly, the teacher has a more inclusive classroom with engaged learners who can make independent progress.

We have discussed academic advantages and will close by acknowledging the positive aspect of being able to read for pleasure. To enhance this further the listener can choose the accent they would prefer, Heather from Scotland being a particular soothing choice. There are times when learners are required to learn to read and others when we should create the opportunity to enjoy literature without a needless struggle.

Save 10% when you purchase ClaroRead on Dyslexic.com before 31st March 2016.
Simply enter discount code **CLARO10** at checkout.



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