
Reports on Past SIG Events

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Using Writing Software with Children and Teenagers

A [Web slide show](#) by [Emma Arthur](#), taken from the Powerpoint slide show used in her face-to-face presentation, which was given at the IATEFL Annual Conference 2001, Brighton, UK

Abstract

This presentation illustrated how supportive writing technology can be used to develop and support the writing skills of young learners of English between the ages 7-14. The main emphasis was to show how specific programs can be tailored to meet the needs of different learners and in particular children with learning difficulties.

Supportive writing technology includes word processors, wordbank software, word predictors, motivational programs, talking word processors and programs with speech output facilities. Speech recognition was not discussed. The aim of this type of software is to enable learners to become more independent by compensating for some of the limitations and difficulties they have during the writing process. This enables children to produce a higher quality and quantity of written work than is possible using pencil and paper.

After looking at considerations in using software, three programs were presented in detail: Clicker 4, Penfriend for ELT and Storybook Weaver.



Clicker 4

This program is an easy to use multimedia authoring program which allows teachers to create professional, tailor-made activities

to support any course book. Speech, sound and video can be used to create materials to develop reading and listening as well as writing. Activities such as matching, talking books, story writing, sentence work, ordering, grammar, vocabulary work, true and false and spelling can be designed. Clicker 4 was initially designed for pupils with special educational needs in UK schools but work with the program has shown that it can successfully be used with EFL and EAL pupils. It is the flexibility of this program which has made it so popular.



Penfriend for ELT

This program addresses the needs of pupils with dyslexia and writing difficulties. It is a prediction program containing specially designed lexicons which children can use while they are writing. Teachers can tailor the lexicon to suit the writing task. Penfriend for ELT can be used together with any wordprocessing program and appears as a small window on the screen. During the writing process relevant words appear in the window. Children can click to hear the words before inserting the one they want into their writing. The program also reads back what is written if required. Penfriend for ELT helps dyslexic pupils in a variety of ways but perhaps most importantly, children gain confidence and feel they can produce a piece of writing to be proud of.



Storybook Weaver

This piece of software is an easy to use multimedia tool which allows pupils and teachers to quickly create professional looking stories. Its database of images and text to speech capability allows children to tape their own voices and create their own talking books. This is a very motivating program and will encourage even the most disinterested pupil to write. Used along with Penfriend for ELT it has the potential of enabling pupils with writing difficulties to achieve a good piece of writing.

If you would like more information about the programs above or other programs for young learners of English contact emma-a@online.no.



Start the slide show

About the presenter

Name: Emma Arthur

Present job: Teacher trainer in using technology with young learners, English teacher in the primary school and university lecturer

Qualifications: MEd TESOL with emphasis on Educational Technology, BEd TEFL, Diploma in Primary Education, Associateship in Upper Primary Education, Certificate in Teaching English for Business

Experience: Although I have taught all levels and age groups I prefer teaching young learners. I have taught in primary schools for around 20 years. I have also been a researcher at the University of Edinburgh where I was involved in co-writing a book on using supportive writing software with children who have learning difficulties.

Interests: At present I am very interested in researching computer software which can support children who have dyslexia and other writing difficulties.



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