

Dragon NaturallySpeaking 12 Helps Teacher Overcome Impediments

Case Study

Australian teacher, Matt Buttsworth, who is handicapped with dyslexia and dysgraphia has found Nuance's Dragon NaturallySpeaking 12 a life liberating solution to his two impediments.

According to the Australian Dyslexia Association, dyslexia is a reading impediment that hampers one's ability to spell, decode and read written language. It affects about 10 per cent of the Australian population.

Dysgraphia is an impairment in which a person has difficulty with the ability to write. Although not as widespread as dyslexia, dysgraphia still affects thousands of people in Australia. Depending on the degree to which a person suffers from either, both can be very detrimental to an individual.

Diagnosed with both dyslexia and dysgraphia at a young age, Matt learnt to live with both impairments as best he could. He struggled through school but was bright enough to enter university and gain a doctorate in history before deciding to pursue a teaching career.

'All through university I would have to pay typists to type up my essays and assignments as my lecturers could not read my written work. Then I would have to check that the typist's

deciphering of my written script was accurate. The whole process was time consuming, frustrating and expensive.

'When I decided I wanted to be a history teacher I knew I had to find something to help me write clearly and read effectively. As you can imagine, there could be nothing worse for a teacher, who has to write on a whiteboard and mark written assignments or exams, than having both dyslexia and dysgraphia.

'It's also very embarrassing when your students cannot read all that you have written and when you know that the information will inevitably contain numerous spelling mistakes,' said Matt.

Determined to not let the impairments rule his life, Matt constantly scanned the market for solutions or aids that would help him overcome or manage both. He always explored the many devices and software packages that claimed to assist those with dyslexia and dysgraphia.

In 1994, while living and working in Switzerland, Matt first heard that voice dictation software had been developed - an innovation that he believed could help liberate him from the disabilities he suffered.

'At that time I would track everything that came onto the market including all software programs that claimed to provide help for

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those with dyslexia and dysgraphia. I remember buying every voice dictation program and using them to see how they could help. It was at this time that I first heard of Dragon NaturallySpeaking. Like all the other programs, I bought it and used it,' explained Matt.

Nuance's current version, Dragon NaturallySpeaking12, brings voice recognition to the PC and allows individuals to simply talk to create content and command a computer. It eliminates the need for typing and delivers up to 99 percent recognition accuracy out of the box. By using Dragon's powerful voice recognition software, people can interact with and command their PC, cruise through email, surf the web and create reports and notes just by speaking.

'After testing everything, Nuance's Dragon was the only software program that could help me. Back then it wasn't perfect but it was useable and I stuck with it as did Nuance. A lot of the other packages just seemed to disappear,' said Matt.

During 2007-08, Matt was in Norway teaching at an international school when Nuance released Dragon NaturallySpeaking 9.

'The added capability of Dragon 9 was far superior in this version when compared to the earlier program. The accuracy rates in terms of converting my speech to text and the spelling were much better so I could create lecture notes to help me teach in class as well as detailed study booklets that I could email my students.

'For the first time I now felt that here was a program that could really help me with my illegible hand writing and reading,' said Matt.

In 2012 Nuance released Dragon 12 and with this version Matt's life was truly altered.

'With the release of Dragon 12 everything changed for me because I now had access to real capability that could help me override my impairments. All of a sudden I no longer felt inhibited and it was a liberating feeling,' said Matt.

Matt found that in addition to using the software to compile notes as well as create lecture booklets, he could now use it to type letters and all correspondence, send emails and surf the Internet.

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In class, Dragon became a powerful teachers' aid. He could hookup his Dragon enabled computer to a projector screen to help him dictate text for the students without the need to write.

'My students no longer had to put up with my writing, which starts off okay but ends up with numerous spelling mistakes and as an illegible scrawl. Likewise, I no longer had to put up with the humiliation of my students seeing that I am not able to write clearly,' said Matt.

Dragon also helped Matt to write his book, *How to Beat Dyslexia and Dysgraphia - My Story*. Using Dragon Professional together with his iPhone he was able to transcribe his book chapter by chapter.

'Dragon made writing my book much easier and for me it was absolutely fantastic. I didn't have to worry about endless spelling mistakes or trying to force my tangled fingers to keep up with the words in my head. Instead, I could just focus on the content, not on typing, which is really awkward to do if you suffer dyslexia and dysgraphia. It's a wonderful way of transforming thought to text,' said Matt.

Today, using Dragon is a daily part of Matt's life. He is also a strong advocate of the software and encourages kids with dyslexia and dysgraphia to not despair and use Dragon to overcome their handicap.

'With Dragon, having dyslexia and dysgraphia is no longer a disadvantage. The software is easy to use and like everything, the more you use it the better you get at it.

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'Ideally, it would be wonderful to see the use of such a tool implemented as a nation-wide education policy to allow students who suffer from dysgraphia or dyslexia to escape these handicaps and perform to their full potential,' explained Matt.

'For me, Dragon has been life transforming. I was always scared of a pen and even typing but Dragon has helped me overcome this and the shame that went with it. Professionally and personally it has been liberating and an answer to my prayers,' added Matt.

Matt Buttsworth is the author of *How to Beat Dyslexia and Dysgraphia - My Story*.



Matt Buttsworth using Dragon NaturallySpeaking software.



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