

Speech maker

Lexion was developed by speech therapists to help children with language difficulties.

John Galloway reports

A team of Swedish speech therapists developed Lexion, and it shows through the product's deep understanding of language structure and processing. It is designed for pupils with a range of language and literacy difficulties, including dyslexia and aphasia.

Developed over the past 18 years it now contains 94 exercises, 2,500 images and 250,000 words. These are all organised in different ways for different uses, from technical speech and language groupings, such as aphasia-dynamic (transcortical motor), to literacy hour groupings by year and term. There is a lot of content exploited in many ways.

The built-in assessments (standardised for pupils aged six to 12) have familiar titles such as Reading Comprehension and Phonological Awareness. Activities include remembering sequences, all with associated observation sheets to emphasise that the computer can't do it all.

It is not intended that pupils should complete every test – rather, teachers should focus on areas they have concerns about. On-screen graphs and analysis offer

suggestions about what the results might mean – for example, “has moderate problems segmenting a whole word and transforming phonemes into letters” – and what activities might be useful. These ideas for exercises are then saved against pupils' profiles, and come up when they click on their personal desktop shortcut.

This is not the sort of software where children are plugged in and teachers come back later to find them educated. As the introduction says, “the computer will be a pleasant and effective complement to your traditional education or therapy”. This is just one ingredient of a programme of work.

Everything you could want is there: activities include reading, rhyming, onset and rime, initial letter sounds and swapping letters and inserting missing ones, which can be thought of as word, sentence and text level. Others focus on speed reading and pronunciation. Beyond language and literacy there is telling the time, four operations in maths, directions, finding places on a map and completing proverbs. All of this is configurable, with plenty of lists and levels to choose from.

Lexion also includes a refreshing range of images – mainly photos – and the whole database is accessible, so anything you don't like can be edited or deleted, and new sound files added.

This is a solid program devised by people who know and care about their field and want to support fellow practitioners and the children they work with. It is short on frills and long on content, which is reflected in the price.

