



Tablet devices – their benefits for deaf children

Having an iPad has helped [Claire Whittaker](#) lose her wheelie bag but gain an exciting number of ways to make speech therapy more fun as well as more effective

Having worked as a peripatetic Speech Therapist for over 10 years and been famous for my 'wheelie bag' full of resources that I would drag across London (and now as a Speech Therapist at Mary Hare Primary School), the iPad is surely 'the best thing since sliced bread'. No longer do I need a geriatric trolley, I can instead use my small handbag containing just an iPad that offers an incredible range of speech therapy resources.

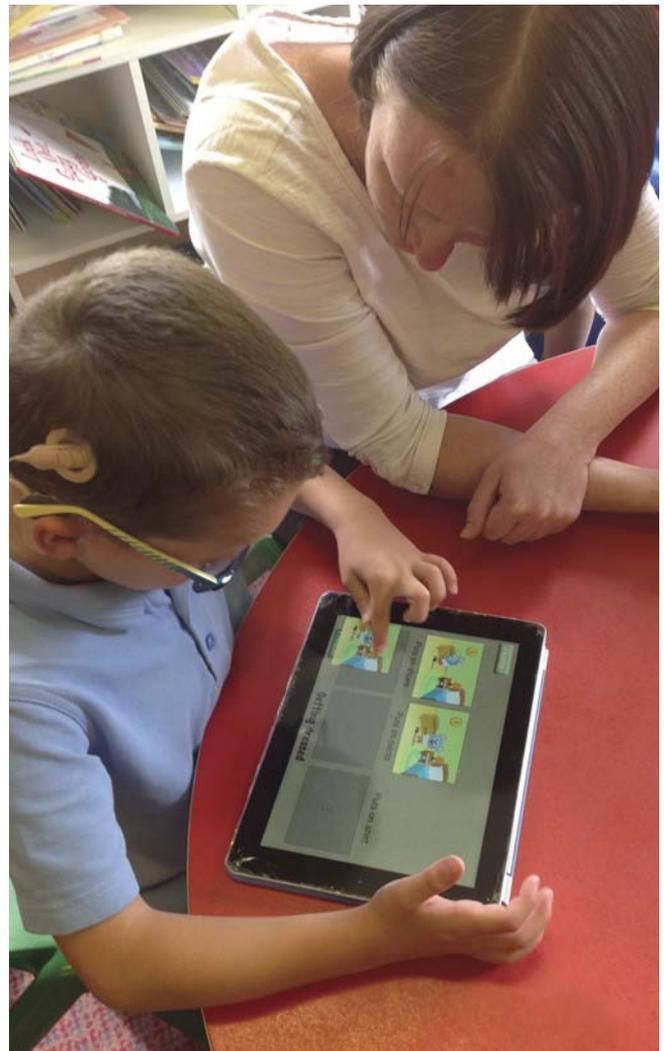
Technology has always scared me a bit. I think as Speech and Language Therapists and Teachers of the Deaf, we like our 'cutting and sticking' our 'posting through letter boxes', our 'sequencing cards' etc. The word 'software' is threatening and unfamiliar and computers remain baffling to many of us. However, once you have taken the first brave step of turning on the iPad, you can quickly realise that you have the simplest, most efficient, clever mini-computer in your hand that is surprisingly easy to use and can help target virtually any speech and language target that you are working on. Not only does it help plan and record your therapy, it also makes speech therapy so much more fun and the children appear to love it.

So where to start and how?

For those working with deaf children, you have a number of amazing apps that you can use. First, I like the idea that the children can 'see' their speech. Try the 'Visible Sound' app – this basically shows the different speech frequencies as the child talks. Then download 'Bla Bla Bla'. This app consists of different faces that move as you talk – the louder you speak the more exaggerated the face. Both very simple apps but allow a form of feedback that the deaf child often lacks.

Then we come to specific listening activities for which there are many apps. If focusing your intervention around the 'Auditory Hierarchy' then it is good to start with 'Auditory Verbal – Ling Sounds'. This provides clear pictures for the ling sounds and the child can listen to the sound and point to the Ling sound that they hear – it also records the child's performance and will then email you the results so that you can monitor the progress that the child makes. This app also has a 'silence' option which is also important so that the child also recognises noise versus silence.

Having established that the child can differentiate the six Ling sounds, I like to then use a fantastic app called 'Auditory Processing Studio'. This provides a full listening programme looking at initial sounds, final



sounds, non-words, same/different, minimal pairs etc. The results can also be tracked carefully for progress monitoring. On the down side the words are spoken in a very American accent and at times some of the vocabulary is fairly unusual and so vocabulary expansion work needs to be carried out first.

The 'Neurelec Rehabilitation Programme' then focuses on many aspects including environmental noise; for example, one of the apps shows different picture scenes (eg a kitchen) and then the child must listen to the noises and identify what they hear in the kitchen (e.g they may hear a microwave or the toilet flushing etc). It allows us to teach our children some everyday sounds that in the past have been difficult to isolate. Gone are the days of 'listening tapes and cards', now

even environmental sounds can be accessed with a touch of a screen.

Once listening to sounds has been addressed then there are numerous 'following instructions' apps that are also graded according to progress and practice. For example have a look in your app store for 'Splingo'. This is a simple following instructions app where the child must listen to an instruction and do what it says e.g 'put the big horse in front of the box' etc. There are clear 'levels' so that the complexity of the instruction can vary according to the child's ability. The pictures are clear and colourful and there is a clever reward game after each section that encourages attention and motivation.

'Bee Articulation' offers activities for every speech sound in every word position. This is a brilliant series that allows you to record the child's attempts as well as providing pictures and phrases for every sound. It is easy to navigate around and provides endless photos, games and stories.

Other therapy ideas:

- use 'doodle pad' app as a drawing board for the child. Ask the child to hold the iPad so you can't see it and then to draw a specific scene e.g the therapist says 'draw a blue circle in the middle of the screen and draw a black dot above it' etc. When the picture is completed, have a look at the iPad and see which

concepts the child has followed correctly. Use the iPad for any such 'barrier type tasks'

- 'Hear Coach' provides a simple method of auditory memory training – the child can hear a number, then two numbers, three numbers etc and must press the simple calculator mimicking the digits they hear
- remember to use the 'video' function so that the child can immediately get both auditory and visual feedback. Film the child attempting to say the target sound or during language tasks

Now that I have become a bit obsessed with my iPad I find myself checking it almost daily for new apps. It is a tool to befriend as its scope for use is immeasurable – it allows 'fun' homework, daily exercises that can be carried out in class without endless planning and supervision from the class teachers, parental understanding and sharing of therapy.

However, it is important to remember that the iPad can *enhance* the work we do as professionals; it cannot replace our expertise and our experience. When technology fails, we are irreplaceable!

At Mary Hare School we have collated an apps database that we are happy to share. If you would like a copy then please email me at c.whittaker@maryhare.org.uk

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