

building futures



Editorial

by Jo Ford

As our regular readers will know the TASC team frequently develop comparison tables of various products. We find these tables are a useful resource as they provide a summary of the various features of equipment and software. They also provide a quick reference when exploring options and providing information to our clients. This month Kerrie and Liza have put together a comparison table of various word prediction software programs. There are numerous products on the market and this table can assist with narrowing down the options to trial that will best meet your needs.

The TASC team have some staff changes this month with Samantha Puffett, speech pathologist leaving us to take on a new role on the south coast of NSW. Sam has worked at The Spastic Centre for 10 years and with the TASC team for 2 years and we will miss her experience and support. Peter Chapple occupational therapist from the Adult Program at The Spastic Centre has joined us on a secondment position to the seating team three days a week. We look forward to more formally introducing him to you next month.

Finally if you have a paid subscription to TechnoTalk you will find a subscription renewal form with this month's edition. Don't forget that you may also access TechnoTalk from www.thespasticcentre.com.au/technotalk.

Cheers!
Jo



What is Word Prediction?

by
Kerrie Fry
and Liza MacLean



Word Prediction technology allows a computer or other device to attempt to guess which word the user is typing. Word Prediction programs have been designed for two main reasons:

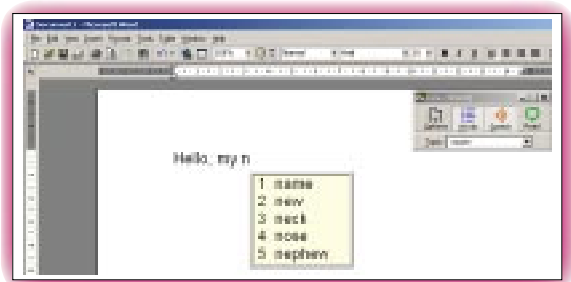
1. To reduce keystrokes
2. To assist people who have spelling and writing difficulties

1. *Reducing keystrokes:* For people who find typing fatiguing or slow, word prediction can assist by reducing the number of keystrokes required. These programs offer a number of possible words in a list as the person starts typing (or some predict ahead before you start the next word – “next-word prediction”). The typist continues to enter letters until the desired word appears on the list. The user

then selects either the word or the number/function key corresponding to the word they require and the word is inserted into the text. Some programs also automatically enter a space after words and have automatic capitalization after punctuation. In the example above, a person is typing in the word “name”. After typing in the letter “n” the word has appeared in the prediction list. The typist can then select the word from the list. So instead of five keystrokes (including the space), the typist only needs to perform two keystrokes. Words are generally predicted according to the user's most recent and frequently used words and according to grammatical rules.

2. *Spelling and writing assistance:* The list of words offered in a word prediction program may provide a resource to assist people who have difficulty with spelling and writing. Many also have the ability to create custom or topic dictionaries, and include thesaurus and homophone support. Some

have phonetic word prediction, for example, if a typist enters “foto” it will predict “photo”. Many of the programs also have auditory feedback to assist a user to check, edit and select text independently. This may include the ability to have the word prediction list read out prior to selection and read text as it is entered into the computer.



Example of Word Q used with Microsoft Word.

So how do you know which program to choose? Remember word prediction is not for everyone. Some people find visually searching the list of words and deciding whether or not the list contains the desired word too demanding. If a word prediction program is going to be considered, firstly think about the features of a word prediction program required for a particular person. For example: Do they need auditory feedback? Do they need to use word prediction with a variety of applications? Do they need to change the appearance or location of the word prediction window? We hope that this table will then help you to match those features with a particular program. Co:Writer SOLO UK has recently been released to replace Co:Writer 4000 and was not available for review at the time of this article. TextHELP Read & Write for Macintosh has replaced Type & Talk.

Please feel free to contact TASC if you
Continued back page.

Features	Co:Writer Smart Applet (Don Johnston)	Co:Writer SOLO UK (Don Johnston)	Penfriend XP (Crick Computing)	Read & Write v7.1 & v.7.1Gold (textHELP)	Read & Write for MAC (textHELP)	Soothsayer v3.0 (Applied Human Factors)	TextPlus (SmartCell Technology)	WordSmith 3.0 (textHELP)	Word Q (Quillsoft)
Display Window									
Change size of prediction window	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	X
Change location of prediction window	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Prediction window fixed or dynamic	Fixed	Either	Either	Either	Fixed	Either	Fixed	Either	Either
Dictionary									
Number of words	6,000	6,000, 12,000 or 40,000	2,000 - 10,000	180,000	5,000	> 11,000	11,000	144,309	2,000, 10,500 or 15,000
Automatic-ally learns new words	√	√	√	√ (if spelt correctly)	√ (if spelt correctly)	√ (with AutoAdd on)	√	√ (if spelt correctly)	√ (if spelt correctly)
Uses a keystroke to learn new words	X	Unknown	X	X	X	√	X	X	√
Ability to delete/ modify dictionary	√ (with Co: Writer 4000)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Ability to add and predict phrases	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Abbreviat- ion Expansion	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√

Features	Co:Writer Smart Applet (Don Johnston)	Co:Writer SOLO UK (Don Johnston)	Penfriend XP (Crick Computing)	Read & Write v7.1 & v.7.1Gold (textHELP)	Read & Write for MAC (textHELP)	Soothsayer v3.0 (Applied Human Factors)	TextPlus (SmartCell Technology)	WordSmith 3.0 (tetHELP)	Word Q (Quillsoft)
Dictionary									
Use of custom or topic dictionaries	√ (with Co:Writer 4000)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Speech									
Speaks selected word	X	√ Dwell to hear word before selecting	√ Right click or dwell to hear word before selecting	√ Option to speak or type word when clicked	√	√ Dwell to hear word before selecting	X	√	√ Dwell to hear word before selecting
Speaks words from list of options	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
Highlights words from list as spoken	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
Speaks letters, words, sentences as you type	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
Additional Features									
Spell Check	X	Unknown	X	√ Phonetic	√	X	X	√	√
Homophone support	X	Unknown	X	√	√	X	X	√	X
Free Demo Version	X	X	√ Time limited	√ (Presentation CD)	√ (Video)	√ 30 days	√ 7 days	X	√ 30 days
Approx. cost									
	\$299.00	\$535.00	\$180.00	\$380.00 v7.1 \$790.00 Gold	\$550.00	\$379.00	\$69.00	\$650.00	\$314.00

Supplier Details		
Co:Writer Smart Applet (Don Johnston)	Technability NovitaTech Spectronics	(02) 9975 8240 1300 855 585 (07) 3808 6833
Co:Writer SOLO UK (Don Johnston)	Ability Tech Technability NovitaTech Spectronics	(02) 9907 9736 (02) 9975 8240 1300 855 585 (07) 3808 6833
Penfriend XP (Crick Computing)	Ability Tech Technability NovitaTech Spectronics	(02) 9907 9736 (02) 9975 8240 1300 855 585 (07) 3808 6833
Read & Write v7.1 & v.7.1Gold (textHELP)	Technability Spectronics	(02) 9975 8240 (07) 3808 6833
Read & Write for MAC (textHELP)	Technability Spectronics	(02) 9975 8240 (07) 3808 6833
Soothsayer v3.0 (Applied Human Factors)	Spectronics	(07) 3808 6833
TextPlus (SmartCell Technology)	Technability NovitaTech Spectronics	(02) 9975 8240 1300 855 585 (07) 3808 6833
WordSmith 3.0 (textHELP)	Technability Spectronics	(02) 9975 8240 (07) 3808 6833
Word Q (Quillsoft)	Ability Tech Technability NovitaTech	(02) 9907 9736 (02) 9975 8240 1300 855 585

From front page.

would like further information or assistance in determining the most appropriate program.

References:

Anson, D. (1997), *Word Prediction*, in: *Alternative Computer Access: A Guide to Selection*, F.A. Davis Company, Philadelphia.

Klund, J. & Novak, M. (2001), "If Word Prediction Can Help, Which Program Do You Choose?" (Trace Website), Available: <http://trace.wisc.edu/docs/wordprediction2001/> (Accessed: 2005, May 5)

"Word Prediction/Text To Speech Programs", (Centre for Assistive Technology), Available: http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl8030_v1/cat-newsletter-9.doc (Accessed: 2005, May 5)

We welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you have on our service. Please feel free to contact us by phone on 02 9972 8183, email at tasc@tscnsw.org.au or in writing at the address below.

TechnoTalk is available free from www.thespasticcentre.com.au/technotalk or by subscription for \$27.50 (GST \$2.50 incl)