

Dance and Dementia Conference

Mantra Lingua's TalkingPEN as a tool for supporting dementia therapies

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Introduction

The Mantra Lingua TalkingPEN offers the possibility of enhancing music and dance dementia therapies by linking **physical objects**, such as photographs, posters, storyboards, possessions, diaries and life story books, to **sound**, such as music, the spoken word, sound effects, and natural sounds.

What does the TalkingPEN do?

The TalkingPEN is fitted with a memory chip big enough to store up to 80 hours of audio.

You can record audio directly using the microphone/loudspeaker at the top of the PEN by touching the end of the PEN to a special sticky label 'sound spot' when in Record mode.

That recording is then played back through the speaker or a headset when you subsequently touch the end of the PEN against the label.

You can also download pre-recorded audio files to the PEN from a PC, which have been linked by Mantra Lingua to sound spot labels supplied with the PEN or printed in TalkingPEN publications.

Applications

Music and reminiscence

Pieces of music from a particular period associated with a care home resident or dementia sufferer, possibly chosen by that person, their family or carer, can be recorded onto a PEN and linked to sound spot labels.

These labels can be attached to specific or general images that can evoke memories of that period or moods associated with hearing that music, eg Bill Haley's 'Rock around the Clock' plays when the PEN touches a photo of a 50s dance hall or a juke box, or Beethoven's 'Pastoral' plays in association with a picture of a rural scene:



Singing Icons Hall of Fame

In a variation on the theme of music and reminiscence, carers can play a game with dementia sufferers in which they touch the PEN against the 'Guess the singer' sound spot to hear a 'greatest hit' of one of these six well-known singers of popular songs from the 40s and 50s.

Then they touch the photo of the singer they think the hit belongs to and the PEN will tell them if they're right or to choose again. Going further, there are 'Which singer...?' questions that are also answered by touching a singer's photo. Square sound spots next to the photos trigger the playing of a 'greatest hit' or a short sound description of the celebrity.



Birdsong and dementia

There is evidence that listening to birdsong reduces anxiety and aids recovery in hospital patients. Indeed, Liverpool's own Alder Hay Hospital has been at the forefront of such research: see <http://www.healthypages.co.uk/newsitem.php?news=6415>.

The TalkingPEN has been used for some time as a 'sound encyclopedia' for bird watchers because it can be used both in playback mode, for rapid confirmation of a bird's identity by touching the Pen against thumbnail images in a bird guide and triggering a playback of its song, and in record mode, by plugging a directional microphone into the PEN and recording 'live' birdsong for subsequent identification.

Now this functionality can be applied in the context of dementia by contributing to 'sensory therapy', in which weather-proof bird labels could be placed around a garden or patio area – touch them with a PEN to hear favourite birds singing. Similarly, we could produce sound spot labels of a dog barking, a cat purring, and other pet or natural sounds, such as wind blowing through trees, waves breaking on a shore, and so on.



Tropical Tales: music, dance, storytelling...and TalkingPENS!




Bisakhar from Chaturangan described the Tropical Tales project. This is a cross-arts project – part of Liverpool's 2010 Year of Health and Wellbeing – in which scientists from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine worked with a creative team of painters, poets, musicians, dance and spoken word performers to produce health-related story cards linked to TalkingPEN sound recordings.

LSTM staff and students worked with children from a local school to share their experiences and re-tell stories which, through the story cards and TalkingPENS, will be shared with people from different communities across the city in Neighbourhood Health Centres, waiting rooms, and the Well-Traveller Clinic.

TalkingPENs as multi-lingual communication aids

An important feature of the TalkingPEN is its ability to store many language translations of the same text and link them to the same set of sound spots. So, once you have touched a particular language 'label', the PEN only plays back the versions of each sound file in that language when you touch the sound spot labels on the resource.

So, a care home in which certain dementia sufferers who don't have English as their first language and have 'retreated' into using their mother tongue, can use a poster like this one to enable a level of communication that might not otherwise be possible:

KEY PHRASES				
Phrases with Parents or Children	Phrases with CHILDREN	More phrases with CHILDREN	LANGUAGE	
Good morning	How are you?	Would you like to hold my hand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Albanian
Good afternoon	Are you OK?	Would you like to put on your coat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic
Hello	It is nice to see you	Would you like to take off your coat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangla/sylheti
Goodbye	Please come inside	Would you like to take off your shoes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bulgarian
Welcome	What is your name	Would you like to put on your shoes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cantonese
Goodnight	My name is	Please sit down	<input type="checkbox"/>	Czech
Pleased to meet you	Thank you	Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	English
Phrases with PARENTS		Listen to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farsi
How are you?	Yes	Watch me	<input type="checkbox"/>	French
Please come inside	No	Copy me	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gujarati
Would you like a tea or coffee?	Would you like to look at a book?	Look at this	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hungarian
What is your name?	Would you like to listen to a story?	Tidy up time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Japanese
It is nice to meet you	Can you show me...	What's wrong?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lithuanian
Would you like an appointment?	Can you see ...	Do you understand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malayalam
What is your telephone number?	Can you tell me ...	I don't understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mandarin
Would you like a translator?	Turn the page	Would you like some help?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nepali
What is your home language?	What is that?	Would you like to join in?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Punjabi
Can your child speak English?	That is really nice.	What are your favourite activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Polish
Do you understand what I'm saying?	What would you like to do?	What do you like doing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Portuguese
Does your child have any allergies?	Would you like to play with ...	Reassurances	<input type="checkbox"/>	Russian
Does your child have any illnesses?	It is time to go out now	Do you feel ill?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shona
Please bring your child at *	Would you like to go out to play?	Point where it hurts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Somali
9 <input type="checkbox"/> 9:30 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:30 <input type="checkbox"/>	Do you want to go to the toilet?	Don't worry, Mummy's coming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish
Please pick up your child at...	Please wash your hands	Don't worry, Daddy's coming	<input type="checkbox"/>	Turkish
3 <input type="checkbox"/> 3:30 <input type="checkbox"/> 3:45 <input type="checkbox"/> 4:00 <input type="checkbox"/>	Please come with me	Don't worry... 1 <input type="checkbox"/> is coming 2 <input type="checkbox"/> **	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urdu
See you soon	I want to show you something	Don't worry, it will be OK	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swedish

* Press green box if the time is different from those mentioned below and say the exact time in English. Otherwise touch the grey box to speak the full time.

** If the person is nervous also press white box 1 first then select the Person from the row below, and then touch the white box labelled 2.

KEY WORDS							
PEOPLE	Parent	Carer	Daddy	Mummy	You	Me	
	Brother	Sister	Neighbour	Friend	Child	Children	Adult
	Baby	Babies	Grandmother	Grandfather	Aunt	Uncle	
DAYS of the WEEK	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
HEALTH	Ache	Hurts	Sick	Sore	Hot	Cold	Medicine
NUMBERS	One	Two	Three	Four	Five		
	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten		

It's quite straightforward to construct a poster for an individual, using the sticky sound spot labels linked to voice recordings made by someone proficient in their home language, and translating words and phrases relevant to their situation.

TalkingPENS, Chatterboxes and memory boxes

As a tool to facilitate reminiscence, the TalkingPEN can be used in conjunction with other prompts that might trigger memory. Currently, considerable interest is being shown by the care community in the therapeutic value of using PENs to record recollections and conversations, however brief, triggered by looking at the 1940s and '50s boxes of reminiscence cards produced by Many Happy Returns (www.manyhappyreturns.org.uk).

Furthermore, it would be quite possible to attach sound spot labels to objects in a memory box so that the 'owner' can link their reminiscences to them via a PEN, and an Oxfordshire museum is planning to do that with their 1940s handling collection.



Boxes of reminiscence cards for the 1940s and '50s

Cards feature familiar scenes from to evoke positive memories; there are prompts to initiate conversation on the reverse



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