

New application 'speaks' for people with communication disabilities

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Sam Sennott displays the Proloquo2Go application.

(PhysOrg.com) -- People with communication disabilities now have the power to "speak" clearly, thanks to a new iPhone application created by College of Education doctoral candidate Samuel Sennott and David Niemeijer, a software expert in the Netherlands.

Sennott, who is pursuing a doctorate in Penn State's Special Education Program, worked with Niemeijer to develop Proloquo2Go, an application that runs on iPhone, [iPod Touch](#), and other portable handheld devices. [Proloquo2Go](#) opens new doors of communication for children and adults who have autism, [cerebral palsy](#), and other [developmental disabilities](#), as well as stroke and accident victims who have lost the ability to speak.

A user communicates simply by pressing buttons containing illustrated

symbols and activating a natural-sounding text-to-speech voice output. Proloquo2Go features a default vocabulary of more than 7,000 items.

Proloquo2Go has been gaining national exposure. It was recently featured by ABC News in its online video series The Conversation. It also has been featured in USA Today, by Fox News, on the popular syndicated talk show The Doctors, and in other media outlets.

Sennott conceptualized the Proloquo2Go idea several years ago while leading an inclusion program on the north shore of Massachusetts. “I saw how my students with disabilities needed powerful, yet affordable and cool technology to help them communicate,” he said.

Using a hand-held device helps the user blend into the mainstream of an increasingly wired-in society, he said.

“The hard-to-quantify coolness factor of using an iPad, [iPhone](#), and iPod touch to communicate is truly awesome,” says Sennott. “As we hear about young adults walking or wheeling into high school with Proloquo2Go on a new iPad, it makes me smile to think about the inclusive power of this tool set.”

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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