

## [P5] Can you repeat that last bit, please? Using talking books to support student learning in science

**Paul Barrow<sup>1</sup>, Nick Musgrove<sup>1</sup>, Richard Homfray<sup>1</sup> and John Worsfold<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>School of Applied Sciences, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton WV1 1SB

<sup>2</sup>Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6XU

P.A.Barrow@wlv.ac.uk; N.J.Musgrove@wlv.ac.uk;

R.P.Homfray@wlv.ac.uk; john.worsfold@rnib.org.uk

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Accessibility is no longer an issue solely for students with additional learning needs: diversity of learning styles requires a diversity of delivery options to enable students to take ownership of their learning and to access materials in the way which suits their needs and preferences.

Our exploratory work with 'DAISY<sup>1</sup> Talking Books' suggested these could be a useful adjunct to traditional delivery methods and an initial trial was instituted on a Level 2 year long Biomedical Science module – *Integrated Physiology and Metabolism*.

This is a team taught module presented as a series of cognate themes supported by various resources. A group of volunteers were recruited to use a 'talking book' version of the section in the prescribed textbook<sup>2</sup> dealing with the '*Renal Section*' of the module.

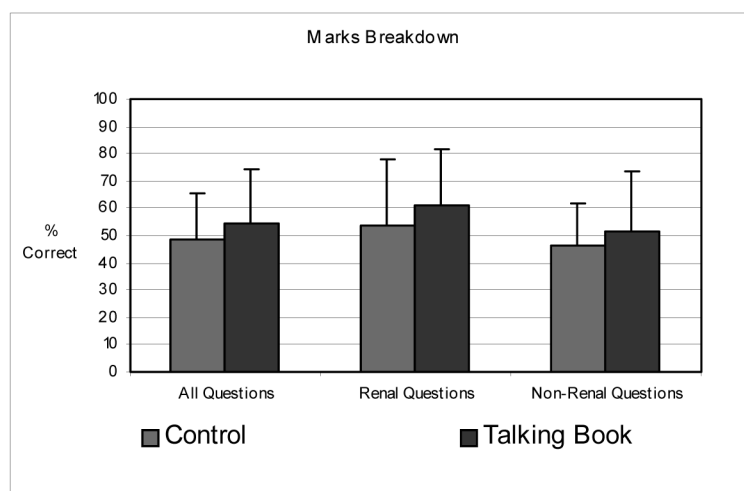
Electronic files of the text and graphics were provided by the publisher and were converted to 'Daisy talking book format. The 'talking chapter' was burnt to a CD together with a restricted version of the reader software<sup>3</sup>; the students were given a copy of this CD with a single sheet of installation and running instructions and left to install the book on their home computers.

Reader screen View	Bookmark screen view	Search screen view
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The principal feature of the reader is the 'preferences' capability which enables students to set their background colour, font size and style and other parameters, and where synchronisation of audio and text highlighting is maintained if the viewing speed is either slowed or speeded up. This option permits users to select a pace which suits their preference or needs. Other options set the play back features, for example 'remember last book position' and the play back speed. Sections or sentences can be 'bookmarked' for subsequent review or revision whilst the search feature permits the locating of particular words or phrases.

At the end of the trial period the participants completed a simple questionnaire on their experiences with the book and the software, and subsequently undertook the standard assessment with the non participating group. The results of the participants were compared with those of the control group both in terms of the section supported by the project as well as the remaining standard delivered sections.

Participants who completed questionnaires expressed positive views as to the utility of the system and expressed a desire to have other materials in 'talking book' form but as an addition to and not as a replacement for a traditional text book.



The chart demonstrates that the talking book users scored better in the 'renal questions' than the non-user group. They also scored better in the non renal questions section but not to the same extent.

These preliminary results suggest that 'talking books' may provide another option in meeting the personal learning styles of some users and may serve to support reinforcement and will be the basis for a repeat of this exercise with another student cohort.

## References

<sup>1</sup>DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) Consortium format is a recognised international standard which was created in 1996. [www.daisy.org](http://www.daisy.org)

<sup>2</sup>Chapter 8. Davies, A., Blakeley, A. G. H., and Kidd, C. (2001) Human Physiology. Churchill Livingstone. ISBN 0443045593. Churchill Livingstone is an imprint of Elsevier whom we thank for their permission and assistance in converting their copyright material into DAISY book format for use in these trials.

<sup>3</sup>EasyReader – Dolphin Computer Access Ltd <http://www.yourdolphin.com/dolphin.asp>