

Classroom Captioning: Interact-AS™ is Making a Difference in Listening Comprehension

Donna Massine, AuD CCC-A/SLP, FAAA and Mike Massine, CMA, MBA

Professor Donna Massine is an Educational Audiologist that for over twenty years has been assisting Colorado students that are hard of hearing. Mike Massine is a hearing aid wearer and an avid user of assistive technologies.

Do you know your student's Listening Comprehension score? Do you really know the impact that your student's various accommodations to access classroom communication are making on their score? Does your student have a good understanding of how much classroom content they are really missing?

A year ago, the Massine's began searching for the missing technology that could make a big difference in one particular high school student's access to verbal instruction in the classroom. This student was intelligent, a good reader and had an affinity for technology – but was the first to say that any additional help from the DHH staff was not needed and that there wasn't much benefit from his personal FM system. After twenty minutes with Interact-AS™, this student couldn't believe how much he was missing in the classroom. He immediately became a fan of this new technology.



The DHH staff knew after thirty minutes that they were not going to be able to take the technology away from this engaged learner.

Similarly, an elementary student was introduced to Interact-AS on a trial basis. The DHH staff knew after thirty minutes that they were not going to be able to take the technology away from this engaged learner. Interact-AS™ is being implemented across the country and the 2013-14 school year showed that acceptance of this technology in the classroom was really ramping up.

It is so rewarding to see a student's reaction when they realize their listening comprehension has just been boosted. While sitting in the back of a classroom with a DHH student, Mike said, "I didn't get that, did you?" The student acknowledged that he too missed the content, but with just a glance at the Interact-AS screen, he was able to tell Mike what they had both just missed. You could just see it in his eyes - he knew he had the access that was not possible with his personal FM or the access Mike had with his hearing aids. Success stories like these were all that the Massine's needed to know that they had to get going on showing the benefits of Interact-AS for other students.

So what is Interact-AS? This software was originally developed in conjunction with the U.S. Marine Corps and the Office Naval Research to remove communication barriers around the world. Thanks to this research, students can benefit from an accommodation that provides real-time captioning, note-taking, writing assistance and speech generation.

After twenty minutes with Interact-AS this student couldn't believe how much he was missing in the classroom. He immediately became a fan of this new technology.

Interact-AS does far more than readily available speech-to-text software, as it is well-suited to deliver real-time captioning in the classroom while working with an existing wireless FM microphone system. "It is definitely not another personal dictation software package," says Mike, who has compared it to many of the other speech-to-text products. The Massine's tried two other speech recognition products in the classroom previously, and quickly realized that they were not suited for the classroom. Interact-AS is different because it utilizes context to deliver full sentences – it is not command based – and it is designed to facilitate communication between people, not between an individual and their PC.

With the advantage of development funding available from the military, many federal government employees are using Interact-AS software in their workplace at no cost, as a means for government offices to comply with ADA requirements. Business, churches and convention centers are now using Interact-AS as a simple and cost-effective approach to providing real-time captioning.

WHY IS INTERACT-AS THE RIGHT FIT FOR DHH STUDENTS?

- It provides true real-time, unlimited captioning of conversations and classroom instruction, without the need for advanced scheduling of adult note-takers;
- The student controls when the software is used and what content is captioned, facilitating greater independence;
- The student is able to maintain the equipment and manage the captioned text;
- The system provides for personal customization, for the student and for the teacher;
- Multiple viewing areas allowing some students to "glance-and-get" missed content, while allowing other students to "read along" using the transcription log;
- Interact-AS does not require internet service and is readily portable to move with the student; and
- Interact-AS has an easy to use interface that provides fast captioning of the teacher's instruction, as well as a full transcript and audio file that can be saved and distributed.

The Interact-AS Communications Suite is flexible enough to allow schools or individuals to use their own Windows-based PC and existing wireless FM microphone systems. Information regarding system requirements can be found at

<http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/interact-as/setup>

A team approach is needed to successfully implement this accommodation.

Implementing any new assisting technology can be quite challenging. It is not advised that any one individual attempt to take this on by themselves – not the classroom teacher, a parent, the student, a DHH staff member – a team approach is needed to successfully implement this accommodation. The school district’s educational audiologist needs to be involved and so should the information technology department. Funding is always an issue and privacy policies come into play as well as the school team considers who will be able to access the transcript. Technical support from the vendor early on is usually necessary. “Believe me, we made all the typical rookie mistakes, looking to save time and money and all we did was create more headaches for ourselves. Free technical support is available from the vendor for the first year, so take advantage of it,” advises Donna, based on her personal experience. The team at Auditory Sciences, along with the resources on the www.successforkidswithhearingloss.com website, are available to make the implementation go smoothly. A \$99 trial program is offered, during which assistance is provided to ensure that the system is rolled out properly.

- KEYS TO SUCCESS -

- Obtain your student’s current Listening Comprehension score (ask the educational audiologist or teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing);
- Arrange for a trial period, which includes the use of a wireless classroom microphone system;
- Obtain a new tablet PC, providing the student with the technology that they will be proud to use and share with others;
- Involved DHH staff members to test everything and allow the student to practice using the technology before introducing the system to the classroom teacher(s);
- Involve your educational audiologist and school IT support from the beginning;
- Ensure that each classroom teacher is confident with using the system;
- Specify Interact-AS speech-to-text captioning as an accommodation in the student’s IEP; and
- Re-test the student to obtain a Listening Comprehension score following the trial period to see how much benefit is provided.

Teachers, parents, DHH staff members – and most importantly students – have been amazed at the immediate impact that this accommodation can make in the elementary, middle school, and high school classroom.

For more information, go to <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/interact-as>.

