

Lexion - The assessment tool that saves you time

Gunnel Wendick is the SEN coordinator of the municipality of Vaggeryd in Sweden. She is familiar with the Lexion software, a training and remediation tool for pupils with reading and writing difficulties. She has now made an evaluation of Lexion Assessment, the Lexion computer-based assessment tool. She finds the program very promising, and that it effectively creates customized exercises in Lexion that helps the pupil to practise the items in the particular areas that the pupil needs to develop.

It is easy to be frustrated, when finding that so many students in our community have not attained the level of reading and writing ability, according to their age. This led to, when I took office last year, that I soon took upon Lexion as a project. Lexion is a computer program with exercises adapted for pupils with reading and writing difficulties. The inventors of the program have borne all the weak spots in the reading and writing process in mind.

Now, when a new version of Lexion has been released, I realize that more pupils can get support in reading and writing through the program - not only the pupils that work individually with their SEN teachers. In view of that, all the teachers that want to should be given the opportunity of further education. This so that the teachers in the classroom situation will be able to use Lexion as an educational tool, supporting the pupil in their learning process.

Last year, 60 staff members were each given 10 hours of training in Lexion. The purpose was primarily to make the teachers familiar with the program as a whole, and also to make them confident enough to customise the general exercises to all the pupils in the class, if required.

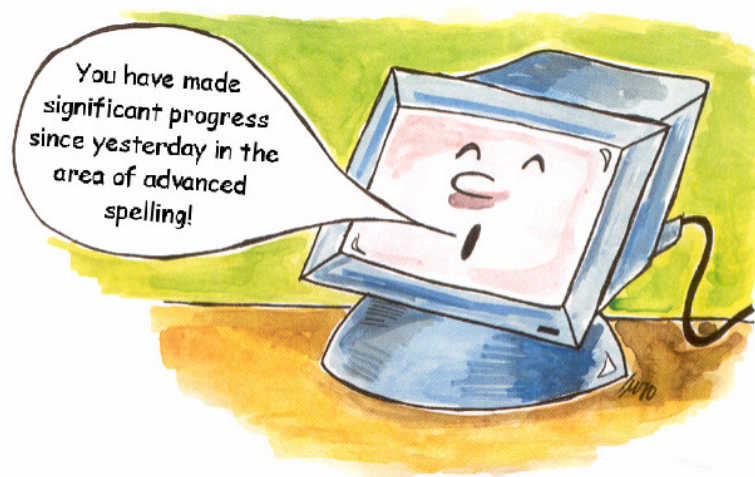
Many a time, I have carried out testing with a pen and paper. Everybody with experience knows how time consuming this is. From this standpoint I wonder if Lexion Assessment could become helpful in the assessment and the analysis. By giving more pupils with the need customised exercises, leading to a strongly reinforced learning, hopes run high that more pupils will attain an improvement of their reading and writing ability.

Lexion Assessment tests the following:

- Linguistic, phonological and phonemic awareness
- Segmenting ability at word, syllable and sound level
- Synthesizing ability at word, syllable and sound level
- Sequencing
- Short-term memory
- Letter-sound correspondence
- Reading comprehension
- Reading
- Writing and spelling

The speech status part includes the following:

- Vowels
- Consonants
- Consonant combinations
- Assimilation tendency
- Metathesis tendency
- Reduction tendency



In the language status, done by the administrator, observations will be found in areas such as comprehensibility, vocabulary, grammar, and other details about the overall communication.

You choose the test that you want to use for an age from 6 to 12 years. Each test is self-instructing, meaning that I as a pedagogue may observe how the pupil is solving the tasks. Observation forms for printing out are included in the program.

The results can be read qualitatively on the screen and be printed. You can both view and print the graphical profile, shown as horizontal bars. Lexion Assessment also presents a verbal statement making the basis for exercises in Lexion. These are created in a matter of seconds. If you wish, you may repeat the test after some time to see if the adapted exercises have had effect. Then the results are placed next to the first ones. You can also easily compare results between different pupils, classes and schools.

My colleague and I have tested 30 pupils. We have been working with all age groups in primary and secondary school. During the time I have used Lexion Assessment, my appreciation of this testing tool is great. I have tried to be critical in my study of it, but the positive impression far outweighs the negative.

The motivational aspect of working on the computer as opposed to book, paper and pen hardly needs mentioning.

I overestimated the time I thought the testing would take due to my misunderstanding of the advertisements. What was meant was that just one of the test parts for the youngest children could take 15-20 minutes. In spite of the fact that two sessions might be necessary to go through all the test items, it is my opinion that it is worthwhile.

Besides, it seems more enjoyable and less demanding for the pupil. I see the following benefits:

- I don't need to administer the testing and the results with pen and paper
- As I hardly need to give any instructions, I can concentrate on observing the child's response to the test tasks.
- The summary of the test results is automatically provided. I get the graphical bars, statement and qualitative documentation printed.
- Should I want to add something else to the documentation, I can use the Lexion Assessment's statement as a basis.
- By a simple click the customized exercises in Lexion are created and individual training can start immediately.
- It is easy to see if the child has improved reading and writing ability by simply repeating the test.

The availability of a functioning computer at the working site is one of the prerequisites for the training. Besides it takes a positive teacher who can see the possibilities of daily training that Lexion provides.

Recent research indicates that the teaching and training of linguistic awareness and intensive reading using adapted text material is the most effective way to attain a development of an individual's reading and writing ability (Myrberg 2003).

Thus, if we can give the pupil linguistic awareness and the possibility of analysis of words, exactly at the developmental level where the pupil is found to be, we are well on the road.