**Speech & Language Information Technology (SPLIT)-2 Course**

**City, University of London**

**September – December 2015**

*…"Fantastic. I am a computer whiz"…*

*…"Like that we work on a 1:1 basis, working with people that have an understanding in communication difficulties - SLT students, having the flexibility to work at own pace"…*

Recent advances in information technology (IT) have led to digital devices (e.g. tablets, smart phones) being more cost-effective and widely available. Internet use is now integral to everyday life activities including learning, shopping, self-management and participating in social activities.

However, learning how to use computers and IT can be challenging for people with aphasia if they have limited knowledge of IT before the stroke, or have with significant language impairment (Menger et al. 2016). Undertaking a traditional pedagogic course requires the ability to process and understand large amounts of information (spoken or written) with minimal support. Research shows that *specialist* computer training is needed for people with aphasia to become proficient computer users (Egan et al. 2004; Kelly et al. 2016).

The SPLIT course is a complete computer-training course for beginners. It is taught in a group setting with Speech and language therapist-led instruction, and with individual support workers (speech and language therapy students). The SPLIT course uses communicatively accessible written materials. These were originally developed from an IT training package by Egan & Worrall (2001) and resources that were freely available from the State Library of Victoria, Australia.

The SPLIT-2 course at City, University of London trained 10 people with aphasia, between September and December 2015. The course aimed to increase people’s use of computers and technology, and increase their confidence in communicating in a small group environment. The course was taught in 10 two-hourly weekly sessions, and people with aphasia had 1:1 or 1:2 assistance. Troubleshooting sessions were provided to support skill transfer to participants’ own electronic devices.

Although 10 people participated in the course, only 6 people attended the final session. However, the course was still beneficial for those people who completed the questionnaires in that session. People with aphasia significantly improved their use of computers and technology, and significantly improved their communication effectiveness. Findings suggest that SPLIT-2 benefited people with aphasia beyond the skills learned in course sessions. General feedback indicated the following were important: having access to support workers; opportunities to transfer learnt skills to own electronic devices (during troubleshooting sessions); and aphasia-friendly teaching materials.

The SPLIT team (Tess Lancashire and Dr. Madeline Cruice) is now seeking larger-scale funding to roll out the SPLIT course to other universities and locations.

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