

THRASS UK Launches Even Better Version of Groundbreaking Phoneme Machine

The THRASS Phoneme Machine is a groundbreaking computer programme that uses the International Phonetic Alphabet and moving human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of the sounds (phonemes) in hundreds of frequently used English words. It has already enjoyed considerable success since its launch last year but THRASS UK has just launched an even better version that contains many exciting new features and is far more advanced than the original.

The Phoneme Machine was designed by Alan Davies, British educational psychologist and pioneer of the widely used THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading And Spelling Skills) phonics programme. It is an excellent resource for teachers, assistants and parents for learning about, and also teaching, the fundamental building blocks of English in an entertaining and fun way.

The Phoneme Machine has already enjoyed considerable success in many countries in Europe and Africa since its launch in March 2006. An indication of the extent of this success is the fact that it has recently received software accreditation from market leader SMART Technologies Inc, for use on its interactive whiteboards in the countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve. Earlier this month, Version 4.1 was showcased by SMART at the BETT educational technology show in Olympia, London. THRASS UK and SMART Technologies Inc are also joint sponsors of the THRASS SMART project using the very latest in education technology at Masibambane College in Orange Farm Township, South Africa.

The Phoneme Machine, programmed by THRASS UK's media director Mike Meade, develops a good understanding of the 44 sounds and the 120 main spelling choices of English. This understanding is largely achieved by 'blending all the sounds through a word', a key recommendation of the British Government's recent report on Synthetic Phonics. The programme is suitable for learners of all ages and abilities and has been found to be particularly helpful to parents of children starting to read, children finding reading difficult and those for whom English is not their first language.

The new Version 4.1 contains many more features than the earlier Version 3.1. It can be programmed to operate in automatic or interactive mode and it is much easier to navigate between and within functions and from one grid to another than with the earlier version. One entirely new feature is the addition of auto-functions to select groups of words for Blending, Reading and Spelling which are linked to the teaching of the Weekly Spellings listed in the four-year scheme of work THRASS 15 Minutes a Day x 2, a resource primarily for children aged 4-7 who have English as their first language but which can be adapted to make it suitable for all other learners.

Another new feature is the inclusion of an interactive version of the THRASS English Calendar Chart with children's voices saying the seven days, the thirty-one dates, the twelve months, the numbers from one to twenty, the ten main colours and the names of the twenty-six lower-case letters (and their associated capitals). Hard copies of this chart, and charts for several other European (Welsh, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Greek and Polish) and African (Afrikaans, Setswana and Zulu) languages are available now or will be in the near future.

Version 4.1 has already had an enthusiastic reception in South Africa, if the words of Dr Jean Place, Principal Tutor Foundation Phase Programmes, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are anything to go by, "We had over one hundred teachers at the THRASS accredited training, organised with the NAPTOSA teachers union, and everyone thought that the programme was an excellent resource for teaching English. There was considerable interest in the Afrikaans and other African language versions of the interactive English Calendar Chart."

The full unrestricted version of the Phoneme Machine Version 4.1 can be downloaded free of charge for a limited period by anyone, in the countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve, who registers their details with THRASS UK. It is available in PC format now and will be available in Mac format shortly.

For more information about the THRASS Phoneme Machine Version 4.1 and to register for a free download of the software, visit www.phonememachine.com

For a summary of the main features of THRASS and the benefits of using THRASS, visit www.thrass.co.uk/keyfacts.htm

For more information about the THRASS Calendar Charts and to obtain copies of these, visit www.thrass.co.uk/cart/cc.htm

For details of the full range of THRASS resources for parents and schools, including picturechart, picturebook, picturecards and CD, visit www.thrass.co.uk/resources.htm

Demonstration lessons showing Alan Davies using the Phoneme Machine can be viewed as videostreams or downloaded from THRASS Video Clips at www.thrass.co.uk/tvc.htm

For details of the THRASS SMART Project, visit www.thrass.co.uk/thrass_smart.htm

For details about SMART Technologies' interactive whiteboards and their other market leading products, visit www.smarttech.com

The countries that THRASS UK is licensed to serve are shown in blue on the world map at www.thrass.co.uk/worldmap.htm

For details of THRASS Professional Development Courses that are held regularly in the UK, Europe, West and Southern Africa, visit www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm

Issued by: THRASS UK News Media Centre www.thrass.co.uk/nm.htm

Mike Meade, Media Director, +44 1829 741413 Mob: 07970 151 738 mikemeade@thrass.co.uk

Chris Griffiths, International Development, +30 266 203 1207 chrisgriffiths@thrass.co.uk