

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

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In order to blossom into a beautiful flower, seeds are first planted into the ground where they sprout **roots**. Next, buds begin to sprout. The **stem** stretches high into the sky. From the stem, many **leaves** emerge. Finally, **a flower** blooms. However, none of this can happen without **water**. When I was thinking of how I could express my teaching philosophy, experiences, and accomplishments into a coherent conceptual framework, I realized that I could use the analogy of a beautiful flower blossom.

My teaching (and research) philosophy is rooted from **the experiences of my own disability (roots)**. I have Cerebral Palsy (CP) which affects my speech and my mobility. More specifically, I have difficulty communicating with other people using my own voice. The stem of my flower is built by **my strong educational background (stem)**. I studied Computer Science in both my Bachelor's and Master's program. However, as I thought about my future career, I changed my major to Assistive Technology (AT) for my doctoral degree because I have always longed to work for individuals with disabilities. I chose to make AT, and particularly Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), the focus of my doctoral studies. An AT device includes any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functioning of individuals with disabilities. Among the many varieties of AT devices, AAC devices are for individuals with speech difficulties like me. To water my emerging flower, since I am benefiting from **the use of AT and AAC myself**, my interest in them is much more enhanced (**water**). During the 6 years since I accepted the position of research assistant professor in the Kellar Institute for Human disabilities (KIHD) at CEHD, I have sprouted many leaves both professionally and personally, including teaching, presentations, research activities, and mentoring, to name a few. These **accomplishments (leaves)** have flowered and let me be **myself, Yoosun Chung (a flower)**, as a scholar, professor, wife, mom, daughter, and friend (please see Appendix for a pictorial representation of this analogy).

Behind the Scenes

I have had very unique teaching experiences compared to other college professors because instead of using my own speech, I use my communication system (please see the "Innovation - I Love Technology!" section below about how my communication system works) when I teach classes. When the teaching job was offered to me after I earned a doctoral degree in AT in 2004 at GMU, I hesitated to accept the offer. I thought "How could I teach students at the University? I know that I cannot speak even a word when I am nervous. How could I teach a classroom full of students?" I thought and thought and finally decided to accept the excellent opportunity. I realized that I had a strong educational background, my communication system, and I could utilize PowerPoint as a teaching tool. I realized that I should have self-confidence. I thought about Stephen Hawking, a world renowned theoretical physicist. He completely lost his speech abilities, but with his communication device, he gives lectures all over the world. My speech condition was a whole lot better compared to his current speech condition. I thought that if he could do it, I could do it too. And now, I have actually taught students at GMU for 6 years.

The most important factor making it possible for me to teach students at the university is my communication device. Without my communication device, teaching students would not be possible for me. AT allows me to teach students at the university. This is not unique to me. Many people with disabilities are getting many benefits from AT. Since I am the one who benefits from AT and utilizes technology very well, I have a passion and enthusiasm to communicate and share my knowledge about AT with the world.

I have a bumper sticker that reads "Silence is unnecessary, not silence is golden". One of my colleagues gave this to me. I love this sentence. Before I started using my communication device, I was very silent at school. Before I entered the AT field in the doctoral program, I studied computer science for both my bachelor's and master's degree. While I was studying computer science, I simply closed my mouth for all of my school years. I did not know that AAC even existed until I began a doctoral program in AT. I came to understand that promoting awareness in the public is a very important issue for the AAC field. Thus, I feel very fortunate that I can teach classes using my AAC and have been invited as a guest speaker in other classes and by various organizations to promote AT and to share my knowledge and experiences.

My Teaching Journey at George Mason University

While teaching classes, I see myself as a professor, as a role model, and as a disability activist. As a professor, I always aim 1) to develop creative, engaging, and innovative courses, 2) to deliver class materials to my students effectively and thoroughly, and 3) to have my students (mostly school teachers) be able to share the knowledge they learn in my class with their students and their peers. As a role model, since my students see a person who utilizes AT well in everyday life (Yes, it's me!), I am sure that they will have a better understanding of how people can benefit from AT. I believe that we can learn better from others' experiences. As a disability activist, I strongly believe that I am a good model for standing up in society among many individuals with disabilities. Some people with a prejudiced view think that individuals with disabilities cannot do anything but only seek help. In fact, people sometimes have asked me, "Can you speak English?" when I spoke to them but they did not understand me

due to my unintelligent speech. I even heard from a former student with an honest voice that she was very shocked in the first class as soon as she found out I was her professor and had severe speech difficulties. I would like to break others' stereotypical thoughts.

My classes are closely related to AT, special education, Instructional Technology (IT), and e-learning. I have taught 4 different courses for the previous 6 years. EDSE 517 (Computer Application for Special Populations) is a required course for the Master's students in Special Education. This course is designed to combine lecture and lab activity. Both EDSE/EDIT 525 (Software for Individuals with Special Needs) and EDSE/EDIT 529 (Internet as a Teaching Tool) are AT graduate certificate courses. Both are completely online classes using Blackboard. EDSE 622 (Augmentative Communication) is also one of the AT graduate certificate courses. This is a hybrid class – using online classes through Blackboard and one face-to-face class. In my classes, I cover all categories of AT and how various ATs are effectively used for individuals with various disabilities (i.e., special education). I also teach various instructional technologies, including Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), image/video capturing tools, and graphic organizers, to name a few. From the previous six years, my overall mean of means for overall teaching is 4.87. I am very satisfied with this mean score.

My online courses are asynchronous using Blackboard, which means that students do not have to be online at the same time. Students can log in at any time to read class materials and participate in discussion boards. My online courses are designed in such a way that they are divided into several learning modules. Within each module, I create a set of learning activities, including course readings, website reviews, and personal reflections. Students are expected to summarize, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on the presented course materials. Students post their reflections to the Discussion Board, and students are encouraged to interact with at least two classmates in each discussion thread because interaction with classmates is an important aspect of any class. I give points in three categories - content, interactivity, and timeliness. By reading my students' reflections, I am able to get a sense of whether my students fully understand the class materials/assignments. My students seem to enjoy my approach of teaching online classes. One of my students commented in her letter of support, "The course layout, sections, and modules were highly organized in a way that facilitated learning and promoted understanding. Dr. Chung provided a lot of resources and web links that greatly assisted me in fully grasping the various course topics. The course materials were presented in an easy-to-understand and accurate way; which encouraged learning. Dr. Chung's assignments, discussion questions, and research projects were very thoughtful and beneficial; and provided me with many real-life experiences."

Whether the classes are online or face-to-face, I post all of the class materials, including the PowerPoint slides, scoring rubric sheets, etc., on Blackboard, which is always up to date. My students submit their assignments through the Assignment section and I post the grades and my feedback on Blackboard. I have found that students are pleased that they can submit their assignments electronically, and it is also good for me because I can keep records, and it conserves trees for the environment.

Innovation - I Love Technology!

I believe that my classes are extremely innovative because of full technology involvement, including my communication system. There are many kinds of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, and I am using EZKeys software by Words+, Inc. Basically, EZKeys transfers all my texts into synthesized (computer generated) voices. I type all of my lectures in text format (i.e., .txt) in advance to prepare for the 2 hour and 40 minute-long classes. Once I have prepared the "teaching script" for each class, my lectures are the same as any other college professor's lecture. The only difference is that instead of using my speech, I let EZKeys talk on my behalf along with my PowerPoint slides. My communication system has two additional features in addition to the feature which reads aloud my prepared texts. The first addition is a "side talk" feature. During my lecture, in the case that a student asks me a question or in the case that I have some additional things to say about a certain topic, I can type my sentences on the fly and let EZKeys speak instantly. The other addition is an "instant phrase" feature. With this, I can store many phrases which I often use in class. The phrases include "Let's get started.", "Any questions or comments?", "I knew somebody would ask this question, so I prepared in advance.", etc. The instant phrase which I do not want to use so often is "Technology is great only if it works!" – I use this sentence when an unexpected technology problem occurs in class. For additional information about how a person utilizes AAC, please see Appendix.

As I mentioned earlier, my face-to-face class (EDSE 517) combines lectures and lab activities. In each lab activity, each student has a chance to play with various software/hardware. Hands-on lab activities should coincide with class topics. For example, in the case that the class topic is assistive reading tools, I first lecture about the characteristics/disabilities of individuals who may have reading difficulties, who can benefit from the assistive reading tools, what features can help individuals who have reading difficulties, what kinds of assistive technology tools are available in the market, etc. After my lecture, I let my students play with assistive reading tools, including software and hardware. Some of the software programs are already installed in the AT lab where my class is held. I need to bring some technology stuff with me to the class. I let my students explore software/hardware individually or as a group, depending on a lab activity sheet that has different reflection points/questions in a different format each week.

In EDSE 525, an online class, I let my students explore software programs that are installed on the laptops located on campus through the remote system, GoToMyPC. The clear instruction of how to use GoToMyPC is provided, and my students seem to enjoy playing programs remotely. A couple of comments from my students are:

"Thank you for the experience of using both GoToMyPC.com and the various programs accessible through it...I was impressed with how easily it set up in the degree of functionality that I was able to experience with individual programs." and "I enjoyed this opportunity to explore a range of software programs. I found gotomypc.com easy to access, and had no problems logging in."

I always provide a PowerPoint and supplementary materials to each class and post these materials on Blackboard before class begins. I have created "how to" sheets for scaffolding students' ability to use AT/IT software programs and to serve as future reference. The supplemental materials help both my students and me so that my class flows smoothly. It is interesting to read the letter of support from one of my colleagues. I recently requested for her to observe my class, and this was her first experience seeing a lecture using a communication system. She commented, "Dr. Chung taught each step on the screen for the students to observe while they completed the activity at their own computer stations. Students were able to follow directions easily, and Dr. Chung moved around the room to provide any additional assistance that was needed. Students appeared comfortable in asking questions and she consistently provided feedback." In addition, another colleague who has been in charge of the AT lab for many years, sometimes stays in the lab while I am teaching EDSE 517. In her observation letter, she commented, "The flow of her class is very smooth and logical, making it easy to follow...It was striking how skilled she is at managing her device to communicate throughout the 2 hour and 40 minute session." She concluded that "It is clear to me through observing Dr. Chung's teaching that she expects a high level of performance from her students and provides high quality instruction. Her knowledge of the subject and advanced planning is ideal for this class which for many, is the first experience they have had with assistive technology."

I especially felt confident when I see the students' progress as the semester goes by. Every semester, some students in the class begin as novice computer users, but I have definitely noticed that their comfort level of using technology increases as the semester goes on. As an explicit example, when I asked them to go to Blackboard during the first class in the previous semester, a student did not even know how to enter the URL of Blackboard in an Internet browser. However, three weeks later she was able to search for what she wanted on the Internet, and she was able to follow the tutorial sheets for the programs I taught in class on her own.

Many students had never been or were exposed very little to AT in their lives before they registered for my class. However, after reading students' comments on the course evaluation forms every semester, I believe they have learned about useful AT and strategies each class. While watching their final presentations on the last day, I noticed that not only had they improved their technology skills, but they were able to incorporate their new technology knowledge in their curriculum for supporting students in their own classrooms as well. One of my students stated that "Each class with Dr. Chung was a thought-provoking and interactive experience in which she challenged me to explore assistive technologies as if I had a disability myself, and to put myself in the shoes of a person who required this technology. Learning in this way, as a user of technology, rather than as the teacher who implements it enabled me to understand the immense benefit of assistive technology and see it as the path to success for many students who could not access the curriculum without it."

Last week (on October 27th, 2011), after EDSE 517 was over at 10:00 pm, one of my students came to me and asked, "Yoosun, how long do you usually take to prepare for each class session?" I immediately answered to her "Oh, it takes, like, forever for me." Then I continued that it usually takes two full days. She responded "Wow....yeah...that can be expected because it is almost a 3 hour long class." She explained why she asked this question. She was wondering how long it could take to prepare a lecture using my communication system. Her only interaction with other AAC devices has been with her students in her class, and she always wondered about the application of AAC in the professional world. She added that she could imagine it would be extremely difficult to have to plan out everything I would want to say for a three hour class. Then she commented "Your class is extremely informative for me since I seriously lack basic computer skills, and has already taught me many things about programs that I could use on a day-to-day basis." It is very true that I spend a tremendous amount of time preparing each face to face class because, as my student (or anybody) could imagine, I need to type everything I say in class in advance. In fact, it usually takes more than two full days because I need to take some time to set up the AT lab for each week depending on the class topic, on top of writing my teaching scripts. Life is challenging but worth the struggle because I always feel that I am getting rewarded for my efforts at the end of every semester.

Another colleague, who teaches EDSE 534 (Communication and Severe Disabilities), has invited me into her class as a guest speaker for the previous several years. In her letter of support, she commented "Yoosun, as an AAC user, must be very structured and her colleagues and students recognize the time it takes her to prepare for class. Yet, at the same time, I believe the needed structure serves her well, creating very well organized and paced lectures that students greatly appreciate." Also, she added "An important part of Yoosun's presentation is the student question session. Yoosun will take time to answer all student questions clearly and honestly. As the instructor, I value this experience because this is the time when Yoosun, as an AAC user, uses her device 'on the fly' and demonstrates for my students how confident and 'real' she is as a speaker as well as a device user."

My Own Strategies and Approaches in Teaching

During the past 6 years, I have come up with several strategies to make my classes exceptional. First, since I know that the skills and interests of students are varied each semester, I always ask my students to fill out a "Familiarity of Technology" sheet in the first class. The sheet includes a list of software and hardware, including MS

office products and which version, different internet browsers, document reading programs, assistive writing programs, alternative keyboards and mice, Smartboard, iPad/iTouch, e-book readers, etc. Then I ask my students to mark the score for each item. For example, I ask students to 1) mark 4 if the hardware/software is very familiar and (s)he is currently using it in the classroom/at home, 2) mark 3 if it is very familiar and (s)he is comfortable using it, but is not currently using it, 3) mark 2 if (s)he has used it before, but does not know how to use it well, 4) marks 1 if (s)he has heard about it before, but has never used it, and finally 5) marks 0 if (s)he has never heard about it. Usually, I get many 0s on the sheet. In addition, I ask them to write if they have a particular technology they want to learn in the class. This sheet is extremely helpful for me to plan each week's lecture in advance. I do not want to waste class time to lecture about what most students may know.

Next, I always catch up on up-to-date technology. In this technology era, today's technology will turn out to be out-dated tomorrow. Software companies always develop newer versions. In order to teach how to use a specific program, I need to master the program first before I teach about it. As I mentioned earlier, I have created how to sheets for certain programs. The sheet includes the instructions of each step and corresponding screen shots of the program. As a newer version come out, I need to update the how to sheets to match the newer version. This takes extra time and effort on my end, but I am sure that my students will appreciate the up to date how to sheet. I started teaching Smartboard and the accompanying Notebook software several semesters ago, since recently, many students have wanted to learn about them. Many counties in the metropolitan area provide Smartboards in classrooms, but since teachers rarely get appropriate trainings, the Smartboard is just sitting in the back of their classrooms, or it is just used as a projector. Recently, the Smartboard lecture has been one of my students' favorite topics in my class. Also, recently, I started using my iPad for spontaneous communications in class (there are already many communication applications developed for the iPad/iTouch), and I have introduced various educational iPad applications to students, helping students recognize the value of using an iPad in the education world.

Another strategy is that I take notes about my class every week to maintain my classes glitch-free as much as I can. While preparing for a class, I make a list of what I should prepare, including what I should cover and what handouts I should prepare. Right before class, I check my list to see if I missed anything for that class. After class, I write down what issues I faced and how I am going to resolve them for my future classes. Since my class uses many technologies, including my communication system and hardware/software in the AT lab, there may likely be unexpected technical difficulties. In this case, I report them to the lab staff to see if they can resolve the problems, and make sure that they are resolved.

In addition, I have provided a scoring rubric sheet for each assignment and have given a grade based on the scoring rubric sheet with my comments for each criterion. For students, learning is probably a main reason why they take classes, but earning a good grade is also one of their main goals. I have tried hard to give my students an explicit idea of the requirements/criteria they should meet for each assignment and then give them a fair grade. After distributing the students' grades, I always tell my students that they can ask me any questions about the grades and comments given. Luckily, I have never had any complaints/disagreements from my students. I think it is because they know my expectations while doing their assignments and I follow my scoring rubric when I grade. Of course, even though I spell out every word in the scoring rubric sheet for each assignment's expectations, I've had some students who did not meet the assignment expectations. I am not sure whether they did not read the scoring rubric sheet carefully or whether they misunderstood the expectations. In any of these cases, I give a second chance to rework their assignment after I explained why their assignments did not meet my expectations. Even though they know the resubmitted assignments are not eligible for full credit and I will apply a 10% reduction (it is explicitly stated in the syllabus), they are willing to rework and resubmit their assignments. I always emphasize to my students that the ultimate purpose of completing assignments is not for receiving a good grade, but rather expanding their knowledge base. Thus, as long as they want to work more, I believe it is fair enough for me to give them a second chance.

Moreover, to make my class more meaningful to my students, I make every effort to try to invite guest speakers either who have had many field experiences in a designated topic or who are actually using AT devices to live a productive daily life. For example, I've invited a teacher and her students who she has worked with for many years. In class, the guest teacher and students show AT devices they use in their school life, and share their perspectives of AT with us. My students always appreciate the presence of guest speakers because they have opportunities of seeing real people who use AT, not just learning materials in theory. They told me that it was really interesting to hear about different forms of assistive technology from students who were actually using it and to essentially have them teach us about it.

Furthermore, I ask my students fill out a course evaluation survey questions at the end of the semester with detailed questions about the class. The course evaluation survey is created using the Survey tool on Blackboard, and my students submit their responses anonymously. Although the GMU official evaluation is important, it generally does not provide me with detailed information about course content and the presentation. Also, faculty members generally do not get the evaluations back in enough time to make changes and modifications for the following semester. I always take my students' comments about my classes very seriously. Reading students' comments on the evaluation survey makes me think about what I have done well as well as how I should improve courses and make them even better.

Besides, it is my pleasure to keep in touch with my students outside class. I return emails promptly and meet with students when needed. Actually, many of my students stay in touch with me outside class. I am 'kind of'

their technology (including AT and IT) consultant and their career consultant. They sometimes seek my help about the problems which they encounter when they use specific software/hardware and seek my suggestions about what kind of AT devices can benefit their specific student. Sometimes, my former students have asked me to write a letter of recommendation for their advanced career. I am always willing to take my time to support them as much as I can. A statement from one of my students shows proof. She wrote "Outside of class, there was always an open-door policy and sense of approachability that allowed each student to shed their fears about the subject matter or any other concern we might have had."

The last strategy is very unique compared to other "typical" university classrooms, but I think this is very important for me to try. Even though speech synthesizer voice has been greatly improved, the voices of any communication systems are still monotonous compared to human voices. It can be assumed that my students will get easily bored with monotonous voices. Thus, in order to get my students' full attention, I often make funny topic-related jokes and present multimedia solutions such as adding interesting video and sounds. Currently, I mix use of my natural voice, my main communication system (EZKeys), and an iPad communication application to help students pay attention. Among many valuable comments from my students, my favorite quotes are "When she did lecture, she made jokes and kept the class engaged in the material while keeping them entertained as well", and "Professor Chung is an incredibly enthusiastic teacher and her enthusiasm is contagious. She loves teaching students about AT and it shows!"

Presentations – Everybody is Special!

It is difficult for me to write about my teaching philosophy without mentioning my various presentation experiences because they are all connected with my longing theme: advocate disability issues. I have been invited as a keynote speaker at some conferences and a guest speaker in other classes/organizations many times during my previous years.

Every opportunity that I had to give my presentation has been great, but the most honorable moment that I have ever had in my life was when I received the Words+/ISAAC Outstanding Consumer Lecture award at the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) biennial conference in 2006. Along with receiving an award, I had to present my essay in front of a big number of audiences at the conference in Germany. The Words+/ISAAC Outstanding Consumer Lecture Award is for an AAC user who has great things to share with other people. I wrote the essay about love among my parents, me, and my children. After my 45 minute presentation, every member of the audience stood up and gave me a standing ovation. The moment was more precious because my mom from Korea, my husband, and my two kids were with me there.

Another pair of unforgettable and precious moments were when I was invited to my son's and daughter's classes as a guest speaker when they were 3rd graders. I intentionally targeted 3rd graders because I thought that the 3rd grade level was the right age group to fully understand the purpose of my presentation and really think it over as time passes in their lives. I gave a speech about an "Everybody is Special!" theme. I was surprised because the kids paid incredible attention to my presentation, including the PowerPoint slides along with the voices from my communication system. The most memorable thing that happened to me after the presentation in my daughter's class was that the teacher asked every student to write me a letter about what they learned from my presentation. I was very touched by their letters because they seemed to fully understand the truth, "Everybody is Special." Of course, my kids were very proud of me at that time.

Where There is a Will, There is a Way

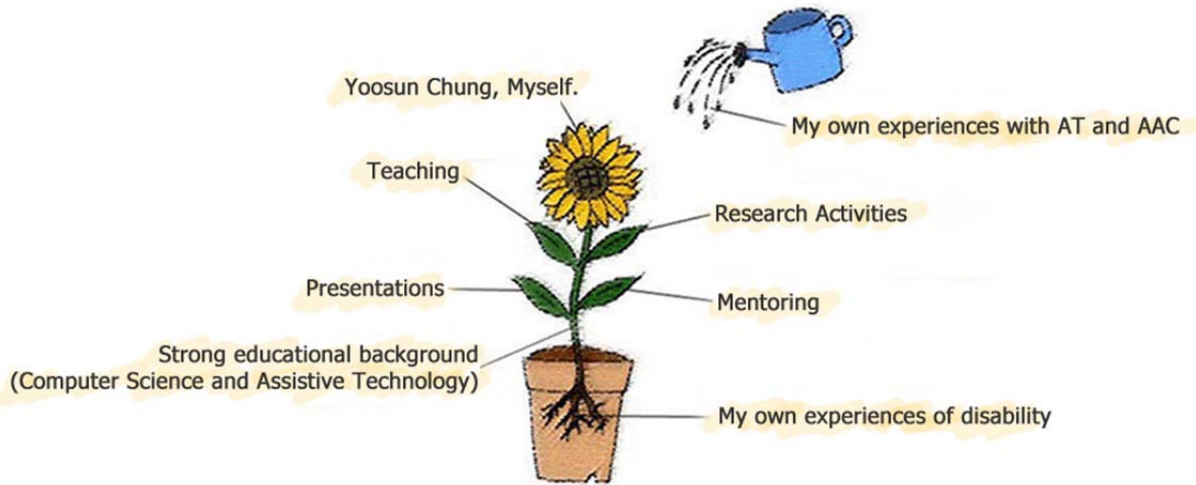
I am originally from South Korea, and I lived there until I graduated from high school. I came to the United States to study and find better opportunities. Traditionally, and even now, some Koreans have looked at individuals with disabilities negatively, thinking of them as stubborn, irresponsible, not-socialized, and incapable. Over the years, the ways of thinking about and towards individuals with disabilities in Korea have begun to change. However, when I was young, many parents hid their children with disabilities from the public. Fortunately, my parents were very different. They brought me anywhere they went. They always said to me, "You can do anything. Just follow your dream."

I often tell my students that they should encourage their students/kids/themselves whether they have disabilities or not, by saying "Do whatever you want even if you think it seems like an unrealistic goal." My father used to tell me that I would be a professor. I thought that was just his unrealistic wish. I thought that there would be no possible way for me to be a professor. Well, now I am a professor.

As I have done during the previous six years, I will continue to make every effort to deliver my knowledge to students in the most effective way. I always make sure that what I have prepared for my courses fits various students' needs and wants because maximizing learning outcomes for my students is my number-one priority. Since my students are mostly school teachers, I want to make sure that they can apply what they learn in my class to their curriculum in their classroom. I will keep trying to provide comprehensive but concise information to students. Nowadays, people know there is abundant information on the Internet, but they are overwhelmed by the amount of information and sometimes do not know where to start. Especially for school teachers who work full time, they do not have time to search for appropriate and correct information for themselves/their students. I believe it is my job to help meet their needs with accurate and comprehensive information. **Life is worth the struggle.**

Appendix

Pictorial representation of the analogy



Additional information about how communication devices work

Someone who reads this might be still wondering “How could a computer talk?” “How could you teach without your capable speech?” “How does Yoosun’s communication system work in class?” If you are one who is still wondering about AT or subject similar in matter, please check out these couple of YouTube video clips as follows. The first short video clip (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJ60bBMesFo&feature=related>) is an interview piece which Stephen Hawking was featured on using his communication device. The second clip, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rXUxk3wFZo>), is about a man with cerebral palsy who shows how he utilizes AT (including his communication system) well to live a productive life. The second one is rather long (about 8 minutes long), but for those of you who have not been exposed to people with disabilities, especially who use a communication system, you may get a new experience in your life.