What is Proloquo2Go?
One main diagnostic feature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is ‘Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts’. An estimated 25% of people with ASD are non-verbal (Autism Speaks website, 2009) which presents many challenges for them and their families. Proloquo2Go is a symbol-based alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) app developed by AssistiveWare that provides voice output, giving a voice to those that cannot communicate effectively. Popular around the world, it is slowly gaining momentum in Hong Kong and is used widely in some school settings, such as at Jockey Club Sarah Roe School. Research has shown that Proloquo2Go, and other full-featured AAC apps improve communication, behaviour, independence and the wellbeing of users, with a potential benefit of increased vocalizations and speech (Niemeijer, Donnellan and Robledo, 2012).

Why use Proloquo2Go?
A comprehensive symbol library is included within the app, or use your own photos.
- Pre-programmed vocabulary sets to accommodate all language levels.
- Different activity templates so many phrases can be used within any activity.
- Quick and easy to edit, customize and ‘grow’ with the user.
- Easy to share vocabulary between users and back up using Dropbox or iTunes.
- Settings can be adjusted to support people with varying motor skills.
- Can be used on an iPad, iPhone, iPod, Apple Watch.
- Available in English, Spanish and French (not Chinese).
- Messages can be emailed or uploaded to iMessage, Facebook, Twitter.
- Cost effective.
- Regular updates are made to the app by AssistiveWare (app developer) to improve what the app can do.
- Quick support can easily be accessed by contacting AssistiveWare through email, Facebook, online forums, online training videos.
- Free resources that support Proloquo2Go use available through AssistiveWare’s Core Classroom (online forum).

Who can use Proloquo2Go with?
- People who understand cause and effect (or who are learning to understand the relationship).
- People with no speech, little speech, or speech that is very difficult to understand.
- People who have adequate fine motor skills to touch a picture (or who can use a switch).
- People with adequate vision to see the images.
- Can be used in conjunction with low tech methods (eg. Visual timetables, communication books, pictures).
- Can be used with people of any age.

Research- Pulse on Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) on iOS (April 2012)- AssistiveWare with The University of San Diego & California State University

Key findings:
- 60% to 80% of the AAC users and families reported improvements in communication with others, in independence, in behavior, in the atmosphere at home, and in general wellbeing since starting with Proloquo2Go or another full-featured AAC App.
- About 50% of the adult AAC users and over 55% of the family members and caregivers report an improvement of verbalization and speech for the AAC user.
- 40-70% of respondents report use of an iOS AAC app to communicate in a variety of other settings beyond the home.

Challenges:
- Less than 10% of adult AAC users and less than 25% of family members and caregivers of AAC users report receiving professional support to effectively implement AAC.
- Close to 20% of the professionals and close to 30% of the family members and caregivers consider the professional supporting the AAC user not or only slightly knowledgeable on AAC.
- Family members and caregivers report that only 20% of the AAC users in their care use AAC for the full-range of communication functions, such as starting and changing a conversation.

How do I learn more?
Beyond Words Speech Therapy is certified with AssistiveWare to provide training on Proloquo2Go and therapy to clients using Proloquo2Go in Hong Kong. Please contact Beyond Words Speech Therapy to enquire about upcoming workshops or to discuss whether it would be beneficial to trial with a child or adult in Hong Kong. You can check the following websites for more information:

Beyond Words website: http://www.facebook.com/BeyondWordsHK

References:
AssistantWare website (2016) http://www.assistiveware.com/product/proloquo2go
AssistantWare Core Classroom (2016) http://www.assistiveware.com/assistiveware-core-classroom
Niemeijer, D; Donnellan, A; and Robledo, J. (2012). Taking the Pulse of Augmentative and Alternative Communication on iOS. http://www.assistiveware.com