

GOBL: Games Online for Basic Language learning (2012-2014)

This project aims to develop web-based mini-games that support spoken interaction for youths and adults who wish to improve their basic language skills [14].

Educational mini-games are small and self-contained games which focus on specific well-defined learning topics, which are highly reusable and cost-effective, and motivating. Mini-games are particularly fit for the development of language skills at the lower end of the proficiency scale (e.g. A2), and allow to focus on aspects which tend to receive little attention in language classrooms nowadays, such as explicit grammar and vocabulary teaching (e.g. [8, 9, 10]). Moreover, there is evidence that disadvantaged language learners seem to benefit most from such mini-games [11].

Over the last few years, games have been used in a number of programmes to **motivate and emancipate disadvantaged citizens**, such as people with health problems [1; 2], deaf people [3], people with dyslexia [4], and young boys 'at risk' who drop out of formal education programmes [5]. Clearly, the motivational aspects of games are being used to address a wide range of socially relevant issues.

For the teaching of foreign languages, a number of **fully immersive games** exist (e.g. [6, 7]), but these often require expensive hardware or gaming skills and are hence not very accessible, or they target more advanced language learners.

In order to cater for the needs of **beginning language learners**, the main objective of this project is to harness the motivational elements of gaming for the basic training of **grammar, vocabulary and communicative skills**. Learning materials will be developed for **Dutch, English and French**, and will be available through mini-games that are embedded in motivating on-line tasks. Additionally, **speech recognition** technology will be implemented for speaking practice in Dutch and English [12, 13].

The project will be carried out by **research units in academia and industry** which have ample experience with e-learning (e.g. <http://www.franel.eu>) and speech (recognition) technology for language learning (see e.g. <http://lands.let.ru.nl/~strik/research/Dutch-CAPT>; <http://lands.let.ru.nl/~strik/research/DISCO>).

The **beneficiaries** of this project include young and adult language learners in formal educational settings as well as at home, and organizers of blended learning programmes in secondary and adult education.

Partners

- Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands (Centre for Language and Speech Technology)
- K.U.Leuven, Belgium (Interdisciplinary research on Technology, Education and Communication)
- University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa (Meraka Institute)
- Televic Education, Belgium

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