

Accessible Language Learning for Visually Impaired People

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Abstract

Language competence as a European competence is an important factor for European development. One of the aims of the European Commission is that all citizens of Europe can understand and speak at least three languages. Therefore, language competence is not only regarded as a central element of the understanding among European people, but also as one of the central qualifications for job mobility and job promotion.

However, adequate language learning materials for blind and visually impaired people are rare. It is therefore difficult to find and to go to adequate language courses, especially if there are no appropriate training facilities locally available. Computer-based, interactive self-studying courses would therefore be a solution. However, these courses are difficult to use for people with visual impairments. This particularly concerns people who have gone blind in later life since only a smaller portion of this group learns reading and writing in Braille.

Facing this challenge, the partners of the Socrates Project "ALLVIP" developed an interactive language learning software for blind and visually impaired people that uses 3D-Sound and a force-feedback joystick for interaction. This innovative approach is used and further developed by two follow-up projects "ELLVIS – English Language Learning for Visually Impaired Students" and "VET4VIP – Vocational English Training for Visually Impaired People".