The Language Magician: developing a tool for assessing young learners

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Erasmus+

Outline

- Introduction to aims of the project

- Project setup

- Tool design:
  - Key decisions
  - Target age group
  - Standards for primary languages
  - Teacher/learner requirements

- Overview of the game concept

- Next steps

Project Aims

To build Strategic Partnerships across Europe:

a) to contribute to higher quality in language teaching across European primary schools

b) to converge standards and

c) to develop an assessment tool for learning modern foreign languages at primary level

GOETHE INSTITUT

LANGUAGE MAGICIAN

Association for Language Learning

University of Reading

Gobierno de La Rioja
Educación, Formación y Empleo

Università per Stranieri di Perugia

EMBAJADA DE ESPAÑA EN REINO UNIDO
CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

ATENEO INTERNAZIONALE
Università per Stranieri di Siena

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

CEP NORTE

Key Decisions

- Which languages?
- What do we want to assess?
- What is the target age group?
- What are the requirements of learners/teachers?
- Game concept
- What are potential technical advantages/constraints?

Game Design: languages

- In the first pilot versions of game 2016:

  - English version for German learners
  - English version for Spanish learners
  - German version for English learners
  - Spanish version for English learners

Game Design: languages

- In the second pilot versions of game 2017:

    - English version for Italian learners
    - French version for English learners
    - Italian version for English learners

Game Design: language skills

- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Writing

- In the first phase of the project it is currently not possible to assess speaking ability due to technical limitations and questions around scoring
- Alternatives speaking assessment activities will be developed along side the electronic game for teachers to use to assess speaking ability

Game Design: standards across partner countries

- Across all countries, the emphasis for listening comprehension is on practical communication and the standards refer to the comprehension of oral messages on familiar topics, and to understanding and following classroom instructions.

- Learners are expected to be able to identify the general sense of the utterance and the communicative intention, recognise familiar vocabulary and to develop the ability to discriminate sound patterns and intonation.

Game Design: standards across partner countries

- For reading comprehension, there is consensus that learners should be able to understand written messages on familiar topics. Again, all of the standards refer to the development of comprehension at word, phrase and text level.

- Learners are expected to identify the general meaning of the written text as well as recognise familiar vocabulary items.

- In some countries there is an expectation that learners should develop knowledge of sound/spelling links so they can read aloud with accuracy.

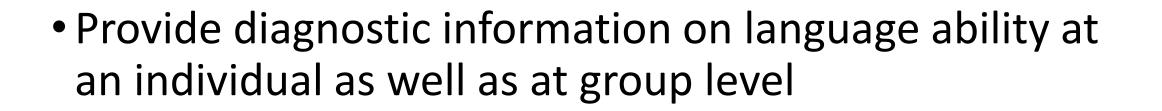# Game Design: standards across partner countries

- For writing learners should be able to describe familiar objects and activities beginning at word/phrase level, moving on to writing simple sentences and progressing to writing short passages on familiar topics while communicating in a simple manner.

Game Design: learner/teacher requirements

- Above all, playing the game should be enjoyable for the learners.

- Will provide information on learners' proficiency with a clear model of progression for each skill from underlying foundational knowledge and skills to comprehension and production at word, sentence level and text level.

- Tasks will be designed to cater for learners from across the ability range and to ensure the output provides evidence of learner progression.

Game Design: learner/teacher requirements

- Provide diagnostic information on language ability at an individual as well as at group level
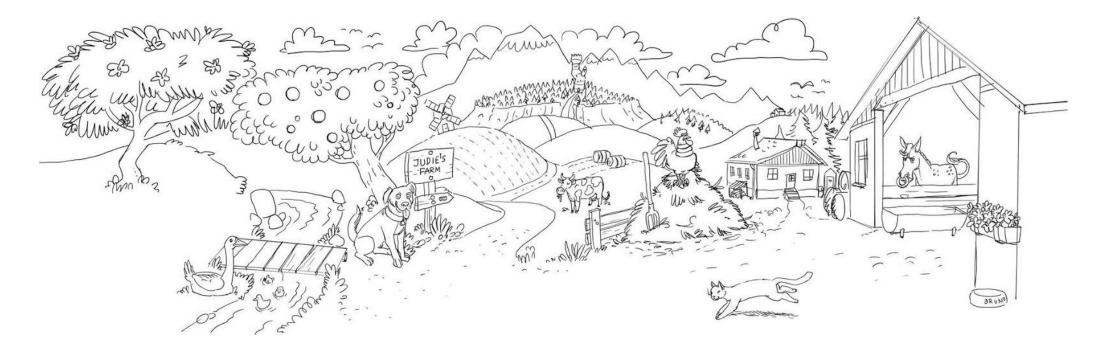
- Provide teachers with evidence of language development so that they can gain a view of the areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Target Age Group

- First phase of assessment game is aimed at learners who have received around 50 hours of tuition in the foreign language
  - England – Year 4 (age 8-9)
  - Other participating countries (likely earlier age 6-7)

Game: storyline

The game takes place in a land, where magic is everywhere. Everyone is (more or less) capable of using magic for everyday tasks. The player's character lives on a nice homestead with many animals. The player's character himself is a magician in training
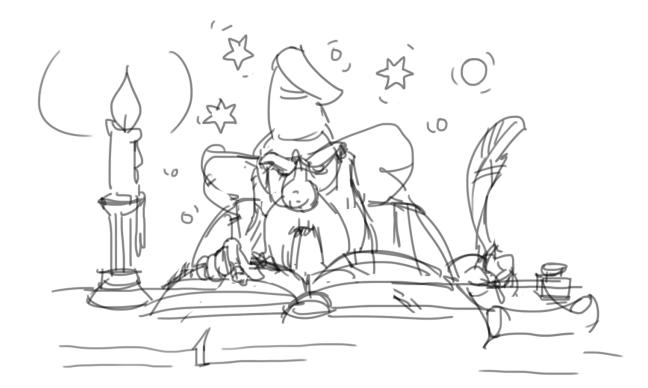
The player selects a male or female avatar and adjusts a few basic parameters (basic clothing, colours and gender). Further accessories can be found and equipped during gameplay (may differ from the final game)

Nearby lives an **evil magician**—a master of spells – in his **magician's tower**. Having studied language magic for years, his tower is filled with books of magic, riddles and items which the player can examine to learn more about the magician and his story.

Behind his evil and grumpy facade, the magician is a sad person, because he doesn't have any friends. No one wants to visit him in his scary tower—no one wants to be his friend. With every failed attempt to find new friends, the magician gets even more evil (and sad). In the end, convincing the evil magician, that it's better to be nice, in order to get friends turns into the player's main challenge. In a last and desperate attempt to get some company, he decides to kidnap all animals from the nearby homestead and turn them into magical door knockers.

The player goes on the journey to free the animals (lift the spell and transform the door knockers back into animals) and bring them back to the homestead. To free the animals they have to complete the language tasks in the game

The player needs to proceed from the basement to the top chamber of the tower to reach the magician for the final showdown
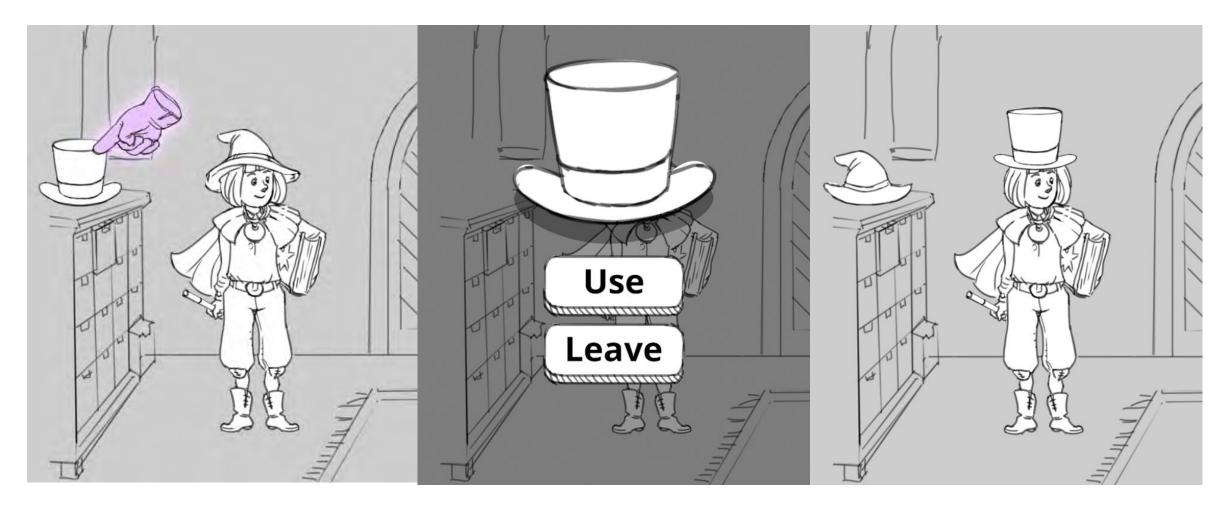
On each floor, there is one animal to be freed from its magic spell: the magician has turned them into **door knockers**. They have to guard the doors until their spell is lifted. The cursed animals can give tips (dialog interface), but cannot move around the room in order to help the player.

And I can only chew on this terrible, terrible ring.

No hay anywhere in this terrible, terrible tower!

Apart from exercises, the levels also contain pieces of clothing and accessories the player can choose to wear.

Teacher Dashboard Application
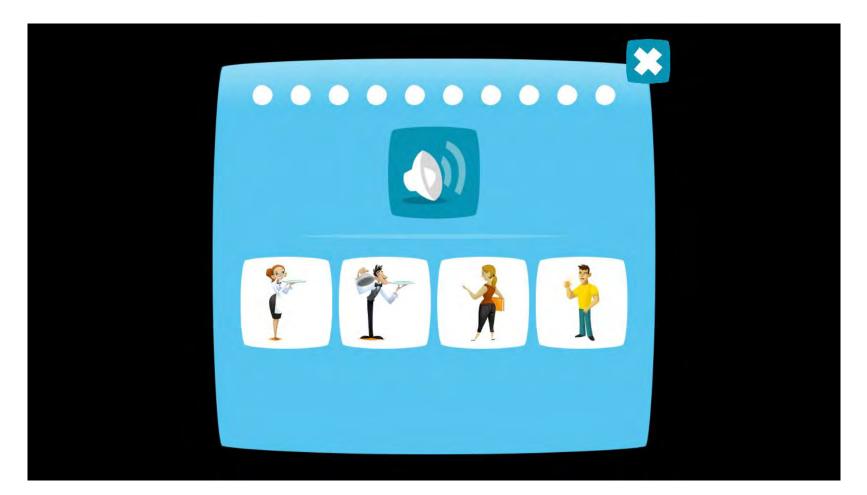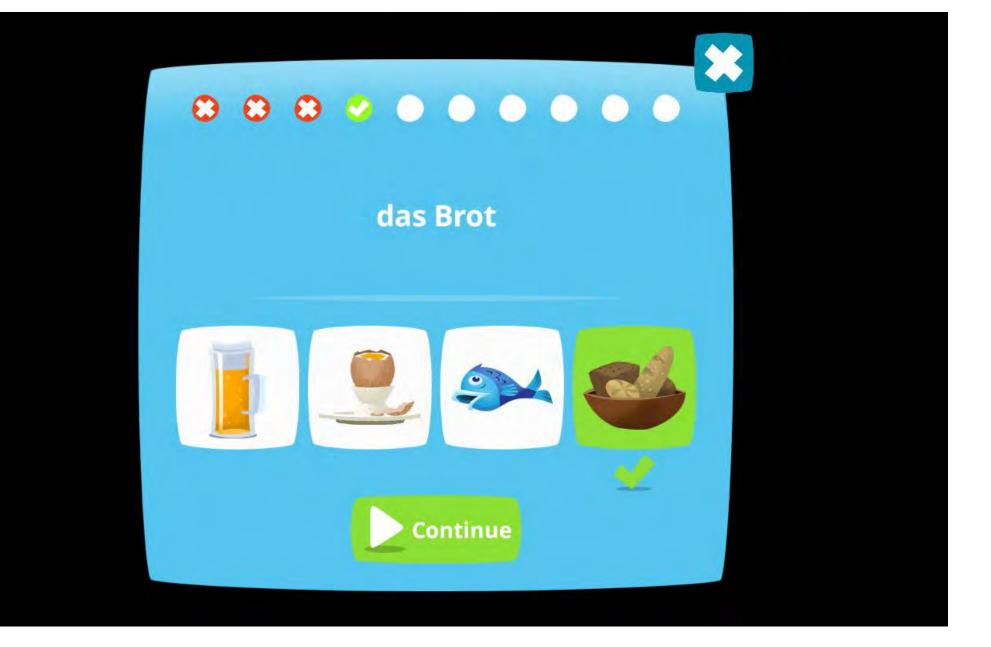## (possible view teacher will have of student progress in real time)

Session ID **jn7df**   Session End at **13:00**   Time left **12 min**   CANCEL SESSION

CONNECTED STUDENTS

Name	Status										Points
Abraham Lincoln	✓ ✓ ✓ 2 ✓ ✗										475
Betty Bernstein	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓										400
Caspar Ghost	2 ✓ ✗ ✓ 2 ✓ ✓ 3										500
Dennis Dunham	2										75
Emily Carter	3										50
Felicia Graham	✗										0
Gustav Gans											0

These are examples of how the tasks may work in the game (background and images will differ and learners will not see number of correct and incorrect activities at the top of the screen as in the following examples)

das Brot

Continue

der das die Solution word

Enter

q w e r t z u i o p ü ß

a s d f g h j k l ö ä

y x c v b n m -

der das die | Solution word
Enter

q w e r t z u i o p ü ß

a s d f g h j k l ö ä

y x c v b n m -

der Hund

das Kind ✔

der Mann

die Frau

Continue

Components / Technology

- **Web Version**
  - PC or Mac
- **Android Version**
  - Tablet (or phone with large screen)
  - Android Version 5.0 or higher
- **iOS Version**
  - iPad Version 2nd Generation or newer
  - iOS Version iOS 9.0 or higher

Research data

- Researchers will have access to anonymised raw learner data to conduct in-depth analysis of task results e.g.
  - Investigate the nature of learner progression in listening, reading and writing
  - Test the reliability and validity of assessment data
  - Development of vocabulary recognition (reading/listening) and production (writing)
  - Link between motivation (via a questionnaire) and task results
  - Any gender differences in performance and motivation

Project next steps

- October 2016 first piloting of game :
  - English for German and Spanish learners
  - Spanish and German versions for English learners
- November 2016-January 2017:
  - Data analysis
  - Presentation of results and dissemination

- Questions/comments?

- Please complete feedback form

- Are you interested in taking part in piloting of game?

Thank you for listening!

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