

How to be a domestic god or goddess in any language

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Students try out their skills at cooking scones in Newcastle University's Digital Kitchen.

Researchers at Newcastle University have cooked up a new way to teach modern languages.

They placed the latest digital devices into cooking utensils to create the

LanCook project - an unique mix of cookery, technology and [language teaching](#).

Working in pairs, learners are guided step-by-step through a recipe in one of seven different European languages: English, French, Catalan, Finnish, German, Italian and Spanish.

Reflecting the UK's diverse culinary history, the English version has a choice of either scones or chicken curry.

Embedded wireless sensor technology (similar to a Nintendo Wii) is inserted or attached to the equipment and ingredients, allowing the kitchen to detect and evaluate progress as the students carry out their cooking tasks. If help is needed, it can be provided through a range of audio messages, images or video.

"LanCook tackles a universal problem of classroom [language](#) learning and teaching – that students are rehearsing a language instead of using it," says project leader Professor Paul Seedhouse, of Newcastle University. "This really helps to bring that language to life in an engaging and memorable way and increases the learners' proficiency skills, motivation and confidence.

"It also integrates the culture of that particular country more effectively, making it an active part of the learning process."

Next month, researchers will be celebrating the project's achievements with a European-themed 'bake-off' on 25 September at Europe House in London, where they will be trying to cook recipes from the partner countries in record time.

The EU-funded project was designed to teach languages in a 'real-life' environment, involving teaching and language experts and enthusiasts

from Finland (University of Helsinki), Germany (University of Paderborn), Italy (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Spain (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and the UK (Newcastle University).

As part of the three-year trial, research teams have been using a portable version of the digital kitchen to host cooking sessions all over Europe with more than 300 lifelong learners.

In Newcastle, Dr Anne Preston, from the University's School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, has been running workshops with teachers and students where chefs, linguists and computer scientists have been linking up to write and try out additional recipes for the kitchen, using a specially designed 'authoring tool' which allows anyone to create and upload new recipes.

Newcastle researchers, who developed both the English and French kitchen versions, are also currently trialling Korean recipes.

More information: europeandigitalkitchen.com/?page_id=46

Provided by Newcastle University

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