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Newcastle 'talking kitchen' could aid language learning

A "talking kitchen" that delivers cooking instructions in French has been created to aid language learning.

The kitchen tracks a user's actions with motion sensor technology and speaks in a similar way to satnav.

Developed at the University of Newcastle, it was trialled at Newcastle College and at the Institut Francais, a charity dedicated to teaching French.

Designed for schools, universities and homes, it could be available by the end of next year.

Project leader Prof Paul Seedhouse said: "By international standards, the UK is low down on the league table when it comes to learning languages - a problem that inevitably has an economic impact.

"We believe that simultaneously developing skills in a country's language and its cuisine will help reverse the trend."

The kitchen is fitted with a computer which allows users to select the French recipes they want to follow.

Digital sensors built into utensils, containers and other equipment communicate with the computer to ensure the right instructions are given at the right time.

Users can ask for an instruction or piece of information to be repeated, or translated into English.

"An overriding objective is to make language learning more enjoyable, more effective, and by linking it to the development of another life skill, more educational too," said Prof Seedhouse.

The cost of adding the technology to an existing kitchen is about £2,000 to £3,000.



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