

# A Kitchen That Talks? This One Teaches You French



LanCook TV

Anne Preston · 16/20 videos

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## A Kitchen That Talks? This One Teaches You French



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A "talking kitchen" teaches students how to cook French and speak French. Researchers at New Castle University in Britain have developed the French Digital Kitchen. Professors Paul Seedhouse and Patrick Olivier led the project. Professor Seedhouse says it works like a satellite navigation system in a car. "The sat nav speaks to you and it tells you, for example, to turn left. And if you turn left then it continues with the program. If, for example, you turn right, then it's a mistake, so it loops back and it gives you further instructions." The kitchen equipment and tools use motion sensor technology similar to the Nintendo Wii game system. The sensors help a computer guide the students through instructions in French. "The system can tell whether you've done what you were asked to do or not. So let's say, for example, the system tells you to take some butter and cut it with a knife ... The sensor in the knife not only knows that the knife is moving, but it also knows what motion the knife is making." Students can ask the computer to repeat the instructions or translate them into English. There are vocabulary lessons before and after the cooking. Professor Seedhouse became interested in the idea after he visited a talking kitchen designed for a different purpose. "It was actually for communicating with people who suffer from dementia ... It can tell them, for example, that they've left the oven on." He says the French Digital Kitchen turns the process of learning language into a real-life experience. But the idea - known as task-based language learning - required a few changes as the researchers were designing the system. For example, if they had a sink full of water, as soon as people finished cooking with an instrument, they would throw it into the water. "And for us that's deadly because the digital sensors were immediately ruined." The system could be available for sale by the end of twenty twelve. Adding the technology to a new kitchen could add an estimated ten to twenty percent to the building costs. The system could also be added to an existing kitchen. The researchers are also developing portable versions. And the European Union has given them money to begin programs in six other languages, including English, Italian and Spanish. For VOA Special English, I'm Carolyn Presutti. You can find links to videos about the talking kitchen at voaspecialenglish.com. (Adapted from a radio program broadcast 31Oct2011)

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