



**MR WINSTON, THE TRUE ENGLISH BOT:
THE BOOKLET ON CHATBOTS IN EDUCATION IS AVAILABLE
31/01/201**

“Mr Winston - the true English bot” is an Erasmus + KA2 project in which 6 European partners are developing a chatbot to tutor VET (Vocational Education and Training) learners in studying English.

During the first year of the project, which started in December 2018, the partners published a guide on Chatbots in Education in 5 languages (English, French, Italian, Slovenian and Finnish). The partners also developed the supporting tools necessary to create the chatbots, which will be made available in the coming months: supporting lessons and an FAQ corresponding to the A1 and B2 levels of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFLR), dynamic teaching content to feed the chatbot, and a beta version of the chatbot.

The second year of the project will focus on 3 main developments:

- the publication of a pedagogical guide on how to use chatbots in language education in practice,
- the development of 2 chatbots (one for level A2 and one for B1), which will be tested during the spring of 2020,
- the creation of a guide to support teachers in creating their own chatbot for language education.

WHAT IS MR WINSTON, “THE TRUE ENGLISH BOT”?

“Mr Winston - the true English bot” is an Erasmus + KA2 project that will develop a chatbot – a conversational robot operating over a messaging app - to teach English to VET learners. The purpose of this project is to develop a chatbot that supports learners who study English at the A2 and B1 levels in following, understanding and remembering the lessons they were taught in class. This chatbot will be supported with open educational resources in the form of corresponding language lessons and a chatbot design guide.

WHEN WILL THE CHATBOT BE MADE PUBLIC FOR TESTING?

The partners of the project decided to create two chatbots: Mr. Winston, which will cover level A2 of the CEFR, and Mrs. Winston, which will cover level B1.

Both chatbots will be made public for testing during the spring of 2020. The partners of the project are planning to have both chatbots tested by at least 500 students and 40 teachers, focusing on the VET sector.

The point of this test is to test, among others, the following characteristics of the outputs of our project:

- Are the chatbots user friendly?
- Do they encourage students to study autonomously?
- Do students feel more comfortable in studying English?
- Do teachers feel more encouraged to use chatbots in their practice thanks to the chatbots of the project and their supporting material?

By gathering the evaluation from real life testers, the partners aim at correcting any possible shortcomings in the tools they produced to ensure they can be used beyond the partnership and after the project.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR A PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE?

A first general Booklet on Chatbots in Education was produced during the first year of the project: its aim was to research existing eLearning solutions for languages, existing chatbots, and to gather advice from experts in education or chatbots and learning. This allowed the partners to identify what advantages an English tutor chatbot could add to the existing set of tools. In short, this booklet aimed at summarising the research that paved the way for the creation of the tools in Mr. Winston.

The pedagogical guide we are creating aims at providing teachers with practical guidance as to the advantages that chatbot tutors can add to their practice, as well as examples in order to encourage them to use the chatbots of the project with their students. At the start of the project, the partners quickly realised that although there were resources existing on the advantages of chatbots in education, practical guidance to support teachers to shift from theory to practice was missing.

In order to bridge this gap, the pedagogical guide will explore:

- Examples of pedagogical strategies to teach with a chatbot,
- Recommendations on how to use Mr. and Mrs. Winston and their support lessons in the classroom,
- How to assess student's performance thanks to the data collection analytics tools from a chatbot platform.

Thanks to this guide, we hope to support teachers into moving from the theoretical advantages of chatbots in language education to the daily advantages they could benefit from in the classroom.

IS CHATBOT CREATION REALLY ACCESSIBLE TO TEACHERS?

Yes... and no. It depends.

Can a language teacher develop their own AI (artificial intelligence) engine that will be able to process the natural language of students, and tutor them according to their needs? In terms of technical skills and time, it seems unlikely.

However, there are several chatbot creation platforms that are available online for free. They are used mostly by ecommerce platform to gather input from their customers. Here, we propose that teachers create their own tutor chatbot for language education. The point is to transfer the experience and methodology that the partners will have acquired during the two years of working on the Mr. Winston project.

One way to make our point is to reveal who created the most technical aspects of the chatbots in Mr. Winston: a Spanish and English language teacher by training. The development of our chatbots was less technical than demanding in design and organisation skills. After working on the skeleton or architecture of our chatbots and taking some time to explore the possibilities of the chatbot creation platform, we had a lot of questions related to the user experience we wanted to provide to learners.

How do we want students to interact with the chatbot: by clicking on buttons or by typing messages? How often do we want students to study with the chatbots ideally? How do we design the personality of the chatbot to make it friendly and supportive? These are not the most technical questions, yet they are the ones that took some time in the creation of the chatbots in this project.

In short: yes, we do believe that provided with the proper tools and design guidelines, any teacher can create their own chatbot.

Fun fact: not only will the chatbot creation guide be available in the form of a PDF file, but it will also come with its own chatbot creation chatbot.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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