

English skills for persons with learning difficulties

Hungary – GNW Ltd. (GNW stands for the names of the founders: Gyarmathy, Nagy, and Weiner)

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The GNW-SupEFL online portal assists young and adult special learners (persons with specific learning difficulties, ADHD, autism spectrum, etc.) in acquiring critical language skills in English and supports their integration into the labour market. Research and experience clearly show that it is possible for special learners to succeed in learning English as a foreign language with the appropriate support. Using self-help methods with access to free ICT-based tools, techniques, and resources, special learners complete foreign language lessons, including self-assessments and guidelines.

QUOTE:

“You don’t have to wait for others, for specialists or for teachers, because the self-help methods give you the freedom of learning, in your own way, with your own material and self-confidence.”

—Ms. Eva Gyarmathy, Head of Project

FACTS & FIGURES

- Altogether, at least 120 special learners from six countries will directly contribute to the training courses as stakeholders evaluate the portal materials.
- The portal will be available at no cost for thousands of special learners.
- 60 English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) trainers were asked to reply to a project questionnaire to get to know the opinions of those working with the target group.
- 90 special learners struggling with English as a second language were asked to reply to a questionnaire to get their views on their difficulties and on what support they find useful.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

The study of a foreign language is becoming increasingly important in a multilingual world, and the command of English is widely considered a key requirement for equal opportunities in education, in the workplace, and for life in general. The exclusion of special learners from EFL classes has been widely recognised, and educational policy in many countries is increasingly reflecting this. Yet EFL teachers and institutions cannot fully meet special learners’ needs. For this reason, special learners should also be supported by self-help methods, giving them greater autonomous control of the language-learning process.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The project serves the need for an open educational portal that special learners can access on their own (or by referral from their teacher) to get help and support. The self-study programme includes seven web-based modules – one each on reading, writing, speaking, listening, memory, motivation, and learning in general. Each module is considered an individual course, and a learner may complete as many modules as he or she chooses. The modules provide special learners with specific tools and techniques to improve their skills and overall competence in the specific area(s) in which they are weakest. The results of other projects aimed at the development of assistive technology (e.g., Robo Braille) will be used as important resources for this project as well.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

After the first trials of the training, there will be more training courses, more advertising of the materials on the websites, and an attempt to approach universities and educational policymakers to promote the methods to a wider audience in education. In Hungary two colleges (Kodolányi College and the Buddhist College) and two universities (University Budensis, a technical university, and the University Semmelweis, a medical university) have already expressed an interest in the method.

Photo: Yes

Life story: Yes

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