

Interview with an

A D U L T E D U C A T O R

HEART Project

(Help educators to teach through robotic tools)

no. 2021-1-PL01-KA220-ADU-000035164

Database and Guide on Educational Robotics

WEBSITE:

- **Please, introduce yourself**

I am a senior educator in a university in the Netherlands. I have over 15 years of experience in the field of teaching and working with adult learners. I work with adult educators and adult learners through my private practice. I provide trainings and am a certified ABA therapist, meaning that I work with people with autism. I also lead several courses in training centers, elective courses in universities of applied sciences and provide trainings in NGOs through my private practice.

- **Have you ever worked with robots during your work with adult learners?**

I started working with robots already 5 years ago with clients through my private practice. While this methodology is not new to me, the developments around the use of robots in education, especially when working with people with disabilities, and the possibilities for adult learners and adult educators continue to increase. There are new developments frequently which is incredible.

- **Can you tell us more about the type of robot you worked with?**

I work with different people and some of my clients are people with autism and dementia. I also speak to parents of children which are part of a family that has purchased the social robot called “Maatje”. This robot is more like a buddy for the child of young adult, but also serves as a care robot. We have programmed it to have different movement exercises and I have also made use of the already pre-programmed rehabilitation exercises. I also provide different types of courses, for instance related to stress and the importance of sleep. For these types of educational practices for adult learners and adult educators I always recommend to the learners to make use of the robot Somnox.

- **How many times did you use the robot?**

I frequently work with “Maatje”. I often use the robot with people with autism or adult learners to teach them on how they can discuss emotions, set up rehabilitation exercises and how to program it for guidance. I (personally) have used it more than 5 times before the pandemic. Mostly I educate the adult learners and other adult educators on the



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functionalities of different robots or include the possibilities of using a robot for a topic that I am presenting about. During the pandemic I tested the functionality of controlling “Maatje” and letting him walk and conducted pre-programmed activities with the clients.

- [How and in what contexts your robot be used?](#)

“Maatje” is really great for many purposes and also that it is available in French, German, English, Turkish and Dutch. Soon also Spanish, Polish and Danish is incredibly helpful given the intercultural society of the Dutch population. “Maatje” can be used for many different purposes and interacted with for different activities but is especially useful in teaching adults on the future of education and treatment for people with disabilities.

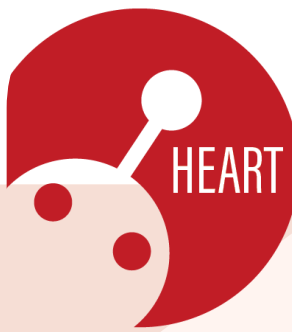
Maatje can schedule appointments and facilitate them. Maatje can also form a dialogue and can be programmed for specific types of actions. For example, an educator can program Maatje to start telling a story related to food, which can remind for instance the care giver that it is time to serve food. Maatje work through PC, MAC and 4G networks with makes is extremely easily accessible to all. What I really like about Maatje is that it can send an SMS if there is an emergency. Also, what is great is that it is possible to preprogram words and sentences with movements and emotions in Maatje’s eyes. There can also be pre-programmed questions and answers. This is done very easily via website www.robot-maat.nl. What is great for therapists is that it can provide their clients with a great structure for daily activities and it’s size is very handy, meaning that the client can take Maatje with them wherever they go, which is not the case for all educational robots.

- [If not confidential, what was the costs for implementation](#)

The robot Maatje costs around EUR 1700 and as far as I know the yearly subscription on the service is around EUR 472. Of course this is only the cost of the robot, the costs for the programming (the therapist’s time) varies.



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- Have you experienced any problem(s) with the robot?

I have never had any technical problems with the robot. I would say that it might be tricky for many to pre-program it online in a fun and interactive way. This is part of the training I provide to adult educators.

- From your point of view, is this robot suitable for teaching children?

Most definitely.

I think it would be even more “fun” and engaging for children to have Maatje at home or on the go.

- From your point of view, is this robot suitable for teaching adult learners with disabilities too?

This robot for sure was intended for learners with disabilities. It can be updated depending on the need of the person and what the purpose of the educator/therapist is. The robot is programmed with the information and is given instructions by the educator for the person who will use it. It is a great tool as it gives many possibilities – from a notification to take medication, to doing a dance, game or a short conversation.

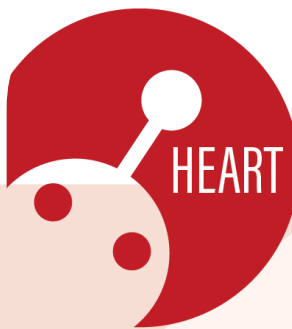
- Do you personally train other teachers to work with the robot?

I am fully aware of how to use Maatje, so I do provide training on its benefits and functionalities. But this is not my core business. I am an educator, who guides adult learners and educators on the different tools they can make use of for a specific topic of choice. In most cases I do try to bridge the gap between education and robotics, but it very much depends on who your audience is. Mostly, younger educators and learners are interested in integrating robotics in their work as they are more “tech-savvy”. So I do train others on using robots for educational purposes, and when asked I do train others on Maatje.

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