

New System Allows Autistic Children To Communicate With Their Environment

Communication ability of children who are intellectually disabled or have communication limitations (such as **autism**, **down syndrome**, or cerebral palsy) may soon be improved thanks to a research group of the University of Granada. SC@UT, which stands for Augmentative and Adaptive Communication System, has been created by the following researchers: 13 professors of the ETSI, ASPROGRADES association and a team of psychologists, psycho-pedagogues, and speech therapists.

All are directed by José Juan Cañas Delgado, professor of Ergonomics of the Department of Experimental Psychology and Behavioural Physiology of the UGR and María José Rodríguez Fortiz, professor of the Department of System Informatics. SC@UT, software for augmenting communication by computer devices (PC's, laptops, PDA's, etc.), is for children with special communication and educational needs, such as those who suffer from autism.

"This is a project promoted by the Regional Government of Andalusia which attempts to reduce differences between disabled and non-disabled people", states Cañas Delgado. "We have created a configurable parameter tool that allows disabled people to interact with their environment. In this way, their adaptation to a world full of barriers is much easier. In this world, social and labour integration is impossible without communication and access to education."

The functioning of SC@UT is easy: through a PC (or even better, a PDA) parents or tutors can download the specific software from <http://www.ugr.es/~scaut/>. Later, the display is ready to be used as a way of communicating between the child and the society. Through the **SC@UT project**, the child can express such needs as going to the toilet or hunger, as well as such states as being happy, sad, or tired. SC@UT includes a speaker which transmits the "user's comments" to the listener.-Universidad de Granada

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