

# Literacy app to stimulate reading development for children with Down Syndrome

## CHILE/CEDETI - LA MESITA APP

The Catholic University of Chile is headquartered in Santiago de Chile. In 2017 its Research Centre CEDETi launched La Mesita, an app stimulating the reading development of children with Down Syndrome. The app allows users to explore several different thematic worlds, such as a nature reserve or the home. Each world contains about 25 words with illustrations, which can be selected for different activities. Between 2017 and 2021 the app has been downloaded more than 10,000 times. An English version has already been launched.

### Problem targeted

According to UNESCO, illiteracy levels in people with disabilities exceed those of non-disabled populations, often due to inappropriate learning tools for different groups.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

La Mesita is a flexible application that supports the reading development of children, targeted at those with Down Syndrome. Users can select a specific environment, such as a fair or an amusement park, and then drag illustrations to a virtual desktop where different literacy activities can be carried out. The application can be played independently, but the company of an adult or a child with more advanced



Playfully expanding the vocabulary with La Mesita.

**“We have designed a space for conversation, entertaining, fun, and attractive for all children.”**

Ricardo Rosas, Director, CEDETi UC

reading skills is recommended. The application is based on scientific research and adapts to the user, allowing an endless number of activities to be generated according to the user's characteristics and needs. People with disabilities participated in the app development, including the design and testing phases. La Mesita can be downloaded for free on touch devices with iOS and Android operating systems. Research has shown that 69 per cent of participants made significant progress in literacy learning when using the app.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The application was created through funding from

donors, including the Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo, a funding agency for high quality research. CEDETi's intention is to continue providing the app for free with the support of public and private funds. An English version of the app, called Tiny Table, was launched in 2020, and CEDETi is aiming to expand the geographical reach by incorporating additional languages. There are also plans to include new features to ensure the app stays up to date, while undertaking additional research based on the experience of users to measure and improve the impact of the app.

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- In 2020 the Spanish version of the app had more than 6,000 downloads.
- 69 per cent of users made significant progress in learning when using the app, according to an internal impact analysis.
- *A practice related to ICT.*