ALPA Kids

The Google Maps Geography

The usage of digital devices among children and the need for native language content
Children under 8 years spend on average every day 2h 16 min behind screens (Ducharme, J. 2017). Every 5th Estonian child under 3 uses a smart phone on a daily basis. The Estonian digital awareness research (Digital Awareness Research) also claims that about 70% of 7-year olds already own a device. But at the same time, most of the content is in a foreign language as most web content is in English (W3Techs). Based on the research of Elyna Nevski, Sonia Livingstone and also international reports (e.g. Unicef, Global Kids Online) it is clear that there is a huge need for native language content that is educational and safe to use.

Previous activity of ALPA Kids
As parents ourselves we really needed native language digital content, so we established our company ALPA Kids OÜ. Together with educational technologists and teachers we create educational mobile and tablet games for children aged 2-8 to provide games to learn the alphabet, numbers, local nature etc through cultural elements that children can relate to.

Our first app was in Estonian. It has more than 12K downloads, about 1.6K weekly users and it is used in 85 countries (many Expat Estonian families). The games are developed on Unity for both Android and iOS.

During the COVID-19 lockdown we got a lot of exposure also abroad and in a short time we have localized the app culturally also for the Indian English community and the Hindi community.

There are about 7000 languages spoken in the world and we aim to localize our games culture by culture. Our mission statement is “every child deserves the chance to use quality digital content in its native language” and we would love it if you would help us on this mission!

More about us here and previous app links: https://www.alpakids.com/, https://www.facebook.com/alpakidsestonia/

The Google Maps Geography: the foundation
We see that native language digital content would help to popularize STEM subjects. Geography and maps are among the topics that children are very interested in from a very young age – often before they learn to read. We want to enable the possibility to shift their screen time towards something useful.

We have joined the Tartu Science Park Sat Apps pre-incubation program and we have validated the idea with their panel of experts (incl. Andrus Kurvits, Martin Jüssi, Vaido Mikheim).

The informative part of the game is compiled with the help of Estonian educational institutions (preschool and primary schools) as we are a part of the official Estonian co-creation programme.

The first edition would be in Estonian and then we would localize it for all the languages in the need of native language content – even the smallest cultures.
The Google Maps Geography

Mission:
Help the traveller alpaca named Alpa to discover the world. The destinations are set with audio, e.g. “Please help me find Tallinn”. The player has to drag Alpa to the correct place on the map. If the place is correct the audio will tell a fun fact about the location. At first the places are more common (largest cities in Estonia) and more difficult ones will follow (islands, smaller cities, lakes and then neighbouring countries). There will be the possibility to expand to lakes, land marks etc. The first edition will be in Estonian but the game should be easily localizable (changing audios) and also the locations according to the next target market.

Visual:
Google Maps SDK for Unity (with simplified UI)
The Verge 2020 - https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/15/21291918/google-maps-gaming-tools-developers-pokemon-go

References

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“Usage statistics of content languages for websites”: https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language
SA - Eesti Statistikaamet 2019

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