



Robotic hand

Innovation > Nonprofit & Social Cause > Robotic hand can read sign language

ROBOTIC HAND CAN READ SIGN LANGUAGE

 NONPROFIT & SOCIAL CAUSE

A team from the University of Antwerp have invented a robotic hand that can turn text into hand gestures.

The first part of a plan to build a sign language interpreter has been unveiled in Antwerp. The robotic hand, that can turn text into gestures, prints the translation in 3D. If the team succeeds, they aim to create an entire robot that can read sign language and has an expressive face.

The University of Antwerp's Sign Language Actuating Node, known as **Project Aslan**, has a team of engineers working towards minimising the communication barriers between the deaf and the hearing. The hand can spell out 'ASLAN' and it is hoped, once complete, will be able to recognise more complex sign language. Using 3D technology, a full arm has been created at a very low cost, making it readily available across the world. As well as meeting social needs, the robot is also a great innovation for the engineering industry, as modifications can be easily added.

The project still has a few years to go before the entire robot is built, but even in its prematurity is already achieving recognition. In 2014-2015, Project Aslan won the best thesis within the Faculty of Applied Engineering at the University of Antwerp. It has also featured on Belgian TV.

This is just one of the many innovations in production across the globe against the challenge to help deaf people communicate more easily with the hearing. In the Netherlands, banking customers are able to tap into a sign language webcam as part of the services by **ABN AMRO bank**. Could this be the end of a need for sign language skills in the service industry with the robot replacing the traditional system of tapping into a hearing loop?

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