The KLettres Handbook

Anne-Marie Mahfouf

Contents

1 Introduction **1**

2 Using KLettres **2**

2.1 Levels 1 and 2 3
2.2 Levels 3 and 4 5
2.3 Configuration dialog 6
2.3.1 About fonts 6
2.3.2 Timers 7
2.4 Getting a new language 8

3 Command Reference **11**

3.1 The Main KLettres Window 11
3.1.1 The File Menu 11
3.1.2 The Level Menu 11
3.1.3 The Language Menu 11
3.1.4 The Look Menu 12
3.1.5 The Settings Menu 12

4 Adding Sounds to KLettres **13**

5 Questions and Answers **15**

6 Credits and License **17**

Abstract

KLettres is an application specially designed to do help the user to learn alphabet in a new language and then to learn to read simple syllables. The user can be a young child aged from two and a half or an adult that wants to learn the basics of a foreign language.

Seventeen languages are available at the moment: Arabic, Brazilian Portuguese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Kannada, Low Saxon, Luganda, Romanized Hindi, Spanish, Slovak and Telugu and but only English, French and your language if it is among those are installed by default.

KLettres is really easy to use. The language can be changed using the Language menu. The user can also choose the Level from 1 to 4 in a combo box in the toolbar or via the Level menu. Themes (background and font color) can be changed in a combo box or in the Look → Themes menu. Three themes are available: Kid, Desert and Savannah. Finally, the mode can be changed from kid to grown-up using the Look → Mode menu.

Chapter 1

Introduction

KLettres is a very simple application that helps a child or an adult to learn the alphabet and some simple sounds in his own language or in another language. The program picks up a letter or a syllable in random, this letter/syllable is displayed and the sound is played. The user should then type this letter or syllable. Training is done in the levels where the letter/syllable is not displayed, only the sound is played. The user does not need to know how to use the mouse, the keyboard only is needed.

There are seventeen languages available at the moment: Arabic, Czech, British English, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Kannada, Low Saxon, Luganda, Romanized Hindi, Spanish, Slovak and Telugu. If your KDE language is among those, then it is taken as default, otherwise French is the default. You can easily get any additional available language by using the File menu and Get Alphabet in New Language... menu item, provided that your computer is connected to the Internet.

Two different modes allow you to adapt KLettres to your need and have the full usual interface or a stripped interface. For a child, the menubar is no longer visible. We assume that a child will not want to set the language himself. A combo box allows him to choose the different levels. For an older user, the background is not so childish and the menubar is present in the Grown-Up style. Three different themes (Kid, Desert and Savannah) set up a different background with different fonts and colors.

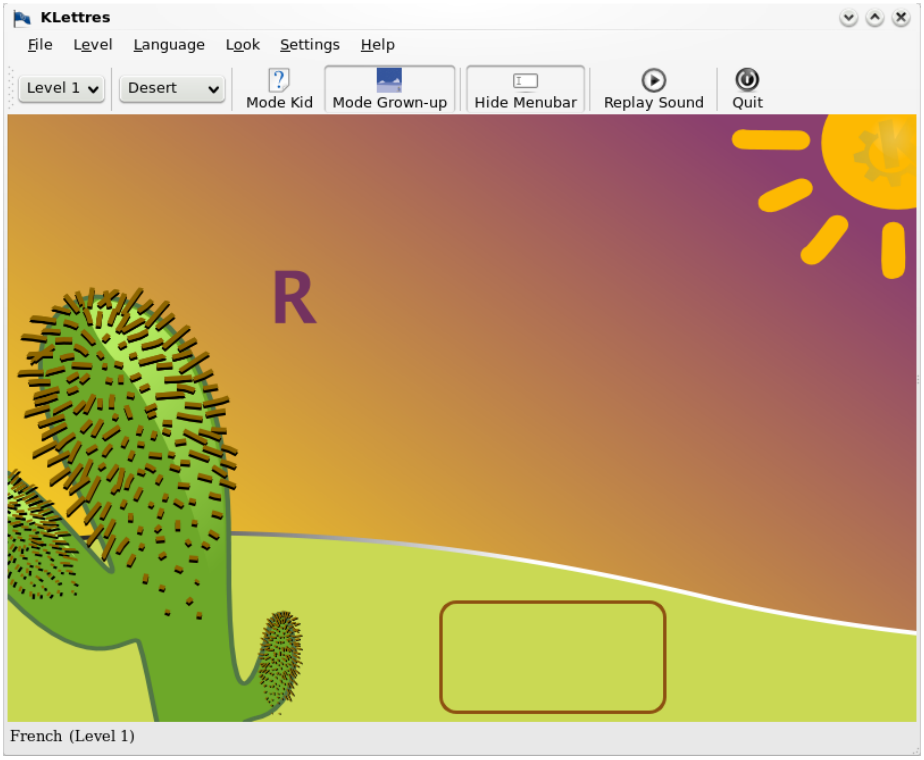
> NOTE
> You do not need the language keyboard layout anymore as you can use the special Special Characters toolbar to type any special character in each language. In the Settings menu, Toolbars, select Special Characters and the toolbar will appear at the bottom of KLettres. Click on the letter you want and it will be shown in the input field. This toolbar can be dragged anywhere on your screen.
> If you prefer having the language keyboard layout, please use , in the section Personal, Regional & Language and submenu Keyboard Layout in order to set the correct keyboard layout.

Chapter 2

Using KLettres

KLettres has 4 levels. Levels 1 and 2 deal with the alphabet and levels 3 and 4 concern syllables. For a very young child (2 1/2 to 4), I would suggest that he/she is sitting on your lap in front of the computer and that you do the game together.

2.1 Levels 1 and 2



Level is Level 1, language is French, theme is Desert and mode is *grown-up*.

> **NOTE**
> If your KDE language is among the supported languages then this will be the default language the first time you run KLettres. For other languages, English is the default. KLettres comes with English, French and your default language if among those listed above and you can get additional languages via File Get Alphabet in New Language... provided you have an Internet connection.

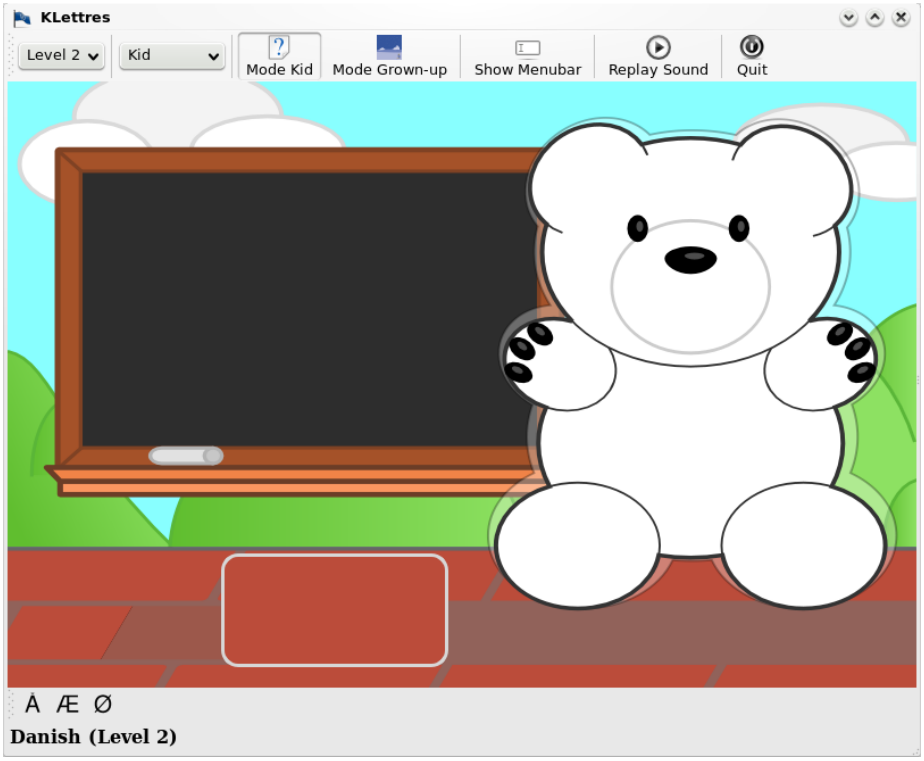
In level 1, the user sees the letter and hears the sound. He then has to type in the letter in the box. If it is correct, the next letter appears (without having to press **Enter** or whatever). If the user types the wrong letter, he hears the sound again. In this level, the user memorizes the letters, associates them with their sound and recognizes them on the keyboard.

> NOTE
> The user can type in either lower or uppercase letters. The letters are automatically put in uppercase so that a child will match them with the keyboard. He can type only one letter at atime.
> When you type a letter in the input field, there is no need to press **Enter** and the program waits for a short while before testing if the letter is right. This short wait is to leave time to a young child to understand what he/she just typed, especially if this is the wrong letter. You can change this time by using the Settings menu, Configure KLettres... and the Timer page which will bring you a dialog where you can set two different times: one for the Kid Mode and one for the Grown-up Mode.

After the first time, the language setting is saved in a configuration file on closing of KLettres and loaded the next time, with the level you were in.

The mode (kid or grown-up) is saved in the config file and therefore is kept until you change.

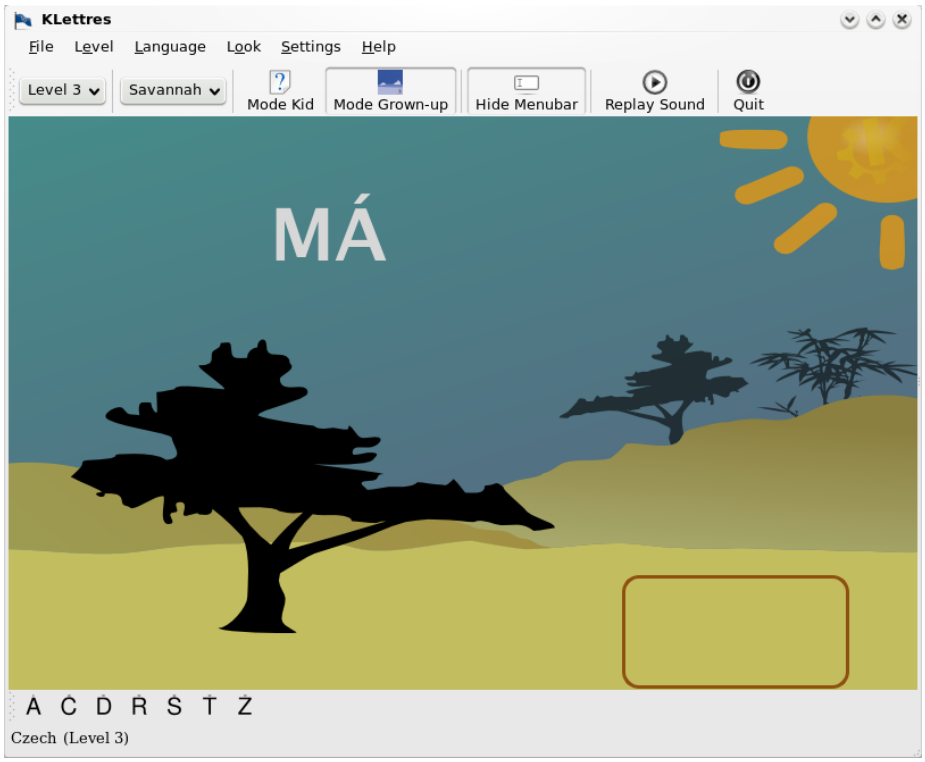
The letters appear in random order. They are not the same consecutively.



Here is a screenshot of Level 2 with the *kid* mode, *Kid* theme and Danish language.

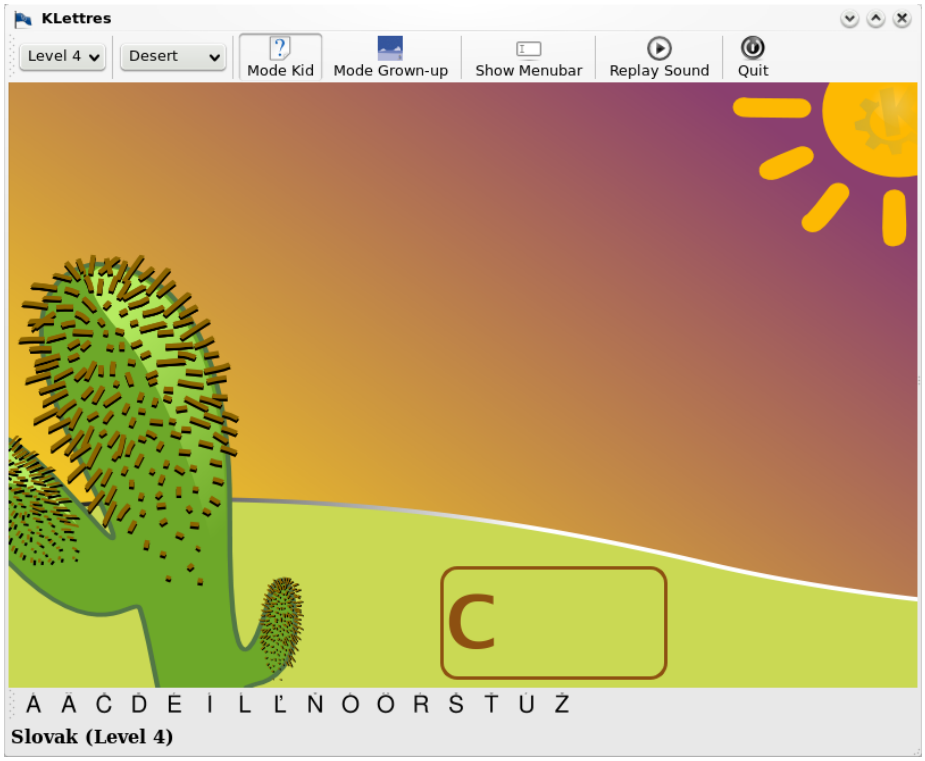
Clicking in the Level combo-box and choosing Level 2 or using the Level menu brings you to level 2. In that level, the user only hears the sound of the letter and has to type in the letter. If he is wrong, the letter appears to help him.

2.2 Levels 3 and 4



Here you can see KLettres level 3, *grown-up* mode, *Savannah* theme and Czech language.

In level 3, the user sees the syllable and hears the sound. He then has to type in the letters in the box. If the first letter of the sound is wrong, the user cannot type in the second one. The letter disappears and he has to try again. The number of letters is two or three, it depends of the language.



Here you can see KLettres level 4, *kid* mode, *Desert* theme and Slovak language.

The sounds appear in random order.

Clicking in the Level combo-box or using the Level menu in the menubar and choosing Level 4 brings you to level 4. In that level, the user only hears the sound of the syllable and has to type in the letters. This level is quite difficult for a young child.

2.3 Configuration dialog

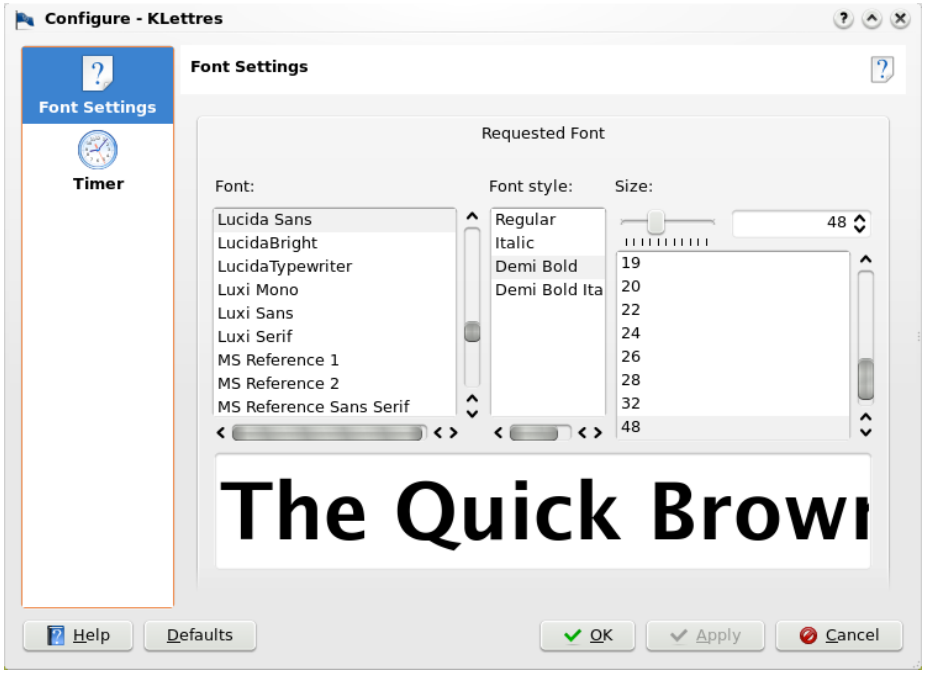
The configuration dialog has two pages: one for Font Settings and one for the Timer.

2.3.1 About fonts

You can easily change the font that displays the letters. In some distribution, the default font used from the system is really ugly. In grown-up mode, in the Settings menu, in Configure KLettres... you will find a Font Settings page with a font chooser dialog. The new font will be applied to both the displayed letter/syllable and the user field.

> **WARNING**
> Changing font is also nice as some fonts (Helvetica for example) do not display correctly East-European languages as Czech and Slovak. If some letters or syllables are not displayed, please change the font and choose Arial for example.

You can also choose here the size you like the best. This size will be kept in configuration.

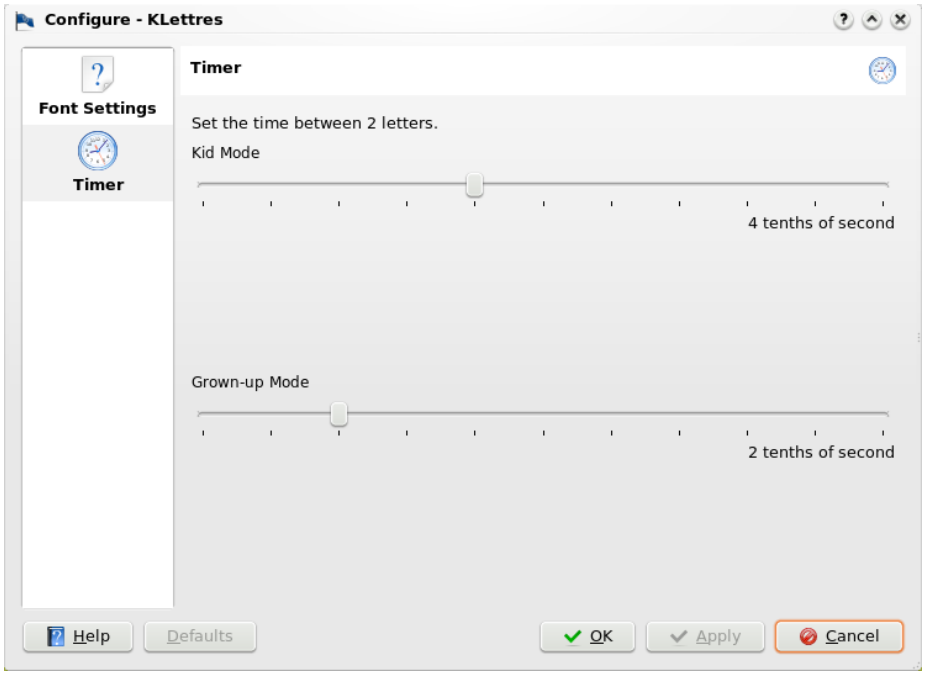


Here you can see KLettres Font Chooser Dialog.

2.3.2 Timers

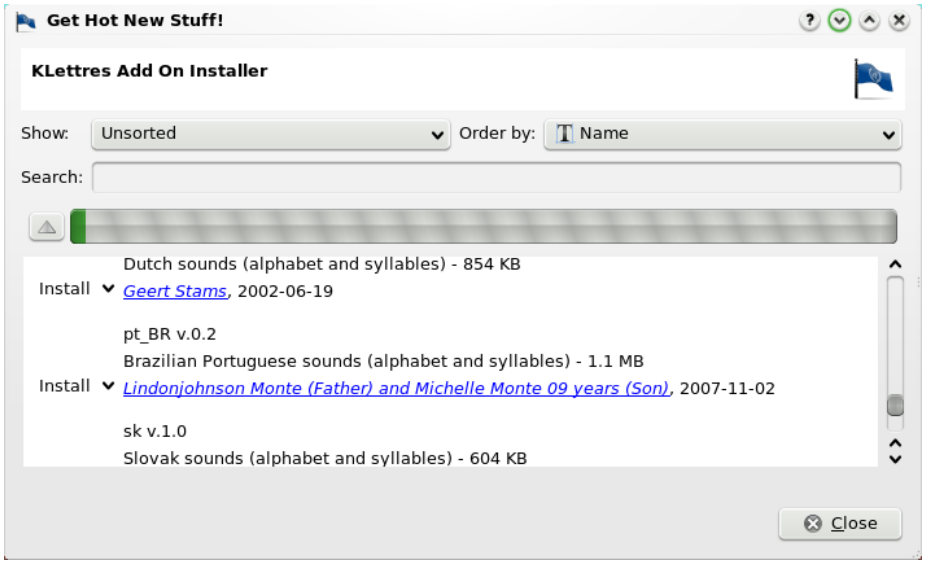
The timers set the time between two letters i.e. the time during wich a letter is displayed. The units are tenths of seconds.

The Timer page in the Settings → Configure KLettres... dialog has two timers settings: one for the Kid Mode and one for the Grown-up Mode. Defaults are 4 tenths of seconds for Kid Mode and 2 tenths of seconds for Grown-up Mode. Increasing the time leaves you more time to see your errors.



2.4 Getting a new language

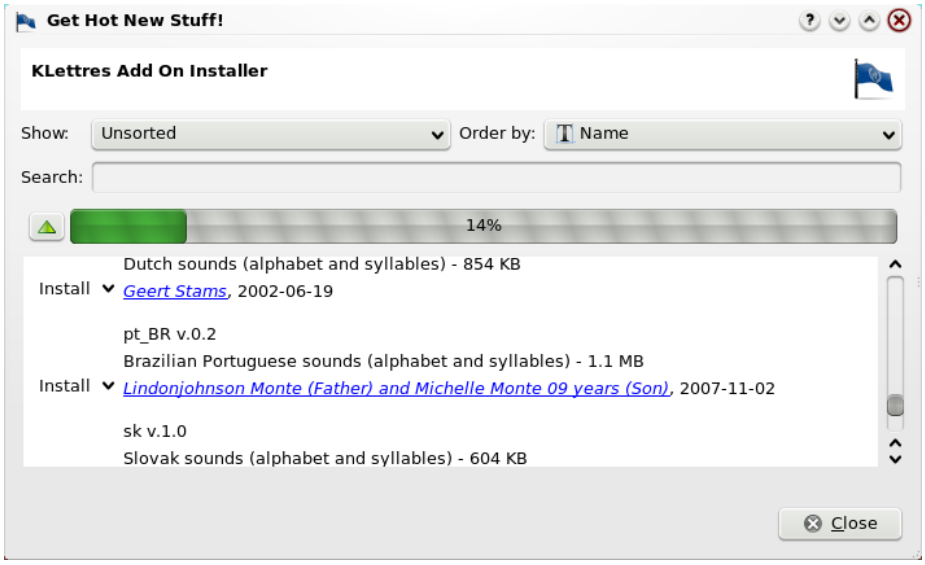
You might want to use KLettres to help you learn a new language. By using File Get Alphabet in New Language..., you will see a new dialog with the list of available languages (you need to be connected to the Internet to use that feature).



Click on the Install button on the left of the language you want to install. You'll see the progress bar indicating how the download is progressing. The next screenshot shows Brazilian Portuguese being downloaded.

Please note that some files have several MB so it might be slow depending on your connection.

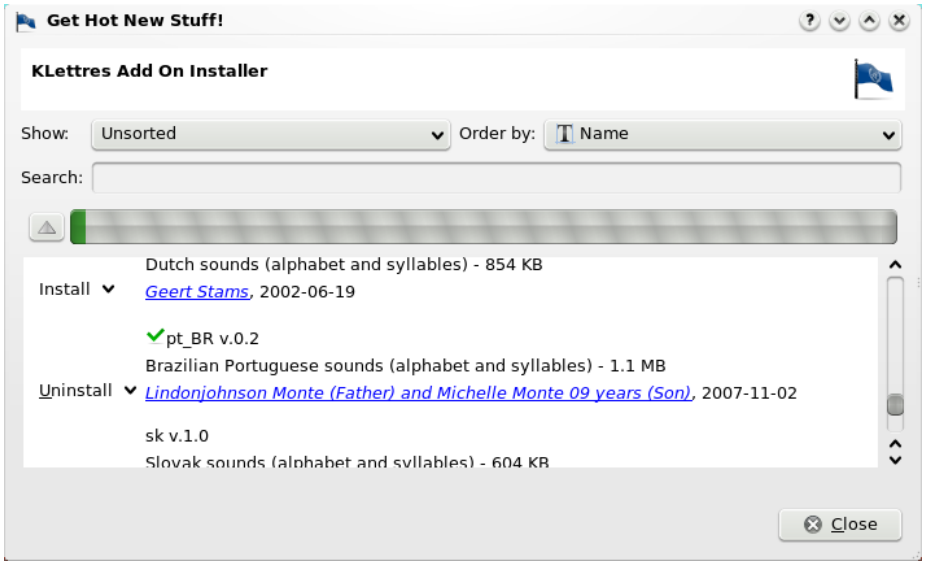
After the file is downloaded, it is automatically installed and when you close the Get Hot New Stuff dialog you'll see the new language in the Language menu and you can use it immediately.



When a language is downloaded, you then can see the Install button turning

to Uninstall and a green tick appears next to the language name to tell you that this language is available in KLettres.

The next screenshot shows Brazilian Portuguese installed.



Chapter 3

Command Reference

3.1 The Main KLettres Window

3.1.1 The File Menu

File → **New Sound (Ctrl+N)** Play a new sound

File → **Replay Sound (F5)** Play the same sound again

File → **Get Alphabet in New Language...** Opens the Get Hot New Stuff dialog for KLettres to download a new language

File → **Quit (Ctrl+Q)** Quits KLettres

3.1.2 The Level Menu

Level → **Level 1** Choose the level 1 (letter displayed and sound)

Level → **Level 2** Choose the level 2 (no letter displayed, sound only)

Level → **Level 3** Choose the level 3 (syllable displayed and sound)

Level → **Level 4** Choose the level 4 (no syllable displayed, sound only)

3.1.3 The Language Menu

Language → **English** Choose the English language

Language → **French** Choose the French language

3.1.4 The Look Menu

Look → **Theme** → **Kid** Switch to the Kid theme

Look → **Theme** → **Desert** Switch to the Desert theme

Look → **Theme** → **Savannah** Switch to the Savannah theme

Look → **Mode Kid (Ctrl+K)** Toggle the kid mode: no menubar

Look → **Mode Grownup (Ctrl+G)** Toggle the grown-up mode: normal interface

3.1.5 The Settings Menu

Settings → **Hide Menubar (Ctrl+M)** Hide the menubar. To show the menubar again, click on the Show Menubar button in the toolbar.

Settings → **Toolbars** Toggle the Main and the Special Characters toolbar

Settings → **Show Statusbar** Toggle the display of the statusbar

Settings → **Configure Shortcuts...** Configure KLettres shortcuts

Settings → **Configure Toolbars...** Configure KLettres toolbars

Settings → **Configure KLettres...** Configure KLettres: display a dialog with the Font Settings page and the Timer configuration page.

Chapter 4

Adding Sounds to KLettres

If you would like to add sounds in your own language, it is very easy to do so. Record the alphabet sounds and place them in a folder named 'alpha'. Then record the most current syllables and put them in a folder named 'syllab'.

Create a text file `sounds.xml`, preferably using Kate as editor or another editor capable of different encoding. In this file, write all the alphabet sounds and syllable sounds you recorded, like this example for the czech language:

```
<klettres>
<language code="cs">
    <menuitem>
      <label>&Czech</label>
    </menuitem>
    <alphabet>
        <sound name="A" file="cs/alpha/a.ogg" />
  ...
    </alphabet>
    <syllables>
        <sound name="BA" file="cs/syllab/ba.ogg" />
  ...
    </syllables>
  </language>
</klettres>
```

Replace "cs" with the two letter code and "Czech" with the name of your language. Write the sound names with the special characters of your language in uppercase in utf8.

Additionally you can tell me about special letters in your language so I can easily generate the special Special Characters toolbar. Create a text file `cs.txt` (replace "cs" with the two letter code of your language) with each special character of your language in uppercase on one line. And save both text files with 'utf8' encoding (upper right dropbox in Kate allows that)

The sounds should be in ogg format and long enough for the audio player to play them (between 1.5 and 2 seconds long, please add some silence if they are too short). Then make a tarball of all that and send it to me.

See the KLettres website for more up to date instructions on how to add a new language.

Chapter 5

Questions and Answers

This document may have been updated since your installation. You can find the latest version at http://docs.kde.org/development/en/kdeedu/ .

1. *The background picture does not appear.*

   If you build KLettres yourself, you need to configure with the `--prefix` option set to your KDE folder or to add this folder to your path.

2. *I do not hear any sounds*

   Make sure that is working on your system. To do so, open and in General, Computer Administration click on Sound.

3. *I do not see some letters on the icons on the special Characters toolbar. I see rectangles instead for some languages.*

   KLettres in Czech and Slovak needs Arial and if you do not have this font installed, please ask your distribution support how to install it.If you have Windows® on your machine, you can use the TTF fonts from Windows® (Arial is in those) via -> Computer Administration -> Font Installer and add the Windows® Font folder.

4. *The letters on the icons on the Special Characters toolbar are too small for some languages.*

   KLettres in Czech and Slovak needs Arial and if you do not have this font installed, please ask your distribution support how to install it.If you have Windows® on your machine, you can use the TTF fonts from Windows® (Arial is in those) via -> Computer Administration -> Font Installer and add the Windows® Font folder.

5. *Why are there only seventeen languages?*

   In order for me to add a new language, I need the sounds for the alphabet and some basic syllables. Someone speaking natively the new language must record these sounds in ogg format. For levels 3 and 4, the syllables

must be chosen by a teacher or someone who knows how children learn: these must be the syllables you have to learn just after the alphabet in order to learn well the basics of this language. Please send me a mail if you are able to do that. See the KLettres website for detailed instructions on how to add a new language.

Chapter 6

Credits and License

KLettres

Program copyright 2001-2007 Anne-Marie Mahfouf annma@kde.org

I am very grateful to the following people whose contribution has been greatly valuable:

- Brazilian Portuguese sounds: Lindonjohnson Monte (Father) and Michelle Monte 09 years (Son) lindon_johnson@brturbo.com.br
- Czech sounds: Eva Mikulčíková evmi@seznam.cz
- Danish sounds: Erik Kjaer Pedersen erik@binghamton.edu
- Dutch sounds: Geert Stams geert@pa3csg.myweb.nl
- English sounds: Robert Wadley robntina@juno.com
- French sounds: Ludovic Grossard grossard@kde.org
- German sounds: Helmut Kriege h.kriege@freenet.de
- Hebrew sounds: Assaf Gorgon assafgordon@gmail.com
- Italian sounds: Pietro Pasotti pietro@itopen.it
- Kannada sounds: Vincent Vikram vincentvikram@gmail.com
- Low Saxon sounds: Manfred Wiese and Sönke Dibbern s_dibbern@web.de
- Luganda sounds: John Magoye and Cormac Lynch cormaclynch@eircom.net
- Romanized Hindi sounds: Vikas Kharat kharat@sancharnet.in
- Spanish sounds: Ana Belén Caballero and Juan Pedro Paredes neneta @iquis.com
- Slovak sounds: Silvia Motyčková and Jozef Říha silviamotycka@seznam.cz
- Telugu sounds: Pavithran Shakamuri pavithran.s@gmail.com

- Original icons: Primoz Anzur zerokode@yahoo.com
- Support and coding guidance: Robert Gogolok mail@robert-gogolok.de
- SVG icon: Chris Luetchford chris@os11.com
- Code for generating special characters icons: Peter Hedlund peter@peterandlinda.com
- Port to KConfig XT, coding help: Waldo Bastian bastian@kde.org
- Kids and grownup SVG icons, Desert theme: Danny Allen dannya40uk@yahoo.co.uk
- Timer setting widget: Michael Goettsche michael.goettsche@kdemail.net

Documentation copyright 2001-2006 Anne-Marie Mahfoufannma@kde.org

This documentation is licensed under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License.

This program is licensed under the terms of the GNU General Public License.