

Foreword

Foreword to Special Issue on "Speech-Based Interfaces in Vehicles"

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Humans have been dreaming of voice-based operation for centuries. Most of us have heard of the "Arabian Nights," and the door that could be opened with the words "Open Sesame". Using this key, Ali Baba was able to get to the treasure and live a long life in peace and happiness. Cassim, Ali Baba's brother, also tried to get to the treasure by using the same "Open Sesame" key. But, he forgot the word "Sesame", and so was killed by robbers.

The rapid progress of modern technology and the move towards an information society have made it possible to operate devices by verbal instructions, even in cars. High-tech info tools can now provide us with the information we need wherever we are. Nevertheless, "getting to the treasure" is often no easier today. Our high-tech tools are producing a lot of people like Cassim, who are giving up before getting to their goal.

Is it possible to say that the dream of "Open Sesame" has come true? I wonder if the task of operating the information door has become any easier. Driving a car is a lot like keeping a lookout for the robbers in the Ali Baba story. If we are preoccupied with trying to remember how to open the door, then we probably won't notice the robbers creeping up on us. We must be able to open the door easily while still being aware of the things going on around us. In the same way, any device in a vehicle should not distract the driver.

One of the most important tasks facing us now is the development of an "information door" that can be easily opened and closed by anybody.