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# THE BRAIN IN SPAIN

A SMART VOICE ANNOUNCEMENT SYSTEM HAS JUST BEEN INSTALLED IN DON QUIJOTE AIRPORT



AviaVox, a Dutch enterprise specialising in artificial announcement systems for airports, will implement its first installation in Spain in mid-2007. The project was awarded by a new airport, Don Quijote (Ciudad Real), 80km south of Madrid. The airport will make use of the most extended version of the system including the Airline-Gate-Client that will be installed on SITA CUTE PCs at the gate.

One of the most underestimated services to passengers at airports is the daily announcements. This is partly because the majority of managers are unaware of the latest technologies, and the services are often neglected because they have always been something that is simply 'there'. If automated, these existing services are often provided by obsolete systems, based on pre-recorded announcements. These systems have many disadvantages, such as voice quality, daily maintenance and limited supported languages and functions.

Because Don Quijote Airport was newly built, the project management team could start from scratch in evaluating the best systems. Having taken a serious look at the automatic announcement systems, the airport wanted to implement the latest technology that could be integrated as part of the facility's daily processes. The AviaVox system uses a digital phoneme (speech fragment) technology that actually makes a computer talk. The artificial voices are so good that they can not be distinguished from a human speaker.

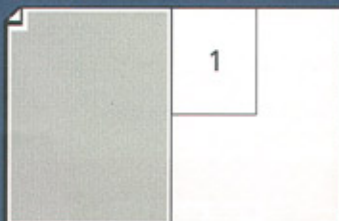
But in addition to the quality, a major point that swayed the airport towards the choice of the AviaVox system is the

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maintenance of the voice base. This is one of the most critical issues that an airport will encounter when using an automated announcement system. With a traditional system new recordings need to be made in a recording studio. This not only adds additional costs, but is also highly vulnerable as recordings need to be made with the same speaker that was used for previous announcements. In addition the tuning takes time, so updates can not immediately be used as soon they are needed.

Don Quijote valued AviaVox's phoneme technology, as it does not have the problems of a traditional system because there are no words and sentences in the system. Simply put, the software generates messages from a database with only digital speech fragments that can be interchanged or tuned. Furthermore a new requirement can be identified in real time and immediately entered into a central database that collects the missing phonemes. This is all done automatically in a highly secure encrypted way with special hand-shaking procedures to ensure the safety of the data. After its initial installation in terminals 2 and 4 at London Heathrow, more than four million phonemes were downloaded just to cope with the changes at the airport. This was measured over a period of only three months and underlines the need for daily voice base maintenance and support.

Along with the use of the generic AviaVox system, Don Quijote Airport will enable airlines to automate their local boarding announcements at the gates through optional Airline-Gate-Client software certified by SITA, ARINC and Ultra Electronics.



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