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SPEECH TECHNOLOGY FOR CONTROLLING ELECTRONIC DEVICES

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Abstract: This paper presents a system that employs the use of speech technology to control electronic devices attached to PCs. The work in this paper is implemented in two major phases. Phase one is the software part of the system. Its role is to accept voice signals from a microphone attached to the PC and perform speech recognition on the signal, determine operating commands from the recognized phrases and control devices attached to the computer ports. Phase two is a hardware logic circuit connected between the PC's printer port and the devices being controlled. This logic circuit which is implemented using simple logic gates performs addressing and control mode for the electronic devices being controlled. The system runs on windows vista operating system and it is capable of authenticating users and validating their action. User response for the system is provided in both voice response and graphic display messages.

Keywords: *Voice Control, multiple devices, speech*

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1. Introduction

Speech is one of the most natural ways to interact. If an application can be controlled solely by way of voice commands then the opportunity that lies is unlimited. Even though the idea of using speech as an input mechanism for an application is not new, there are not a lot of applications that use speech as input. In other words speech is still a big opportunity that is yet to be explored [1-3]

Most people currently are very busy as they strive to achieve their life long dreams and ambitions. As a result they hardly have time to go about normal routines at home, office, train stations or bus stops etc. This has led to high demand for automation of most domestic appliances. Speech is the latest technology which has now arrived at our door steps [4-8].

In addition to having access to digital electronic domestic appliances, at least one in every two households has a computer. Most modern homes boast of numerous and vast rooms. With our busy schedules voice control of domestic devices comes in handy especially with the emergence of Bluetooth audio transceivers. One can now control domestic appliances without necessarily being close to them [9-10].

The main objective of this paper is to develop a system which would allow voice input to control and monitor multiple electronic devices. The system is PC based. It makes use of the PC

microphone, speech recognition technology, and PC communication ports such as parallel port or any other data communication ports available in the PC. This concept presents an opportunity to any individual who has a PC and may wish to use voice as an input to control electronic devices around them.

2. Design methodology

A. Software design

This software implements Automated Speech Recognition(ASR) command interpretation and execution. It receives its input from a microphone connected to the PC. It is driving and manipulating the parallel port. It is also responsible for installing and maintaining information on the domestic appliances being controlled. The software in order to carry out its functions is implemented under the following modules.

- VoiceControl.Core
- VoiceControl.DataAccess
- VoiceControl.Port
- VoiceControl.ParallelPortUtility
- VoiceControl.Security
- VoiceControl.Service
- VoiceControl.Speech
- VoiceControl.UI(User Interface)

Each of the modules is dedicated to unique tasks that eventually build up to the overall software application. Fig.1 shows the interaction between modules.

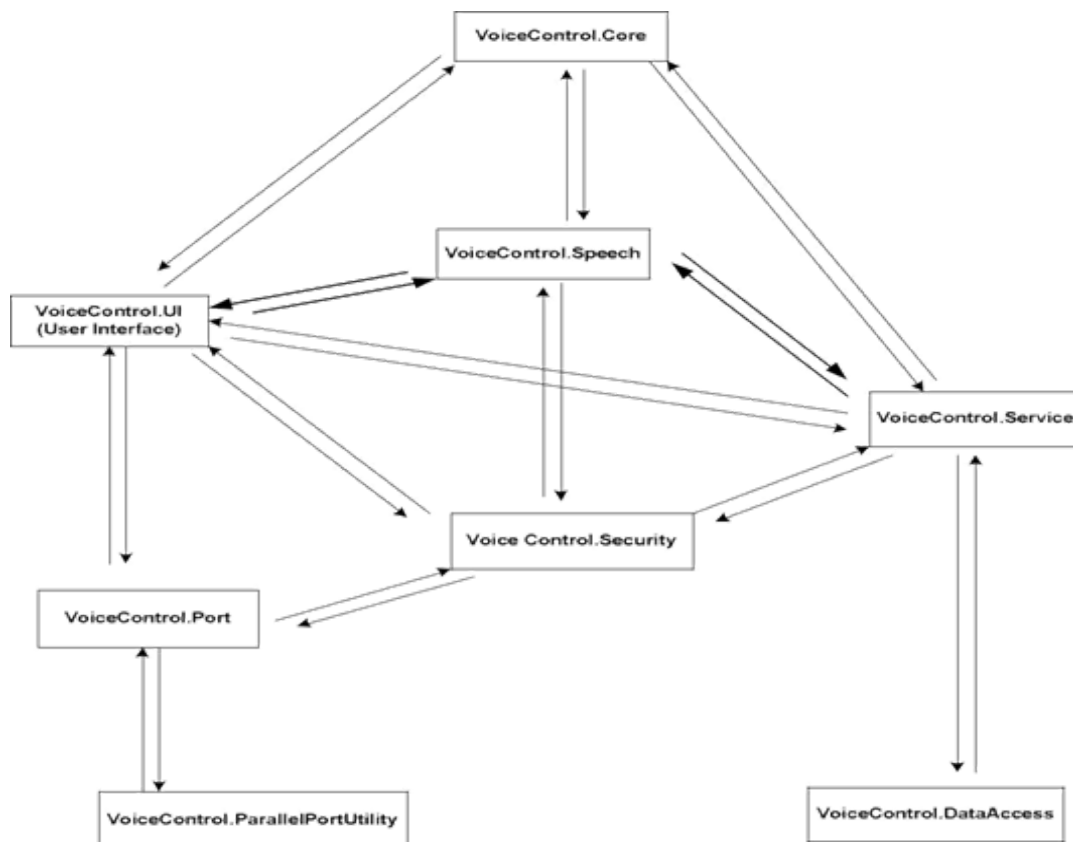


Fig. 1 – Interaction between modules

A-1. System Function

1 - VoiceControl.Core

VoiceControl.Core is responsible for modeling systems objects and all the domestic appliances to be driven by the application.

2 - VoiceControl.DataAccess

VoiceControl.DataAccess tasks involve manipulation of system objects stored in the database. It is charged with establishing a connection to the database, inserting, retrieving, deleting and updating database objects.

3 - VoiceControl.Port

This module contains class objects that model both the serial port and parallel port. The port module provides serial or parallel port class instances which are used to create serial port or parallel port. These therefore access and initiate the actual PC ports for transmission or reception of data.

4 - VoiceControl.ParallelportUtility

This utility module contains the functions which are used to address parallel ports (LPT). It is basically charged with reading or writing to the port. Manipulation of printer ports is a bit complex unlike serial port. To manage LPT ports, the application employs the use of native code in order to directly access registers in the PC which are dedicated to the ports. The application then opens and writes binary or hex data type to the port depending on the operation to be executed.

5 - VoiceControl.Security

In this module, both systems and application level security are implemented. That is for the application level security, authentication of system users is done. On the other hand, it validates every action the user performs on the system. The module verifies whether a particular user is granted permission to perform a certain function. It then either allows or denies the user access to that function.

6 - VoiceControl.Service

The service module is basically an abstraction of the data access module. This acts as a coupling layer between the user interface (UI) and data access module. In this case it has to be loosely coupled allowing for independence of each module and seamless interaction between the calling module and data access module.

7 - VoiceControl.Speech

The speech module provides the means by which input voice signals are recognized and the system's operation command extracted. It also employs the use of voice response to provide feedback to the user.

8 - VoiceControl.UI (User Interface)

This is the graphical user interface (GUI) module. It's basically responsible for providing the user interactivity front for the system. It contains forms with control buttons on it. The user is expected to provide some of the input response through these controls.

A-2. System Users

The voice control system manager is appointed to manage and maintain the devices and the system process data. The user requires basic training on how to use the system and is assumed to be familiar with computers, the Microsoft Windows operating system and commonly used Microsoft Windows microphone input devices. The user's voice is equally trained to increase the accuracy of single word error rate (SWER) engine.

A-3. System Requirements

1 - Operating System

The application is designed to operate on Microsoft Windows Operating System 2000 or higher. (Windows XPSP3, Windows Vista) with the necessary service packs applied.

2 - Database System

The application uses the Microsoft SQL Server (MSDE) 2000 or Microsoft SQL Server 2005 express or higher as the database platform.

3 - Runtime Environment

The application runs on the Windows.NET runtime version 3.0 or higher. The application is developed and compiled in C# .NET. The computer on which the application is installed requires that a supported version of the runtime to be installed. The software natively installs the required runtime.

4 - Hardware

Any computer hardware capable of running the above mentioned system environment is suitable for the application. The system however requires enough hard disk space to accommodate the application database.

A-4. Software Features

The application is designed and developed under the following category.

1 - VoiceControl.Core

- Class Rule
- Class Gate
- Class Light
- Class Phone
- Class PhoneBook
- Class PhoneCall
- Class Radio
- Class ShortMessage

2 - VoiceControl.DataAccess

- Class ActionDAO
- Class DataAccessUtility
- Class GateDAO
- Class IDAO
- Class LightDAO
- Class PhoneBookDAO
- Class PhoneDAO

- Class RadioDAO
- Class SpeechStateDAO
- Class UserDAO
- Class UserGroupDAO
- Class VoiceGrammarDAO
- Class VoiceParallelPortDAO
- Class VoicePPPinDAO
- Class VoiceSerialPortDAO

3 - VoiceControl.Port

- Class VoiceParallelPort
- VoicePPPin
- Class VoiceSerialPort

4 - VoiceControl.Security

- Class Action
- Class User
- Class UserGroup

5 - VoiceControl.Service

- Class ActionService
- Class GateService
- Class LightService
- Class PhoneBookService
- Class PhoneService
- Class RadioService
- Class SpeechService
- Class SpeechStateService
- Class UserService
- Class UserGroupService
- Class VoiceGrammarService
- Class VoiceParallelPortService
- Class VoicePPPinService
- Class VoiceSerialPortService

6 - VoiceControl.Speech

- Class SpeechState
- Class VoiceGrammar
- Class VoiceSpeechEngine
- Class VoiceSpeechTraining
- Class VoiceTTS

7 - User Interface

The following forms are designed

- Actions Form
- Calls Form
- Commands Form
- Dashboard Form

- Gate Form
- Light Form
- List of Calls Form
- List of Objects Form
- List of Sms Form
- Login Form
- Gate Operations Form
- Light Operations Form
- Phone Operations Form
- Radio Operations Form
- Parallel port Form
- Phone Form
- Phone Book Form
- Parallel port pins Form
- Radio Form
- Serial port Form
- Sms Form
- User Form
- User Group Form

8 - Database Objects

The system has a database where it stores information about all installed devices, their status and also information on the system and system users. Therefore a database is designed and the following are the database objects developed:

- Table of Actions
- Table of Devices
- Table of Gates
- Table of Grammars
- Table of Lights
- Table of PhoneBooks
- Table of Phones
- Table of Radios
- Table of SpeechStates
- Table of UserGroups
- Table of Users
- Table of VoiceParallelPorts
- Table of VoicePPPs
- Table of VoiceSerialPorts

A-5. Software Testing

The application is tested at the following two levels.

1 - Unit Testing

This is done to verify implementation of class functions, procedures and properties. A third party tool known as NUnit is employed for unit testing. This ensures that every function or procedure developed returns the results expected of it.

2 - Integration Testing

This is performed to check the overall performance of the application. The system is tested on how it works or interacts with the port hardware interface, response to user input stress (also known smoke test) and finally it is tested against the database.

B. Hardware Design

B-1. Connecting Circuits to the Parallel Port

PC parallel port is a 25 pin D-shaped female connector at the back of the computer as shown in Fig.2. It is normally used for connecting computers to printers, but many other types of hardware for the port are available today. Not all 25 pins are always needed. Usually one can easily do with only 8 output pins (data lines) and signal ground.

The data pins are transistor-transistor-logic (TTL) level output pins. This means that they output ideally 0V when they are in low logic level (0) and +5V when they are in high logic level (1). In the real world the voltages can be something different from ideal when the circuit is loaded. The output current capacity of the parallel port is limited to only a few milliamperes.

The parallel port usually comes as a 25-pin female port and it is commonly used to connect printers to a computer. Many geeks also use it to connect their own devices to their PCs. There are a few more things to remember when using a PC's parallel port. It can load only 2.5mA and ~2.5 volts. It is better to use opto-couplers or ULN2803 when interfacing with an external device.

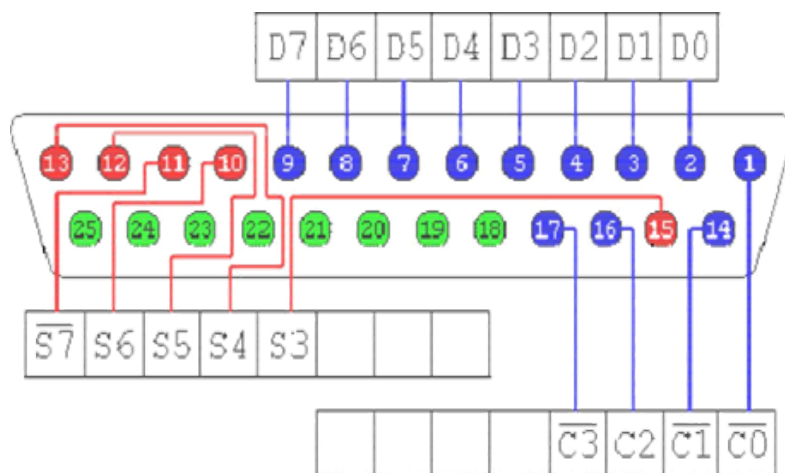


Fig. 2 – Pin out of DB25 connector

1 - Data Register

This is the register that allows the user to write values into the port. In simple words, these pins can be used to output a specific value in a data register. Voltages in specific pins can also be changed. These are called output pins. There are altogether 8 output pins available, ranging from D0 to D7.

2 - Status Register (Pins)

These are called input pins or status registers and can hold a value that the outside world gives to the parallel port. So, this port acts like a reader and it has 5 pins for inputs. The pin range is S4 to S7.

3 - Control Register (Pins)

This register can be used in both ways, it enables a user to write values to the outside world, as well as read values from the outside world. However, we need to remember that most of the control pins work in an inverted manner. We can see them with a dash sign on the top of the pin. Pin range is C0 to C3. Ground pins are used as neutral; these pins are used as (-) in batteries. If we are connecting a device to a parallel port in order to read or write, we have to use one or more ground pins and a read/write pin to work. For example, if we are trying to light up an light-emitting-diode (LED), then we have to connect the (-) of the LED to a ground pin and the (+) of the LED to an output pin. For reading purposes, we use the same mechanism.

4 - Addressing the Parallel Port and Registers

Port addressing control is a great deal in port programming, as it is the door that enables programs to connect to the external circuit or device. In normal PCs, a parallel port address can be one of the addresses given below, but depending on the basic input/output system (BIOS) settings and some other issues, the parallel port address can vary. However, it always lies in one of these address ranges.

- LPT1 03BC (hex) 956(decimal)
- LPT2 0378 (hex) 888(decimal)
- LPT3 0278 (hex) 632(decimal)

5 - How to Light up LEDs

To test the output, assume that we wrote value 2 to the data register and we want to know which pin outputs +5V. The data register starts from pin number 2 and ends in pin number 9, so there are 8 pins for output. In other words, it's an 8-bit register. So, when we write 2 to its data register, +5 voltages will be there in the 3rd pin. We have to take a scientific calculator and convert Decimal 2 to Binary; then the value is $2(\text{DEC}) = 1\ 0(\text{BIN})$, so 1 0 means '000 0 0 1 0' is the status at the data register. When we want to light up an LED, there is a special way to connect them to a data register. Here we have to connect a ground pin to any pin starting from the 18th to 25th. All are ground pins, so there is no difference. The output pin or positive of the LED should be connected to a pin in the data register. When we write a value which enables that particular data register pin, then the LED will light up.

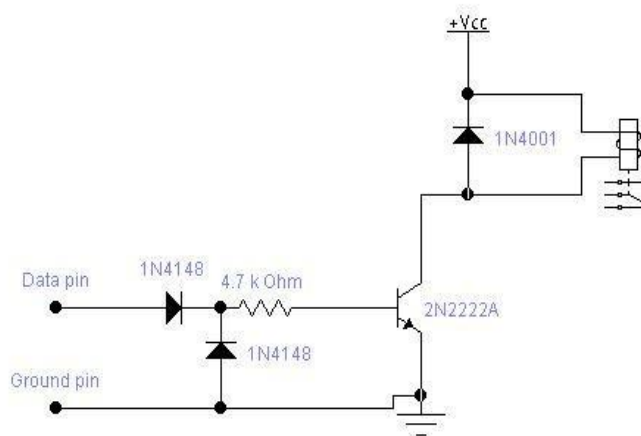


Fig. 3 – Relay controlling circuit

B-2. Relay Circuit

The circuit shown in Fig.3 is used to control the relay from the parallel port.

The circuit needs an external power supply which has the output voltage which is right for controlling the relay (5-24V depending on relay). The transistor does the switching of current and the diode prevents spikes from the relay coil from damaging the computer. Since coils (solenoids and relay coils) have a large amount of inductance, when they are released (when the current is cut off) they generate a very large voltage spike. Hence a diode circuit is used to block that voltage spike from hitting the rest of the circuit. The circuit is then used for controlling the electronic devices.

The 1N4001 diode in parallel with the relay is an essential protection component because damage of the parallel port can occur because of high voltage inductive kickback from the relay coil (the diode stops that spike from occurring).

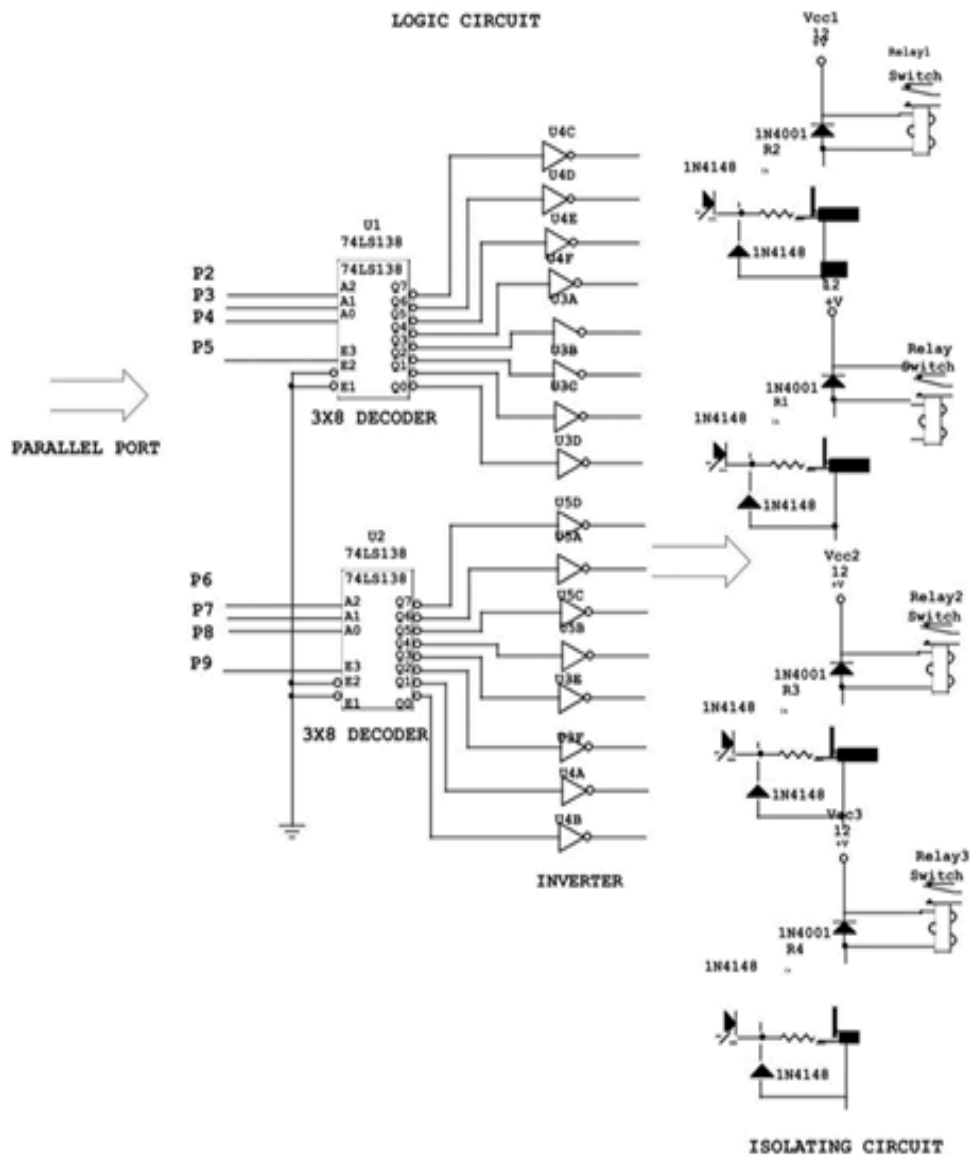


Fig. 4 – Hardware logic circuit

The circuit protects the parallel port against higher than +5V signals and also against wrong polarity signals (power on the circuit is accidentally at wrong polarity).

More safety is added by replacing the 1N4148 diode connected to ground with 5.1V zener diode. That diode will then protect against overvoltage spikes and negative voltage at the same time.

The decoders are used to select the address and control level for a device. The system sends a binary code sequence to the parallel port which is interpreted by the decoder. At the output of the decoder, inverters are connected since the decoders used are active low. The outputs of the inverters are then channeled through circuit with the relay switch which finally drives the devices. The complete hardware logic circuit is shown in Fig.4.

C. System Process

The system in this paper is designed to receive voice signals from the microphone directly connected to the PC. The microphone can be any ordinary microphone compatible with PCs.

The voice/speech which contains control commands is recognized and the command interpreted by the control program. The program is responsible for creating speech grammar from the commands of each device stored in the database. This grammar is then loaded into the speech engine as the basis for recognition.

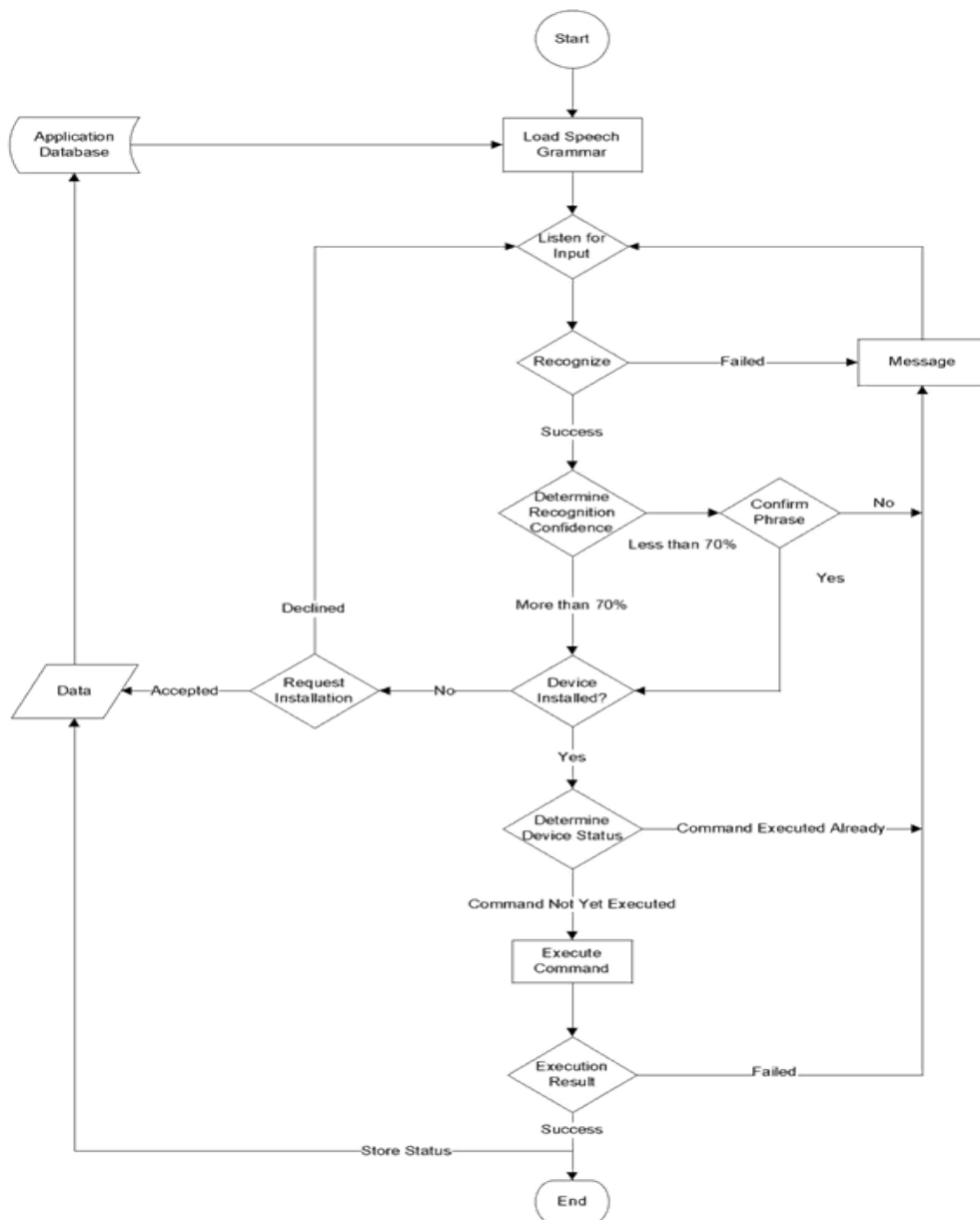


Fig. 5 – Program process chart

The following steps outline the control program's process, while, Fig.5 shows the program process chart.

- The application during start-up initializes the SR engine by loading it with speech grammar. The grammar is created from the operating command phrases stored in the database.
- The application shall then wait for an input signal from the microphone attached to the PC. If voice input is detected it proceeds to 3, otherwise the application will continue waiting for an input.
- The application then initiates speech recognizer instances and parse recognition. If it succeeds the application proceeds to 4, otherwise a system error message is generated and the application goes back to 2.
- Using the initialized recognizer, the application determines the confidence level of the recognized phrase. If it is more than 70% it proceeds to 5, otherwise it goes back to 2.
- The application analyzes the recognized phrase for operating commands. If a command is found, it proceeds to 6, otherwise, it goes back to 2.
- Application determines whether the device to be operated is installed. If so, it proceeds to 7, otherwise it requests for installation of the device and then goes back to 2.
- The system determines the status of the device before executing the operating command. If the command has been executed, a message is generated informing the user that the command had been executed. It then goes back to 2, otherwise, it proceeds to 8.
- The system executes the operating command. If execution of the command succeeds it goes back to 2, otherwise it generates a message indicating an error has occurred then proceeds to 2.

3. Results and analysis

Before the user could speak to the microphone connected to PC with the required command, the system verified whether the user is validated and authenticated. The application verified the user by first confirming if the user existed in the systems database, as shown in Fig.6

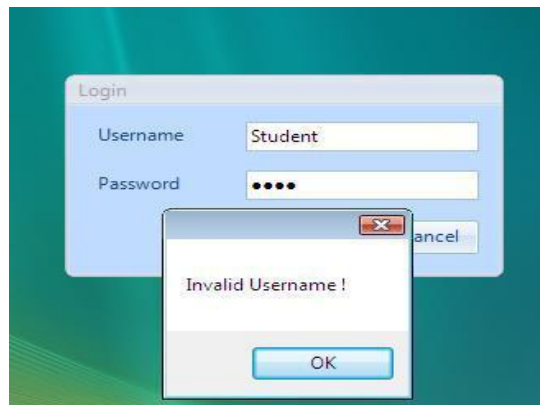


Fig. 6 – User login

After validating, it allows the user to log into the system with the existing user profile. The system established users had not undergone voice training as shown in Fig.7 in order to facilitate accurate speech recognition. It then offered the user a speech training session via a wizard developed in the system to take users through speech training as shown in Fig.8.

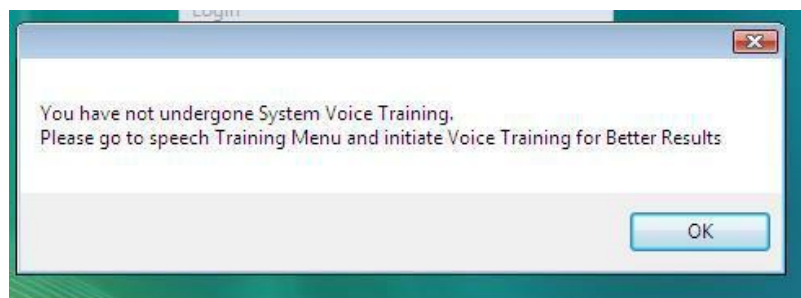


Fig. 7 – Untrained user detected by the application

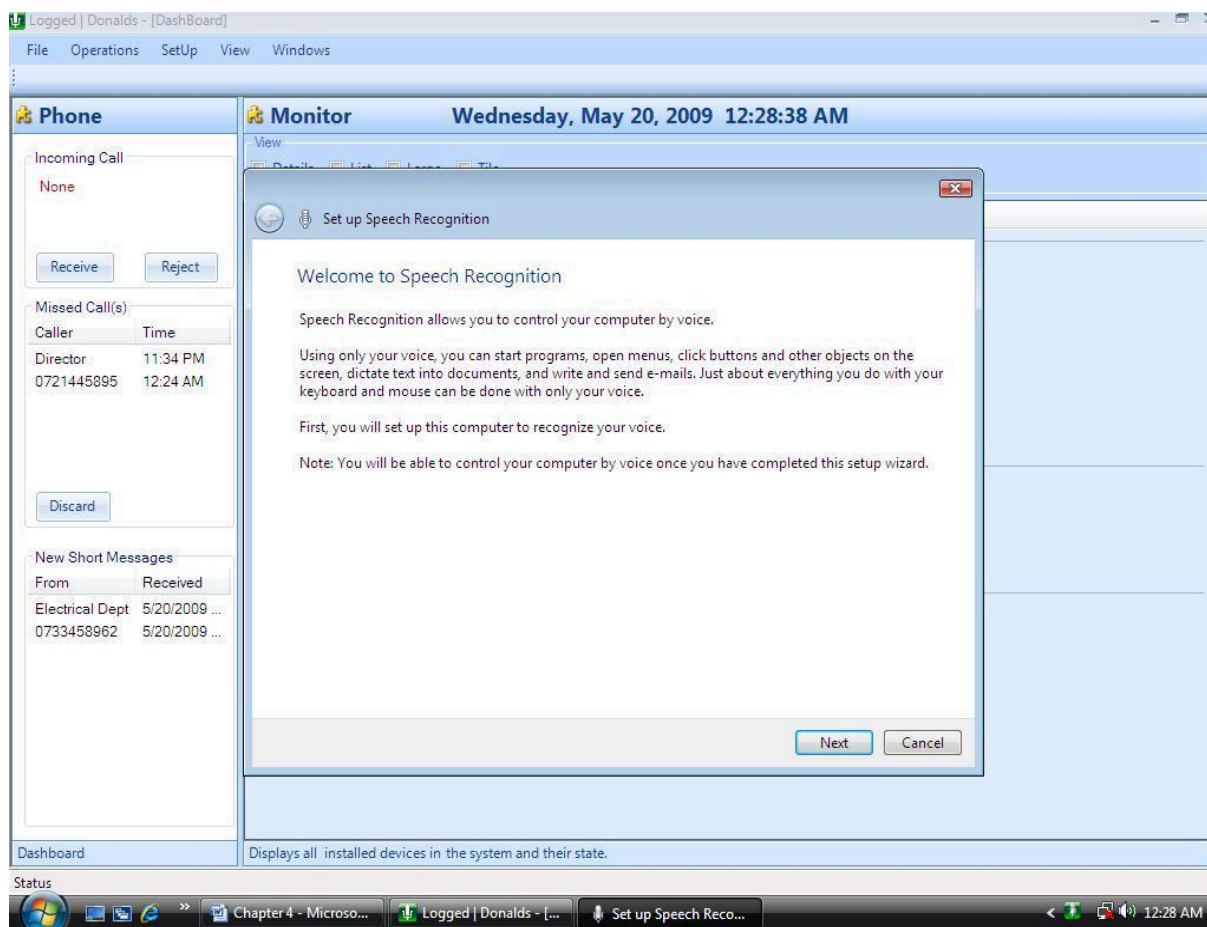


Fig. 8 – Application voice training wizard

Upon completion, the user is allowed to install new devices in the system. This includes bedroom light, sitting room light, a DVD player radio system and a gate. Each of these devices are then assigned operating commands shown in the command table 1. When the system is fully initialized, the user exited graphics thereafter activating speech operating mode for the system as shown in Fig.9.

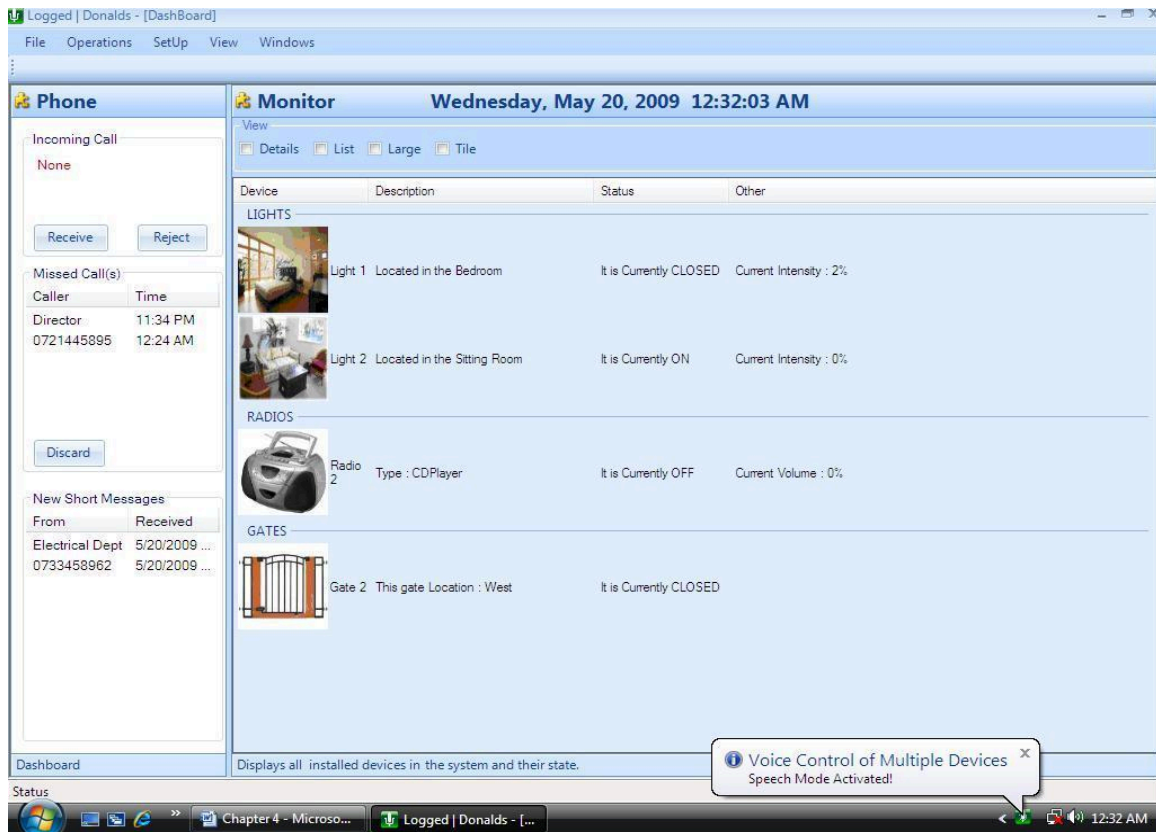


Fig. 9 – Speech activated

The system loaded the speech engine with grammar whose main parameters are the systems installed devices commands and names. When speech is detected in the microphone, the system first establishes its threshold. In order to achieve this, the application uses speech hypothesis to determine the confidence level of the recognized phrase. It then uses the recognized phrase for example, 'Bedroom Light ON', to verify whether such an action is permitted for the user. The user had permission to switch on or off any device. It goes ahead and checks if the light is ON. It was not ON and so the system goes ahead and implements the command. It returns a voice response 'Bedroom Light Switched ON' to the user. Table 2 shows various results.

Table 1. Commands table

DEVICE	COMMANDS	PORT ADDRESS	CONTROL PINS
Bedroom Light	Bedroom Light OFF Bedroom Light ON Increase Bedroom Light Intensity Decrease Bedroom Light Intensity	888	Pin02, Pin08, Pin09, Pin07, Pin06
Sitting room Light	Sitting room Light ON Sitting room Light OFF	888	Pin03, Pin08, Pin09, Pin07, Pin06

Gate 1	Gate 1 OPEN Gate 1 CLOSE	888	Pin05, Pin08, Pin09, Pin07, Pin06
CD Player Radio	Radio ON Radio OFF Increase Radio Volume Decrease Radio Volume	888	Pin04, Pin08, Pin09, Pin07, Pin06

Table 2. Various results

DEVICE	STATUS	RECOGNIZED PHRASE	NEW STATUS	VOICE RESPONSE
Bedroom Light	OFF	Bedroom Light OFF	OFF	Bedroom Light is OFF
	OFF	Bedroom Light ON	ON	Bedroom Light is ON
	50% intensity	Increase Bedroom Light Intensity	60%	Intensity is now 60%
Sitting room Light	ON	Sitting room Light OFF	OFF	Sitting room Light Switched OFF
Gate 1	CLOSED	Open Gate 1	OPENED	Gate 1 Opened
CD Player Radio	OFF	Radio ON	ON	Radio Switched ON
	0% Volume	Increase Radio Volume	10% Volume	Volume is now 10%

4. Conclusions

A speech based voice control of multiple devices was discussed, designed and implemented. The design and implementation was based on connecting a microphone and connecting the electronic appliances through the parallel port. The software was developed to perform automated speech recognition and response operations. The results obtained for the system allowed users to control various home appliances using their voice speaking directly to the microphone attached to the system. The system also allowed the users to get voice response feedback from the system on the accomplishment of the request. The users were also able to inquire and get the status of the various home appliances connected to the system. The user's voice was also able to be trained by the system. Though to keep the application simple, only the bare minimal features of the application were emphasized.

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МОВЛЕННЄВІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ КЕРУВАННЯ ЕЛЕКТРОННИМИ ПРИСТРОЯМИ

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Анотація: У цій статті представлено систему, яка використовує мовленнєві технології для керування електронними пристроями, підключеними до ПК. Робота в цій статті реалізується у два основні етапи. Перший етап – це програмна частина системи. Його роль полягає в прийнятті голосового сигналу від мікрофона, підключеного до ПК, та виконанні розпізнавання мовлення за сигналом, визначенні робочих команд з розпізнаних фраз та управління пристроями, підключеними до портів комп'ютера. Другий етап – це апаратна логічна схема, підключена між портом принтера ПК та керованими пристроями. Ця логічна схема,

реалізована за допомогою простих логічних вентилів, виконує адресацію та режим керування керованими електронними пристроями. Система працює під управлінням операційної системи Windows Vista та здатна автентифікувати користувачів та перевіряти їхні дії. Відповідь користувача для системи надається як голосовою відповіддю, так і графічними повідомленнями.

Ключові слова: *Голосове керування, множина пристроїв, мовлення*