CarPet Artist Statement

CarPet is a speech radio-controlled car. The concept behind it explores the idea of human computer interaction. By having the car react to speech commands, which are not perceived as random sound waves but actual words that are found in a common language, it creates the illusion that the machine can understand the user. We could say that the machine is “speaking our language”. This way, the relationship that has been existing between machines and people, where the communication is limited by the technical expertise of the user, is reduced to a communication made through the speech. There is a more personal relationship between you and the car because, instead of typing or controlling it through another device, you just need to talk to it. Similar to, for instance, a dog, to whom you can talk to and depending on the command given he will react. CarPet takes this idea a little further. It intends to remove the language limitation as well. If it can understand different languages, then it would be available to a broader audience and thus it can be a device that people from different parts of the world can interact with without distinction.

The multiple language supported by the car is one of the most interesting features of the project. Not only because it allows a wide array of users to interact with the user but because of the nature of the feature itself. This is because the technology at hand used to recognize speech has not yet reached the level of accepting several languages at the same time. So, it creates an interesting paradox. How can it be possible that something that only recognizes one single language is able to understand some others at the same time? CarPet explores what I call the “interpretation blunder”. It basically is just taking the words from other languages and transforming them into English words. The code has the misinterpretation of words in other languages coded on its arrays of accepted terms. Some words that have nothing to do with the actual action will produce it anyways. For instance, “allez” is often understood as “ally” and although the word ally does not have anything to do with movement, it will make the car move. That also explains the name of the project. Is it being associated with a piece if textile material used to decorate or is it being associated with a car that can understand? Nonetheless, It raises then the question of whether we are actually communicating with the machine or whether we care at all what is happening as long as it understands.