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Breaking the silence, courtesy of the mind

First published: Wednesday, November 30, 2005

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Wolpaw said his lab's latest research stands up to its competitors, and he points out that implantable devices can cause infections or even damage.

The Wadsworth researchers are working on at least two approaches. Hamel can easily move an icon, dot or mouse point in two or three dimensions, to choose commands, surf the Web or spell out words.

The second approach is another spelling program that uses a technology called P300. It flashes columns and rows of letters in a format that looks like a search-a-word puzzle. When the desired letter is highlighted, the user has what is called an "oddball," or "a-ha!," response, which the skullcap and software detects.

Wolpaw's team is nearly ready to offer its system to people who need it. They recently got a boost -- the 2005 Altran Foundation for Innovation Award -- through which a European consortium will give Wadsworth 1 million euros worth of free consulting: advice from scientific and business professionals on how to build an interface for users and to market it to them.

The hardest part may be making the complex system work for everyone, regardless of their technical skills.


"To be any good," said Wolpaw, "this has to work without us standing there."

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