



[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 2 \(2009\)](#) > [Ju](#)

Approachability: How People Interpret Automatic Door Movement as Gesture

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Abstract

Automatic doors exemplify the challenges of designing emotionally welcoming interactive systems—a critical issue in the design of any system of incidental use. We attempt to broaden the automatic door’s repertoire of signals by examining how people respond to a variety of “door gestures” designed to offer different levels of approachability. In a pilot study, participants ($N=48$) who walked past a physical gesturing door were asked to fill out a questionnaire about that experience. In our follow-up study, participants ($N=51$) viewed 12 video clips depicting a person walking toward and past an automatic door that moved with different speeds and trajectories. In both studies, our Likert-scale measures and open-ended responses indicated significant uniformity in participants’ interpretation of the behaviour of the door prototypes. The participants saw these motions as gestures with human-like characteristics such as cognition and intent. Our work suggests that even in non-anthropomorphic objects, gestural motions can convey a sense of approachability.

Full Text: [PDF](#) [HTML](#)

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[Table of Contents](#)

Approachability: ...

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Reading Tools

- [Review policy](#)
- [About the author](#)
- [How to cite item](#)
- [Indexing metadata](#)
- [Email the author*](#)



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