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## Fridge magnets tinker with poetry

By Anna Sallah for Science Online

Fridge magnets may one day be able to fix bad grammar and change the words to something they think is more appropriate.

"The idea is that each magnet is aware of the other magnets on the fridge and they transmit information between each other," Australian digital artist Pierre Proske said.

Mr Proske is working with researchers at the Future Applications Lab of the Viktoria Institute in Sweden to develop the intelligent fridge magnets.

Details will be presented at the International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces in Sydney later this month.

Each fridge magnet consists of a 16-character liquid crystal display, rather than a magnetic strip with a printed word.

The magnets can randomly generate a word, categorise that word as a noun, verb, adjective or adverb and transmit the category to any words they are placed next to.

As you compose a poem, placing words in grammatical order, the magnets communicate with each other to learn the grammar rules you are using.

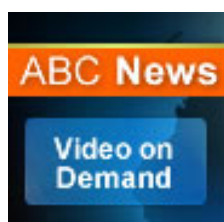
Once they are trained, the magnets can change the words they are displaying to substitute words that do not fit the established grammar rules, like an autocorrect function.

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"So the actual word that's associated with each magnet can change depending on the way in which it's aligned," Mr Proske said.

Luckily if you do not like the word the magnet substitutes, you can always take the magnet off the fridge and shake it to reshuffle and get a new word.

The plan is for users to be able to reset the magnets completely so they forget all their grammar rules.

Of course, the magnets rely on being taught good grammar in the first place.

"Someone could instil bad grammar if they wanted to," Mr Proske said.

### **'Total sense' unnecessary**

But he does not want to take all the fun for those kitchen-based partygoers that like making up crazy sentences on fridges.

He says the system will only worry about which words can be immediately next to each other and will not be too strict about the grammar of the sentence as a whole.

"This was deliberate to keep the sentences a little more poetic," Mr Proske said.

"The idea is it is still fridge poetry. We don't want to create sentences that make total sense."

The team also hopes that the magnets will be able to substitute words in response to stimuli other than bad grammar.

Mr Proske says for example, someone might have a set of magnets on the home fridge and a set of magnets on the work fridge that can communicate via wireless Internet.

If the magnets at home read, for example, "Crazy kangaroos dream wildly" those at work might change it to "Drunk wallabies laze around the pool" - in keeping with the Australian theme.

The team also suggests it might be interesting to apply their ideas to Scrabble and crosswords, but says further details on this are a subject for further investigation.

Mr Proske and colleagues have so far half developed a prototype intelligent fridge poetry magnet system and are hoping to get more ideas at the Sydney conference.

They are not just interested in generating another product for the consumer market.

Mr Proske says this is a "whimsical and accessible" way to contribute to the study of developing intelligent robots.

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