Advances in Learning for Intelligent Mobile Robots

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ABSTRACT

Intelligent mobile robots must often operate in an unstructured environment cluttered with obstacles and with many possible action paths to accomplish a variety of tasks. Such machines have many potential useful applications in medicine, defense, industry and even the home so that the design of such machines is a challenge with great potential rewards. Even though intelligent systems may have symbiotic closure that permits them to make a decision or take an action without external inputs, sensors such as vision permit sensing of the environment and permit precise adaptation to changes. Sensing and adaptation define a reactive system. However, in many applications some form of learning is also desirable or perhaps even required. A further level of intelligence called understanding may involve not only sensing, adaptation and learning but also creative, perceptual solutions involving models of not only the eyes and brain but also the mind. The purpose of this paper is to present a discussion of recent technical advances in learning for intelligent mobile robots with examples of adaptive, creative and perceptual learning. The significance of this work is in providing a greater understanding of the applications of learning to mobile robots that could lead to important beneficial applications.

Keywords: Intelligent robots, adaptive control, robust control, reinforcement learning, adaptive critic, creative control, perceptual control

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There are several approaches to the design of automation systems. Systems can be designed for a specific job or they can be multipurpose. One approach to automation is to tailor a system to the solution of a specific problem. This approach has the advantage of the user being able to amortize the cost of the system over many units in production. However, if the product changes too rapidly, the system may not be able to be changed fast enough to be useful. Also, if the automation does not work perfectly without significant tuning, the tuning maintenance cost may make the system cost prohibitive. Finally, in other cases, the specific design simply cannot be realized perhaps because the constraints permit no admissible solution.

Many cases of automation have needs opposite the ones for the specific job requirements. The tasks may be varied. The tasks may change rapidly. The number of iterations required for each task may be small. In these situations, an automation system that is multipurpose, versatile and easily changed is desirable.

In general, a system may be divided into hardware and software components. To design a multipurpose system, adaptable hardware or software or both is required. Hardware versatility can be achieved with a robotic approach. The robotic approach consists of hardware that is a multi-functional manipulator designed for a variety of tasks and controlled by software.

It should be easier to change the software than the hardware. However, this is not always the case and depends on the language, the editor, the operation system, the training of the operators, etc. Software that is well designed and cleanly implemented and well documented is changed readily. It is worth striving for these qualities. Many problems or tasks can be solved with a specialized use of a general mobile robot base with manipulators and tools. Therefore, the general capabilities of the hardware components is very important. Also, the flexibility of the software, its ease of use by developers, its ease of understanding by users are very important.

In the design of an intelligent robot a controller is needed. For the controller, the ultimate objective is to obtain one that will cause the system to perform in a desirable manner for all times and environments. Other design factors such as weight, size, cost, reliability, etc. also influence the controller design so that compromises between performance requirements and implementation considerations must be made.

The criteria is also important. Classical design procedures such as response to a step function, characterized by a desired rise time, settling time, peak overshoot, or settling time to a steady state value or frequency criteria such as phase margin, gain margin, peak amplitude or bandwidth are most suited for single-input, single output, linear, time invariant systems. Since mobile robot systems are non-linear, multiple-input, multiple output systems, new approaches are needed. For non-linear, multiple-input, multiple output systems, simulation and mathematical analysis may lead to an optimal control that can be implemented with a digital controller. However, implementation is not guaranteed since all the states must be available for feedback to the controller for the optimum control law. In any case, the optimal control provides a standard for evaluating suboptimal designs that may be suggested from knowing the optimal solution..

During the past 20 years, the use of intelligent industrial robots that are equipped not only with motion control systems but also with sensors such as cameras, laser scanners, or tactile sensors that permit adaptation to a changing environment has increased the number of applications significantly. However, relatively little has been done concerning the application of learning capability to industrial or mobile robots.

What can be learned by a robot? Some examples that will be discussed include: part of all of the model of a robot; unknown parameters in the model of a robot; the path such as a straight line to follow between known end points; a path such as a curve between certain given control points; a path from a start to a goal that avoids obstacles; a path that minimizes some criteria function such as distance from an ideal path as in seam welding; a path that avoids collisions with stationary or moving obstacles; a path that permits a robot to cover an entire region with a tool such as a paint brush; a task that can be accomplished from a set of tasks some of which are impossible; how to accomplish a task safely, etc. Optimal control theory tells us that if as performance criteria is selected and constraints defined, then the optimal solution is a control law that causes the system to follow a trajectory in state space than minimizes the performance measure.

Would such a robot be safe? Perhaps not during the learning phase. This learning must be done in a laboratory or controlled environment. However, after the learning phase is complete the robot can be run in an automatic mode. In this automatic mode, whether the robot is safe or not depends on the design of the robot and work environment. When a robot and human occupy the same workspace, the situation is not safe. Also, during automatic operation, data can be collected for the next learning cycle to achieve continuous improvement.

One basic example of learning that is familiar to many control engineers is the selection of the parameters for a PID compensator used in a servo control. Proper parameters permits one to achieve accurate point to point and controlled path operation. This problem can be solved with a learning control. In an unstructured environment, the terrain changes may change the load on the robot's motors.. Learning the parameters of a proportional, integral and derivative controller (PID) with an artificial neural network provides a method to design an adaptive and robust control.

Learning may also be used for path following when the path is unknown. Simulations that include learning may be conducted to see if a robot can learn its way through a cluttered array of obstacles. If a situation is performed repetitively, then learning can also be used in the actual application.

To reach an even higher degree of autonomous operation, a new level of learning is required. Recently learning theories such as the adaptive critic have been proposed. In this type of learning a critic provides a grade to the controller of an action module such as a robot. A creative control process may also be used that is "beyond the adaptive critic." A mathematical model of the creative control process is presented that illustrates its use for mobile robots.

Human perceptual processing that often depends on natural language processing also provides a model for advanced intelligent control. Examples from a variety of intelligent mobile robot applications are also presented.

1.2 Intelligent Robots

Intelligent robots are an ideal, a vision. All one has to do to see the intelligent robot model is to look in a mirror. Ideally, all intelligent robots move dexterously, smoothly, precisely, using multiple degrees of coordinated motion and do something like a human but that a human now doesn't have to do. They have sensors that permit them to adapt to environmental changes. They learn from the environment or from humans without making mistakes. They mimic expert human responses. They perform automatically, tirelessly, and accurately. They can diagnose their own problems and repair themselves. They can reproduce, not biologically but by robots making robots. They can be used in industry for a variety of applications. A good intelligent robot solution to an important problem can start an industry and spin off a totally new technology. For example, imagine a robot that can fill your car with gas, mow your lawn, a car that can drive you to work in heavy traffic, and a machine that repairs itself when it breaks down, or a physician assistant for microsurgery that reconnects 40,000 axons from a severed finger nerve or 1,300,000 in an optic nerve.

Intelligent robots are also a reality. NASA's robots are making measurements on Mars. Some hospitals have food delivery and physician surgery aid robots. Industrial robots are now commonly used. Many more intelligent prototypes have been built. Typical industrial applications are: high speed spot welding robots, precise seam welding robots, spray painting robots moving around the contours of an automobile body, robots palletizing of variable size parcels, robots loading and unloading machines.

In 1985, Hall and Hall[1] defined an intelligent robot as one that responds to changes to its environment through sensors connected to a controller. Now greater ambitions can be considered. Dynamic Programming (DP) is perhaps the most general approach for solving optimal control problems can be used for formulating problems. Adaptive Critics Design (ACD) offers a unified approach to deal with the controller's nonlinearity, robustness, and reconfiguration for a system whose dynamics can be modeled by a general ordinary differential equation. ANN and Back propagation (BP) made it possible for ACD implementation[2]. However, in order to develop "brain-like intelligent control"[3], it is not enough to just have the adaptive critic portion. A novel algorithm, called Creative Learning (CL) to fill this gap. For even greater autonomy, a perceptual controller may be required.

The third section of this paper presents the development of a proportional-plus-derivative (PD) Computed-Torque (CT) and proportional-plus-integral-plus-derivative (PID) CT controllers[4]. A dynamic simulation, based on a framework developed by Lewis, et al.[5], was conducted and modified to suit the navigation of a wheeled mobile robot (WMR). The simulation software takes, as input, the desired robot path from the navigation algorithm described in a previous paper[6]. The simulation software produced the suitable control torques. This simulation was developed using Matlab and C++.

Shim and Sung[7] proposed a WMR asymptotic control with driftless constraints based on empirical practice using the WMR kinematic equations. They showed that with the appropriate selection of the control parameters, the numerical performance of the asymptotic control could be effective. The trajectory control of a wheeled inverse pendulum type robot had been discussed by Yun-Su and Yuta[8], their control algorithm consists of balance and balance and velocity control, steering control and straight line tracking control for navigation in a real indoor environments.

Rajagopalan and Barakat[9] developed a computed torque control scheme for Cartesian velocity control of WMRs. Their control structure can be used to control any mobile robot if its inverse dynamic model exists. A discontinuous stabilizing controller for WMRs with nonholonomic constraints where the state of the robot asymptotically converges to the target configuration with a smooth trajectory was presented by Zhang and Hirschorn[10]. A path tracking problem was formulated by Koh and Cho[11] for a mobile robot to follow a virtual target vehicle that is move exactly along the path with specified velocity. The driving velocity control law was designed based on bang-bang control considering the acceleration bounds of driving wheels and the robot dynamic constraints in order to avoid wheel slippage or mechanical damage during navigation. Zhang et al.[12] employed a dynamic modeling to design a tracking controller for a differentially steered mobile robot that is subject to wheel slip and external loads.

A sliding mode control was used to develop a trajectory tracking control in the presence of bounded uncertainties[13]. A solution for the trajectory tracking problem for a WMR in the presence of disturbances that violate the nonholonomic constraint is proposed later by the same authors based on discrete-time sliding mode control[14-15].

An electromagnetic approach was investigated for path guidance for a mobile-robot-based automatic transport service system with a PD control algorithm was presented by Wu et al.[16]. Jiang et al.[17] developed a model-based control design strategy that deal with global stabilization and global tracking control for the kinematic model a nonholonomic WMR in the presence of input saturations. Adaptive robust controllers were also proposed for globally tracking problem for of the dynamic of the non-holonomic systems with unknown dynamics[18]. However, real time adaptive control is not common in practical applications due partly to the stability problems associated with it[19].

A fuzzy logic controller had also been tried for WMRs navigation. Montaner and Ramirez-Serrano[20] developed a fuzzy logic controller that can deal with the sensors inputs uncertainty and ambiguity for a direction and velocity maneuvers. A locomotion control structure was developed based the integration of an adaptive fuzzy-net torque controller with a kinematic controller to deal with unstructured unmodeled robot dynamics for a non-holonomic mobile robot cart[21]. Toda et al.[22] employed a sonar-based mapping of crop rows and fuzzy logic control-based steering for the navigation of a

WMR in an agricultural environment. They constructed a crop row map from the sonar readings and transferred it to the fuzzy logic control system, which steers the robot along the crop row. A local guidance control method for WMR using fuzzy logic for guidance, obstacle avoidance and docking of a WMR was proposed by Vázquez and Garcia[23] the method provide a smooth but not necessary optimal solution.

1.3 Intelligent Control Theory and Neurocontroller

In order to design intelligent robot controllers, one must also provide the robot with a means of responding to problems in both temporal and spatial context. It is the goal of the robot researcher to design a neural learning controller to utilize the available data from the repetition in robot operations. The neural learning controller is based on the recurrent network architecture, and has the time-variant feature that once a trajectory is learned, it should learn a second one in a shorter time.

An artificial neural network (ANN) can be used to obtain the system model identification that can be used to design the appropriate intelligent robot controller. Once the real system model is available, they can also be used directly in design of the controller[24]. A time-variant, recurrent network will provide the learning block, or primary controller, for the inverse dynamic equations discussed above. The network compares the desired trajectories with continuous paired values for the multi-axis robot, at every instant in a sampling period. The new trajectory parameters are then combined with the error signal from the secondary controller (feedback controller) for actuating the robot manipulator arm. Neural networks can be applied either as a system identification model or as a control for the robot controller. ANNs can be used to obtain the system model identification that can be used to design the appropriate controller. Once the real system model is available, they can also be used directly in design of the controller. Neural network approaches to robot control are discussed in general by Psaltis *et al.* [25], and Yabuta and Yamada [26]. These approaches can be classified as: (1) Supervised control, a trainable controller that, unlike the old teaching pendant, allows responsiveness to sensory inputs; (2) Direct inverse control is trained for the inverse dynamic of the robot; (3) Neural adaptive control, neural nets combined with adaptive controllers result in greater robustness and the ability to handle nonlinearity; (4) Backpropagation of utility involves information flowing backward through time. (5) Adaptive critic method uses a critic evaluating robot performance during training. This is a very complex method that requires more testing.

A brief introduction to intelligent robots is given in Section 2. The creative control approach is descried in Section 3. Perceptual control is described in Section 4. Conclusions and recommendations are given in Section 5.

2. INTELLIGENT ROBOTS

2.1 Introduction to Intelligent Robots

The components of an intelligent robot are a manipulator, sensors and controls. However, it is the design architecture or the combination of these components, the paradigms programmed into the controller, the foresight and genius of the system designers, the practicality of the prototype builders, the professionalism and attention to quality of the manufacturing engineers and technicians that makes the machine intelligent.

Just where is the intelligence in an intelligent robot? Is it in the controller just as the intelligence of a human is in the neural connections of the brain? Is it in the sensors that permit the robot to adapt? Is it in the manipulator which actually does the work? Or is it some remarkable architectural combination of these components? When are intelligent robots needed? When a task is repetitive such as making a million parts per year, automation is needed. The most suitable automation may be an intelligent robot. In addition, when a task is hazardous for humans, automation is needed. The best solution may be an intelligent remote manipulator. Finally, when an industry needs to be internationally competitive in cost and quality, automation is needed. Again, the intelligent robot may play a significant part in the solution.

What are the benefits from using intelligent robots? Robots can do many tasks now. However, the tasks that cannot be easily done today are often characterized by a variable knowledge of the environment. Location, size, orientation, shape of the work piece as well as of the robot must be known accurately to perform a task. Obstacles in the motion path, unusual events, breakage of tools, also create environmental uncertainty. Greater use of sensors and more intelligence should lead to a reduction of this uncertainty and because the machines can work 24 hours a day, should also lead to higher productivity.

2.3 Simulation of the PID CT Controller for WMR Navigation

Several experiments have been conducted with the PID CT simulation software, and different trajectories and controller parameters were tried. The results of the experiments show that the controller parameters need to be small positive numbers to obtain good results. It is also noteworthy that increasing k_p and fixing k_v and k_i, or increasing k_v and fixing k_p and k_i, reduces the tracking errors of θ and x, while it increases the tracking error of y. However, there is a limit to this increase, which is about 10.

Using very large, or zero, values for k_p, k_v, or k_i is not recommended. Additionally, the value of k_i must not be too large, as a condition for having a stable tracking error; k_p =2, k_v =1, and k_i =1 give very reasonable results, as shown in the following figures. The tracking error for θ is zero. For x, it oscillates around zero. For y, it starts at zero and increases to 0.35, as shown in Fig. 1. The desired versus the actual motion trajectories are shown in Fig. 2.

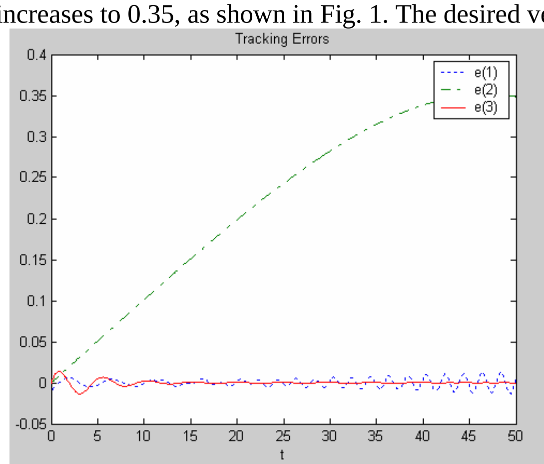


Figure 1: PID CT controller tracking errors versus time[4].

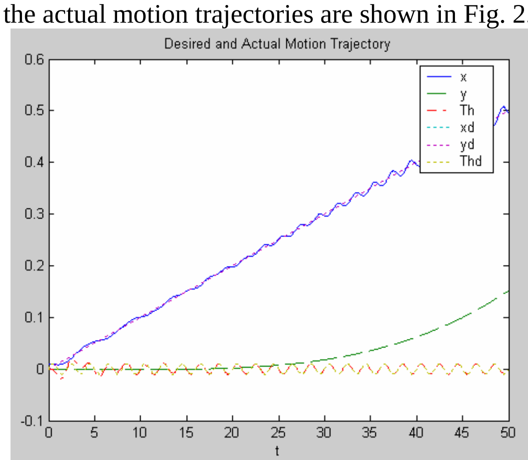


Figure 2: Desired versus actual motion trajectories[4].

3. Creative Learning and Control

"Creative learning" provides a model, for understanding the kind of intelligence that exists in biological brains. A creative control architecture as shown in Fig. 3 is proposed in this paper according to the creative learning theory [27]. In this proposed diagram, there are three important components: task control center, criteria (critic) knowledge database, and learning system. Adaptive critic learning method is a part of the creative learning algorithm. However, creative learning with decision-making capabilities is beyond the adaptive critic learning. The most important characteristics of the creative learning structure are: (1) Brain-like decision-making task control center, entails the capability of human brain decision-making; (2) Dynamic criteria database integrated into the critic-action framework, makes the adaptive critic controller reconfigurable and enables the flexibility of the network framework; (3) Multiple criteria, multi-layered structure; (4) Modeled and forecasted critic modules result in faster training network.

It is assumed that we can use a kinematic model of a mobile robot to provide a simulated experience to construct a value function in the critic network and to design a kinematic based controller for the action network. Furthermore, the kinematic model is also used to construct a model-based action in the framework of adaptive critic-action approach. In this algorithm, we build a criteria (critic) database to generalize the critic network and its training process. It is especially critical when the operation of mobile robots is in an unstructured environments. Another component in the diagram is the utility function for a tracking problem (error measurement). A creative controller is designed to integrate the domain knowledge and task control center into the adaptive critic controller. It needs to be a well-defined structure such as in the autonomous mobile robot application as the test-bed for the creative controller.

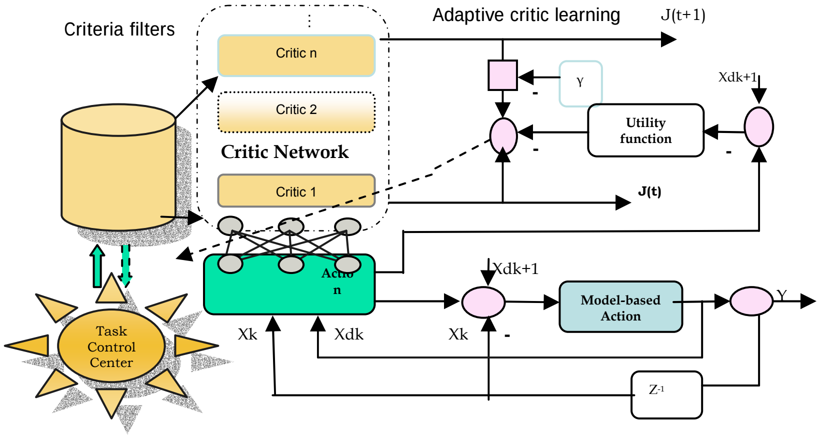


Figure 3. Proposed CL Algorithm Architecture

3.1 Adaptive Critic Control
Adaptive critic (AC) control theory is a component of creative learning theory. Werbos summarized recent accomplishments in neurocontrol as a “brain-like” intelligent system. It should contain at least three major general-purpose adaptive components: (1) an Action or Motor system, (2) an “Emotional” or “Evaluation” system or “Critic” and (3) an “Expectations” or “System Identification” component [28].

“Critic” serves as a model of the external environment to be controlled; solving an optimal control problem over time may be classified as adaptive critic designs (ACD). ACD is a large family of designs which learn to perform utility maximization over time. In dynamic programming, normally the user provides the function U($\underline{X}$(t), $\underline{u}$(t)) , an interest rate r**,** and a stochastic model. Then the analyst tries to solve for another function J($\underline{X}$(t)), so as to satisfy some form of the Bellman equation shown in Eq. (1) that underlies dynamic programming [3]:

$$J(\underline{X}(t)) = \max_{\underline{u}(t)}(U(\underline{X}(t),\underline{u}(t)) + < J(\underline{X}(t+1)) > /(1+r)) \qquad (1)$$

where “<>” denotes expected value.

In principle, any problem in decision or control theory can be classified as an optimization problem. Many ACDs solve the problem by approximating the function J. The most popular methods to estimate J in ACDs are heuristic dynamic programming (HDP), Dual Heuristic Programming (DHP) and Globalized DHP (GDHP) [28 29]. HDP and its ACD form have a critic network that estimates the function J (cost-to-go or strategic utility function) in the Bellman equation of dynamic programming, presented as follows:

$$J(t) = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k U(t+k) \qquad (2)$$

where γ is a discount factor (0<γ<1), and U(.) is the utility function or local cost. An alternative approach referred to as Dual Heuristic Programming (DHP) has been proposed. Here, the critic network approximates the derivatives of the future cost with respect to the state variable. It has been proved that DHP is capable of generating smoother derivatives and has shown improved performance when compared to HDP [30 31]. Werbos first proposed the idea how to do GDHP [32]. Training the critic network in GDHP utilizes an error measure which is a combination of the error measures of HDP and DHP.

3.2 Task Control Center (TCC)
The task control center (TCC) can build task-level control systems for the creative learning system as shown in Fig. 5. [27] By “task-level”, we mean the integration and coordination of perception, planning and real-time control to achieve a given set of goals (tasks). TCC provides a general task control framework, and it is intended to be used to control a wide variety of tasks and permits responsive actions based on mission commands, on interactions with other robots. Although TCC has no built-in control functions for particular tasks (such as robot path planning algorithms), it provides control functions, such as task decomposition, monitoring, and resource management, that are common to many applications. The particular task built-in rules in the dynamic database matches the constraints on particular control schemes or sub-tasks or environment allocated by TCC. The task control center acts as a decision-making system. It integrates domain knowledge or criteria into the database of the adaptive learning system. According to Simmons[33], task control architecture for mobile robots provides a variety of control constructs that are commonly needed in mobile robot applications, and other autonomous mobile systems. Integrating TCC with adaptive critic learning system and interacting

with the dynamic database, the creative learning system could provide both task-level and real-time control or learning within a single architectural framework.

3.3 Dynamic Knowledge Database (DKD)

A dynamic knowledge database serves as a "coupler" between a task control center and a nonlinear learning system. The purpose of the coupler is to provide the criteria functions for the adaptive critic learning system and filter the task strategies commanded by the task control center. The proposed dynamic database contains a copy of the model (or identification). Action and critic networks are utilized to control the plant under nominal operation, as well as make copies of a set of HDP or DHP parameters (or scenarios) previously adapted to deal with a plant in a known dynamic environment. It also stores copies of all the partial derivatives required when updating the neural networks using back propagation through time[34] .

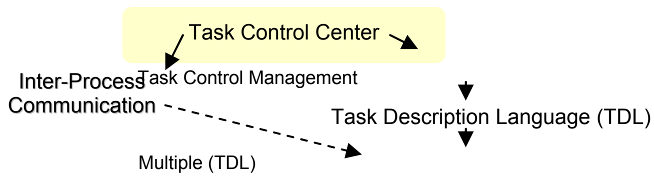
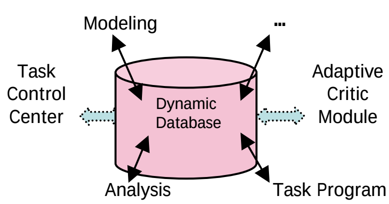


Figure 4. The structure of task control center

The data stored in the dynamic database can be uploaded to support offline or online training of the dynamic plant and provide a model for identification of nonlinear dynamic environment with its modeling function. Another function module of the database management is designed to analyze the data stored in the database including the sub-task optima, pre-existing models of the network and newly added models. The task program module shown in Fig. 4 is used to communicate with the task control center. The functional structure of the proposed dynamic database is shown in Fig. 5 and 6.



Database fields	
MODEL_ID	Action model ID
CRITERIA_FUN	Criteria function
Adaptive Critic Training Parameters	
INPUT_CRITIC	Input to critic network
DELT_J	J(t+1)-J(t)
…	…

Figure 5. Functional structure of dynamic database

Figure 6. Semantic database structure

3.4 Creative Control Mobile Robot Example

Suppose a mobile robot is used for urban rescue as shown in Fig. 7. It waits at a start location until a call is received from a command center. Then it must go rescue a person. Since it is in an urban environment, it must use the established roadways. Along the road ways it can follow pathways. However, at intersections, it can choose various paths to go to the next block. Therefore, it must use different criteria at the corners.

The overall goal is to arrive at the rescue site with minimum distance or time. To clarify the situations consider the following steps:

1. Start location – the robot waits at this location until it receives a task command to go to a certain location.
2. Along the path the robot follows a road marked by lanes. It can use a minimum mean square error between its location and the lane location during this travel.
3. At intersections, the lanes disappear but a database gives a GPS waypoint and the location of the rescue goal.

This example requires the use of both continuous and discrete tracking, a database of known information and multiple criteria optimization. It is necessary to add a large number of real-world issues including position estimation, perception, obstacles avoidance, communication, etc.

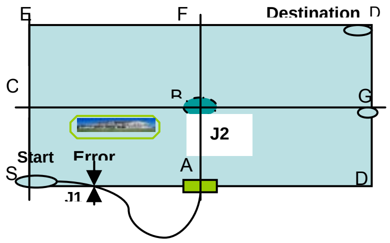


Figure 7. Simple urban rescue sites

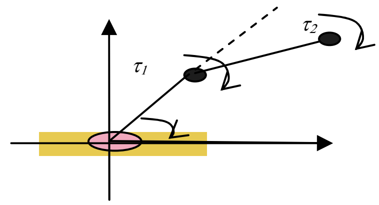


Figure 8. Two-link robot arm manipulator

The task control center (TCC) acts a decision-making command center. It takes perception information from sensors and other inputs to the creative controller and derives the criteria functions. Moving the robot between the intersections, decision making is based on the control-center-specified criteria functions to minimize the cost of the mission. It is appropriate to assume that J1 and J2 are the criteria functions that the task control center will transfer to the learning system at the beginning of the mission from the Start point (S) to Destination (D). J1 is a function of t related to tracking error. J2 is to minimize the distance of the robot from A to T since the cost is directly related to the distance the robot travels. From Star (S) to intersection A the robot should follow the track SA with the J1 as the objective function. From intersection A to B or D, the robot must decide which one will be the next intersection. The control center takes both J1 and J2 as objective functions.

The initial plan such as road tracking and robot navigating are based on known and assumed information, and then the plan is incrementally revised as new information is discovered about the environment. The control center will create criteria functions according to the revised information of the world through the user interface. These criteria functions along with other model information of the environment will be input to the learning system. There is a data transfer module from the control center to the learning system as well as a module from learning system to the dynamic database. New knowledge is to explore and learn, training according to the knowledge database information and then decide which to store in the dynamic database and how to switch the criteria. The simplest style in the adaptive critic family is heuristic dynamic programming (HDP) as shown in Fig.13 . This is NN on-line adaptive critic learning. There is one critic network, one action network and one model network in the learning structure. U(t) is the utility function. R is the critic signal as J (criteria function). The learning structure and the parameters are saved a copy in the dynamic database for the system model searching and updating. The system learning will be improved tremendously by time and iterations.

The robot system designed to operate successfully in the unstructured environment must be able to learn the environment frequently. Since there will always be some delay between the acquisition of data information and the incorporation of that information into the control system, the creative control structure will facilitate faster learning and planning of the mission. More discussion is presented in Liao's dissertation[27] .

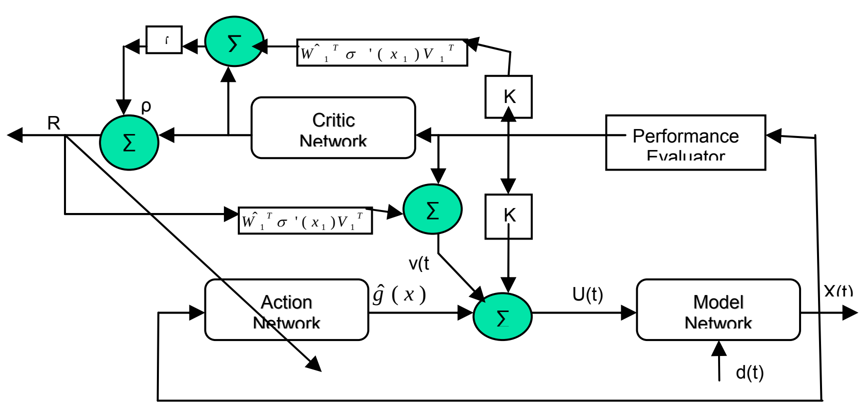


Figure 9. Adaptive critic learning structure [35]

3.5 Creative Controller and Simulation Results

As an ANN robot controller, the block diagram of the creative controller can be presented as shown in Fig. 11. A creative controller is integrated into the intelligent robot learning system. As an expermental study, we used a two-link robot arm maniputlator shown in Fig. 8 as one simulation example for adaptive critic learning. The dynamics of the two-link robot arm manipulater is shown as Eq. 3. The HDP in ACD family is used for learning portion as shown in Fig. 9 . The simulation results are shown in Fig. 11. When training with the adaptive crtic system, it is more stable and the tracking errors are smaller. Furthur results presenting a comparison with the adaptive critic learning techiques and more case studies for the system are given in [27].

$$M(q)\ddot{q} + V(q,\dot{q}) + F(q,\dot{q}) + G(q) + \tau_d = \tau \quad (3)$$

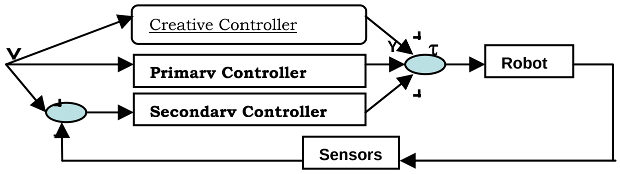


Figure 10. Creative controller structure

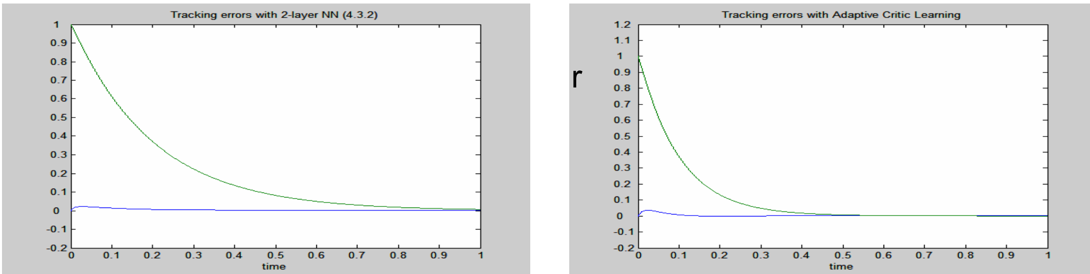


Figure 11 (a) Tracking error with 2-layer neural network vs. (b) Tracking error with adaptive critic learning (t=1sec)

4. Natural language perception-based task control center

In the presented model the TCC acts as the highest level of decision making. It processes perceptions and the sensory information. This is the area that the human brain shows its extraordinary abilities. What was explained at the beginning of this paper as the perception-based control is well suited for the TCC since it is a complex and brain-like task.

The problem can be explained as follows[36]. There are a collection of *propositions* expressed in the natural language about the robot environment and the goals. These propositions could come from an online operator or in the fully autonomous mode they could be stored in the robot. From these propositions we wish to infer proper tasks for the TCC. In the perception-based module the answers could be in the form of natural language. The idea is to do the computation on words instead of numbers when it is appropriate as explained before.

4.1 Implementation and the RESULTS

The International Ground Vehicle Competition course was used as a test bed for model validation. In the autonomous challenge of this contest there are white lines to follow, which sometimes disappear, and barrels to avoid. This course will be declared to the system by an operator and the robot is supposed to navigate through the path. Fig. 12 shows the competition course. Fig. 13 is the picture of an Unmanned Ground Vehicle demonstrated in the 11th IGVC in Detroit and taken by the author.

Figure 12. A competition course for the intelligent robots

Figure 13. An UGV by General Dynamics

The robot control was implemented in two phases. The first phase is the instructional mode. The commands are given to the robot and robot follows the instructions based what operator perceives. Table 2 shows some examples of these commands.

Table 1. Example of instructional control commands

What	Where	How much
MOVE	LEFT	A LITTLE
MOVE	FORWARD	UNTIL SEE OBSTACLE/LINE DISAPEAR
GO TO	OBSTACLE	UNTIL VERY CLOSE/CLOSE
FOLLOW	KNOWN ROUTE	UNTIL it is DEFFERNT
LOOK	from RIGHT CAMERA	UNTIL SEE A LINE/OBSTACLE
CONTINUE	in AUTOMODE	
STOP		

The second mode is the declarative mode. In this mode the environment is described to the robot with simple propositions. The robot should make its movement decisions based on what is described to it. Propositions are limited to what is expected in the International Ground Vehicle Competition course. Table 3 gives an idea about some of these propositions.

Table 2. Examples of propositions in the declarative mode

Proposition	Possible action
There is an obstacle in the front left	Move a little bit to right
Left line is disappearing	Switch to the right camera for line following
The obstacle is very close in front	Make a big turn
There is a obstacle in front close to the left line	Turn to right and then left

ViaVoice™ is a voice recognition software, available in the UC robotics lab, which was used in this research. In addition, Python as a scripting language was used as well as C++ and Matlab™. An important feature of scripting languages such as Python is their ability to write their own code. For instance, a route instruction given by the user will be saved by the robot as a Python scrip that then becomes part of the procedure set available to the robot for execution or future learning .

This experiment applies some but not all the features of the model which was explained in this paper and currently is under development.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

The design of intelligent mobile robots is a challenging task. However, several learning methods were described in Section 4 that provides solutions for the point to point and controlled path motions even in an unstructured environment. The controllers select suitable control torques, so that the WMR will follow the desired path from a navigation algorithm described in a previous paper. The controllers are tested under various control parameters and motion trajectories. Simulation results show that, for a PD CT controller, the gain matrices need to be different for each component of the motion trajectory; small positive values are needed to get good results. Simulation results for a PID CT controller show that the gain matrices also need to be small positive numbers. k_p =2, k_v =1, and k_i =1 produce reasonable results.

Selecting the proper parameters for the controller is a challenging task, since there are too many parameters involved.

When a task must also be selected automatically, the creative control approach described in Section 5 may be used. A creative learning theory proposed in this paper includes all the components in the adaptive critic family, which generalizes adaptive critic learning by modifying the learning rates and utilizing multiple critics and providing a model-based action database. A creative controller can be used to explore an unpredictable environment, and permit the discovery of unknown problems. By learning the domain knowledge, the system should be able to obtain the global optima and escape local optima. The creative controller for intelligent robots like the adaptive critic controller has information stored in a dynamic database, plus a dynamic task control center that functions as a command center to decompose tasks into sub-tasks with different dynamic models and criteria functions. This is again a learning approach. The perceptual controller takes the problem to a higher level and includes learning to communicate with a human. The intelligent mobile robot is capable of learning in a variety of ways; however, the goal of building an intelligent robot is a challenge and further research is needed to realize the full potential of safe and useful machines.

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