

An Open Source Path to Embodied Multimodal Intelligence

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Abstract—The recent development in large embodied multi-modal mode like RT2, GPT4, Palm-E has demonstrated extraordinary multi-modal abilities, such as multiple embodied tasks including sequential robotic manipulation planning, visual question answering, and captioning. These features are rarely observed in previous vision- language models. Large language models have been demonstrated to perform complex tasks. However, enabling general inference in the real world, e.g. for robotics problems, raises the challenge of grounding.

In our project, we focus on crafting a Vision-Language-Action (VLA) model, similar to to RT-2, with a distinctive twist — the integration of open-source models and innovative parameter-efficient fine-tuning techniques. Our core methodology involves fine-tuning the Llava model using QLoRA, a method designed to enhance parameter efficiency. Our approach includes novel aspects such as direct action representation as tokens, and token association for efficient action representation.

Index Terms—Large Language Model, Robotic Action, Table Top, VQA, VLM

I. INTRODUCTION

The recent introduction of Google’s PaLM-E, a massive 562-billion embodied multimodal language model, and RT2 an improvement over RT2, marks a significant leap in the realms of linguistics and robotics. However, the closed-source nature of this model poses challenges in terms of accessibility and costs. In response to these challenges, we advocate for the development of an open-source, parameter-efficient implementation of PaLM-E and RT2. Such an alternative holds immense potential to democratize access to this groundbreaking technology, enabling a diverse community of researchers and developers to explore and expand its capabilities. Moreover, by addressing the cost-intensive nature of fine-tuning a model of this scale, our initiative aims to make multi-modal language model research more affordable and widely accessible. Through this endeavor, we aspire to foster collaboration, innovation, and progress in the dynamic field of multi-modal language models.

We have developed a new approach to enhance the capabilities of large language models, making them more useful in real-world scenarios like robotics. The challenge we addressed is how to connect the language understanding of these models with the real-world environment they operate in.

Our primary objective is to provide a solution that not only addresses the closed-source limitations of PaLM-E but also mitigates the significant expenses associated with fully

fine-tuning a model of this scale. This endeavor is poised to accelerate progress in multimodal language models, empowering a wider community to contribute to and benefit from advancements in this dynamic field. In the project’s initial phase, our primary emphasis lies in crafting an open-source implementation of PaLM-E [1] and RT2 [2], with a particular emphasis on augmenting parameter efficiency. This implementation is custom-designed for the Tabletop Manipulation task within the Language Table environment.

Our Contribution

- 1) We prioritize the integration of open-source models, promoting transparency and accessibility in our Vision-Language-Action (VLA) model. By tapping into existing open-source tools, we actively contribute to a collaborative and inclusive development and research environment.
- 2) Our distinctive approach involves fine-tuning the BaK-Llava model using QLoRA, a method tailored to enhance model efficiency with reduced computational costs. This innovative technique optimizes parameter performance, making our model resource-efficient..

II. RELATED WORK

A. Visual Language Model

The field of vision-language pre-training has witnessed the development of diverse model architectures to enhance performance across a spectrum of vision and language tasks. Notable among these are the dual-encoder architecture, as demonstrated in works by Radford et al. (2021) [3] and Jia et al. (2021) [4], the fusion-encoder architecture introduced by Tan and Bansal (2019) [5] and further explored by Li et al. (2021) [6], the encoder-decoder architecture as employed by Cho et al. (2021) [7], and the more recent unified transformer architecture proposed by Li et al. (2022) [8] and Wang et al. (2022b) [9]. Over the years, various pre-training objectives have been put forth, converging towards established methodologies such as image-text contrastive learning, image-text matching, and (masked) language modeling. Additionally, BLIP-2 emerges as a novel vision-language pre-training method, employing a Querying Transformer (Q-Former) that undergoes two distinct stages of pre-training: vision-language representation learning with a frozen image encode, followed by vision-to-language

generative learning with a frozen Large Language Model (LLM). This innovative approach aims to bridge the modality gap, offering a unique perspective in the evolving landscape of vision-language pre-training methodologies. [10]

B. Leveraging Pre-trained LLMs in Vision-Language Tasks.

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in the adoption of autoregressive language models as decoders in vision-language tasks, as evidenced by studies like Chen et al. (2022) [11], Huang et al. (2023) [12], Yang et al. (2022) [13] [10]. This strategy leverages the power of cross-modal transfer, facilitating the sharing of knowledge between language and multimodal domains. Pioneering works such as VisualGPT [11] and Frozen [14] have illustrated the advantages of employing a pre-trained language model as a vision-language model decoder. Subsequent advancements, including Flamingo, [15] employed gated cross-attention to align a pre-trained vision encoder and language model, exhibiting remarkable in-context few-shot learning capabilities. The introduction of BLIP-2 [10] further optimized the alignment of visual features with the language model, utilizing a Flan-T5 [16] with a Q-Former. Notably, the recent development of PaLM-E [1], featuring 562 billion parameters, signifies a groundbreaking effort to integrate real-world continuous sensor modalities into a Large Language Model (LLM), establishing a direct link between real-world perceptions and human languages. Additionally, the release of GPT-4 [17] showcases enhanced visual understanding and reasoning capabilities, achieved through extensive pre-training on a vast collection of aligned image-text data.

III. DATASET

A. Language Table Dataset

The Language Table dataset, a significant contribution to natural language-instructable robots, is introduced with an open-sourced framework, including datasets, environments, benchmarks, and policies. Trained using behavioral cloning on a large dataset, the resulting policy demonstrates exceptional proficiency, achieving a 93.5% success rate on diverse language instructions for real-world visuo-linguo-motor skills. Notably, the policy exhibits adaptability, responding to real-time human guidance for precise rearrangement tasks. The dataset, comprising nearly 600,000 labeled trajectories, is a substantial advancement, incorporating real robot data and various simulation scenarios. This comprehensive resource aims to advance natural language interaction with robots by providing valuable insights and diverse components for research and development. [18]

B. LLaVA Visual Instruct

The LLaVA Visual Instruct 150K dataset serves as a valuable resource for fine-tuning and enhancing the visual instruction capabilities of language models, specifically tailored towards the multimodal capabilities of GPT-4. Constructed as an augmentation of the COCO dataset, this dataset comprises GPT-generated multimodal instruction-following data.

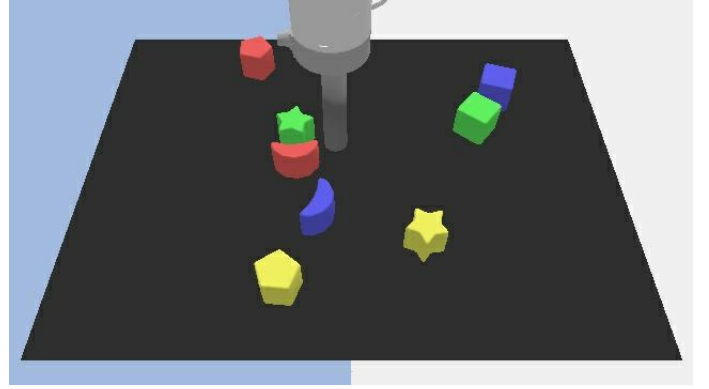


Fig. 1. Language Table Dataset

The dataset encompasses a total of 158,000 unique language-image instruction-following samples, distributed across various contexts. [19]

One of the example from the dataset involves an image of a man with a truck and associated conversations between a human and the GPT model. The interactions cover a range of inquiries related to the image content, including the activities of a man in the back of a pickup truck. The conversations include questions about the man's actions, details about the pickup truck, and speculative reasoning about the possible reasons for the depicted scenario.

IV. METHOD AND TOOLS

Our project is dedicated to developing a Vision-Language-Action (VLA) model similar to RT-2, but distinctively using open-source models and focusing on parameter-efficient fine-tuning techniques. The centerpiece of our methodology is fine-tuning the recent BakLlava [20] [19] model with QLoRA, a method that enhances parameter efficiency.

1) Action Encoding and Tokenization:

- **Direct Action Representation:** In alignment with the RT-2 model, our approach trains the model to output actions as tokens, which are integrated with language tokens for a cohesive action-language output.
- **Discretization of Action Space:** Our model's action space, in contrast to RT-1's [21] 6-DoF action space, is confined to the X and Y coordinates (delta values) of robot arm movements. These dimensions are discretized into 256 uniform bins, each represented as an integer, for a simplified and manageable action space.
- **Token Association:** Following a concept introduced in "Symbol Tuning Improves In-Context Learning in Language Models" [22] and implemented in RT-2 [2], we reserve 256 tokens from the Llava model's tokenizer to represent action tokens. This strategy involves mapping the discrete bin ordinals to specific tokens, allowing for an efficient

representation of robot actions within the model’s output.

2) Model Co-Fine-Tuning:

- **Data Integration:** The model processes inputs comprising robot camera images and textual task descriptions, formatted akin to standard VQA style. The outputs are strings of tokens representing robot actions.
- **VQA Dataset Generation:** We also generated a custom VQA dataset using images from the language table dataset, created in a format similar to the llava-instruct-150k dataset, with the assistance of ChatGPT. This enriches the model’s capability in image-grounded reasoning and aligns with the high-quality structure of the LLaVA-Instruct-80K dataset.
- **Co-Fine-Tuning :** An essential part of our training involves co-fine-tuning with the Llava Instruct dataset alongside the language table robotics data, to help enhance the model’s generalizability across diverse visual concepts and specific robot actions
- **Training Batch Balance:** A balanced representation of language table dataset and the Llava Instruct dataset is maintained in each training batch, adjusting the sampling weight to ensure adequate exposure to both types of data.

V. EXPERIMENTS

Our experimental framework was designed to iteratively improve the integration of Vision-Language Models (VLMs) in Visual Question Answering (VQA) tasks and robotic action generation. Each experiment built upon the learnings of its predecessors, refining our approach and methodology

- **Initial VLM with Frozen Components:** We initiated our experiments by training a VLM that incorporated a frozen Vision Transformer (ViT) [23] and a frozen Llama-2-7B-chat [24] as the vision and language models, respectively. A linear layer was introduced to project vision embeddings to dimensions compatible with the language model. This model was trained using 10,000 data points each from the COCO and CLEVR datasets. Despite the strategic selection of CLEVR for its object similarity to the language table dataset, this model exhibited poor performance in VQA tasks, particularly lacking in generating image-grounded text.
- **Adoption of MiniGPT4 Architecture:** Following the architectural insights from the MiniGPT4 study, we incorporated a QFormer and a Linear layer between the vision and language models. Despite training this model on the same datasets as the first experiment, the performance improvements were minimal, with similar issues in VQA tasks persisting. [25]
- **Expanded Dataset with LoRA Adapters:** To enhance the model’s capabilities, we expanded the training dataset to 20,000 data points from each of the COCO [26], CLEVR, and [27] COCO-VQA datasets [28]. This expansion aimed to provide a well-rounded and diversified set

of visual and textual data for training. The model maintained the linear layer strategy and incorporated LoRA adapters into the ViT, while keeping the language model frozen. This version showed a notable improvement in describing image contents but still faced challenges in reasoning with images from the language table dataset.

- **Integration of Language Table VQA Dataset:**

To specifically address the reasoning limitations, we generated a VQA dataset for the language table images using ChatGPT and added it to our training set. This model exhibited improved performance in reasoning about languageable images, marking a significant advancement from previous iterations.

- **Experiment with Robotic Actions Dataset** We further experimented by generating a dataset for robotic actions using the language table dataset. This involved discretizing actual X and Y effector delta values into action tokens using our action tokenizer. Despite integrating this new multimodal VQA dataset into our training, the model consistently produced identical action tokens for varying prompts, indicating a critical issue in diverse action token generation.

- **Fine-Tuning Llava VLM with QLoRA:**

Recognizing the potential of the advanced Llava VLM, we decided to fine-tune it, focusing on a subset of the self-attention and multimodal projection layers using QLoRA. Initial memory challenges were overcome by employing additional GPUs. This final model outperformed all previous versions, retaining robust VQA capabilities while also being able to output robot action tokens. However, there is still room for improvement in the accuracy and diversity of the robot action token generation. Through these experiments, we have progressively refined our approach to developing a model that adeptly combines VQA reasoning with robotic action generation. While the final model presents significant advancements, it also highlights areas for future research, particularly in enhancing the quality and accuracy of robot action token generation.

VI. RESULTS

A. Original Objectives and Shortcomings

The primary goal of our project was to create a Vision-Language-Action (VLA) model capable of generating robotic action tokens and conducting simulations within the language table environment. This objective was set forth as a critical component of our robotics class assignment. Despite a concerted effort and innovative approaches, our project did not progress beyond the vision-language alignment phase to the action token generation phase, which was the intended milestone for the class.

B. Evaluation of Vision-Language Model Configurations and Their Alignment Outcomes

- 1) **Model 1 (Frozen Vision Transformer + Trainable Linear Projection Layer + Frozen Llama2):**

3) Model 3 (BakLlava Model Fine-Tuned on Various Datasets):

Single-Stage Training for Robotic Actions: Given the setbacks with Models 1 and 2, we pivoted to leveraging the recently released open-source VLMs—Llava and BakLlava. Our strategy shifted to fine-tuning the BakLlava model on the robotic actions dataset with QLoRA, bypassing the initial alignment stage. We experimented with several dataset combinations to optimize performance.

Results: Encouragingly, the model retained its VQA capabilities post-fine-tuning, which was a positive indicator of its robustness. However, the model did not succeed in generating contextually varied robotic action tokens. Irrespective of the instruction provided, the model defaulted to outputting the same reserved tokens, highlighting a critical area for improvement. [Fig 5]

C. Interpretation of Results

The complexity of achieving accurate vision-language alignment was more pronounced than initially anticipated. The translation of visual and linguistic data into robotic action tokens proved difficult, indicating that further methodological refinements are needed. The consistent issue of repetitive action token generation suggests that our models may require a different approach to learn the variability and specificity required for robotic tasks.

VII. FUTURE WORK

Our research has achieved significant progress in integrating vision with language processing, enabling effective image interpretation. However, we face a persistent challenge with our model’s tendency to overfit to robotic action data and its repetitive generation of action tokens. To enhance our model’s capabilities, especially for practical robotic applications, we propose the following focused developments:

- **Integration of Advanced Image Segmentation Models:**

Objective: Implement models like Meta’s Segment Anything Model (SAM) to improve object understanding in images. (SAM) [29] into our framework.

Challenges: Efficiently merging the segmentation output with the language model and managing the added computational complexity will be key. The segmentation model’s accuracy will directly influence the overall system performance.

- **Continuous Value Generation for Robot Actions:**

Objective: Adopting the approach from the xVal paper [30] to enable the language model to generate continuous values for robotic actions, moving away from the current discretization method.

Challenges: Ensuring stable training and accurate continuous value prediction is crucial. This approach may require significant alterations to the traditional language model architecture to accommodate continuous outputs.

- **Ordinal Regression Classification Loss Implementation:**

Objective: To integrate an ordinal regression/classification loss alongside the traditional cross-entropy loss. This aims to exploit the ordinal nature of the action space, ensuring that even incorrect predictions are closer to the actual value.

Challenges: Balancing this new loss function with existing learning mechanisms and aligning token ordinality with action bins.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our investigation into the development of Vision-Language-Action models has been a journey marked by both insights and obstacles. Model 1 was unable to establish a foundational understanding of images, a critical first step for subsequent action token generation. Model 2 offered incremental improvements in image comprehension, yet it did not achieve a comprehensive grasp of the language table dataset needed for the progression to robotic action training. Model 3, despite successfully retaining its Visual Question Answering capabilities, faced difficulties in producing a diverse set of robotic action tokens, a key requirement for our robotics class project.

These outcomes underscore the intricate challenges involved in synthesizing visual data interpretation with language processing to produce actionable outputs for robotics. The complexities encountered have shed light on the limitations of current methodologies and have opened avenues for future exploration, as detailed in our Future Work section.

Moving forward, the insights gained from this research lay a foundation for further advancements in the field. We anticipate that the next steps, guided by the reflections and proposed directions in our Future Work, will pave the way for breakthroughs in the creation of more sophisticated and capable VLA models. The lessons learned here will serve as valuable reference points for future endeavors in the dynamic and evolving landscape of the Multimodal Models.

IX. CONTRIBUTION

- **Chandramani :** Led initial Vision-Language Model (VLM) training with ViT and Llama-2-7B-chat. Generated VQA dataset for language table images and expanded the MiniGPT4 architecture. Despite progress in image description, faced challenges in reasoning with language table images.
- **Sushant :** Addressed reasoning limitations, initially with ViT and Lora. Adopted MiniGPT4 architecture, showing improved reasoning performance. Spearheaded robotic actions dataset generation and fine-tuned BaKLLava VLM with QLoRA, enhancing VQA and robotic action capabilities.

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APPENDIX A OTHER RESULTS FOR MODEL 2

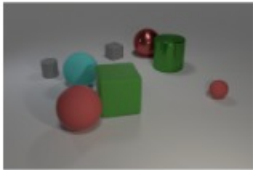




<p>Input Image</p>  <p>Question What do you see in the image?</p> <p>Model-2 Response a red and black cylinder</p>	<p>Input Image</p>  <p>Question What do you see in the image?</p> <p>Model-2 Response A dog running on the beach with a surf board.</p>	<p>Input Image</p>  <p>Question What do you see in the image?</p> <p>Model-2 Response A woman sits at a table with a bowl of fruit.</p>
<p>Input Image</p>  <p>Question What do you see in the image?</p> <p>Model-2 Response A man is using a cell phone while riding on a train.</p>	<p>Input Image</p>  <p>Question What do you see in the image?</p> <p>Model-2 Response A sign that reads "Do not walk on the grass".</p>	

Fig. 4. Results of Model 2 on different set of Images

APPENDIX B TOKENS

The Tokens we reserved for our action tokens are :

职陽亞咄施泰載벨笑華迎뎡豆嘉ě庄
 級Ψ氣責𐄂乱休約𐄂Σ察온ㅈ乘람ᄇ
 𐄂𐄂亲委赤뎡勝怎감宋調ㅈ难뎡티備
 塞險旅虛笔馆唐律稍散ㄹㄹ副尽挂鼎
 △洋鬼암孩℃扣铁闻戳む秀細御拖좌
 绍참항끝민贵纪秋ㄹ網铺恋兼羽창啟
 弟년慢호許硬잘뎡術溪暴混夢랑뎡還
 探祖织軍務艺應擇渡葉령決刀從變을
 灣평衣製隊P纳赖农桥阻ㄹ秘박伤稿
 拦뎡宿錄鏡채ㄹ党금洲說i尝담ㅈ哥
 圣萨丁虎권善岩커拋석E宣拳뎡枚洛
 証陵佐館돌稱聊車루ㄹ庫지統련ㄹ旗
 勵紀忠杨丹却舞轉ㄹ丽借음편蒙衡叶
 ㄹ谢Aㄹㄹ既济✕準담ㄹ殘慮急招막
 產垂親猫刪胡晩군승曾論ㄹ戰魚寶득
 崎甘該링頁큰毀聖麻敏運뎡쓰ㄹ작復

Fig. 5. Tokens Used for action Tokenizer