

Debugging Problems

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Contents

1	Acronyms	5
2	Introduction	5
2.1	Context	5
2.2	Aims	5
2.3	Evaluation Metrics	6
2.4	Structure of the Dissertation	6
3	Background	7
3.1	Literature Review	7
3.2	Summary of LLMs	7
4	Design and Implementation	7
4.1	Design Overview	7
4.2	Ollama	8
4.3	Code generation	8
4.4	Test case generation	8
4.5	Bug Insertion	8
4.5.1	LLM Bug Insertion	8
4.5.2	AST Bug Insertion	8
5	Testing and Evaluation	8
5.1	Metrics	8
5.1.1	Code Complexity	8
5.1.2	Code Diversity	8
5.1.3	Attempt Count	8

5.1.4	Run Time	8
6	Conclusion	8
7	References	9

1 Acronyms

- LLM - Language Model
- AST - Abstract Syntax Tree
- AI - Artificial Intelligence

2 Introduction

2.1 Context

In recent years there have been great strides made in the ability of LLMs to generate code. These LLMs are already being integrated into employee workflows in companies all over the world. This will place a much greater emphasis on the debugging process as the code generated by these LLMs much be inspected and fixed when bugs are produced. It has also been noted in many studies that debugging is an extremely important skill as it is the most difficult part of the programming process and is also the most often overlooked when teaching programming. More will be discussed on this in the literature review. This project will aim to create a tool that will help teach debugging to students who will be the future employees of these companies.

2.2 Aims

The aim of this tool is quite simple. To generate problems for students. The language, code topic and bug type should all be customisable.

It was also a goal to create two different methods for inserting the bug which can be compared with each other. The first method being to insert the bug by querying the LLM

and the second method being to insert the bug by walking through the AST of the code and inserting the bug semi manually.

Another aim of the project was to create test cases that the code could be tested against to ensure that the bug was inserted correctly. These same test cases could then be used by a student to test their solution to the problem.

The creation of a frontend was not a goal of this project, the meaningful work of this project is all done in the backend and a frontend could be added at a later date.

2.3 Evaluation Metrics

It was decided early on that the evaluation and measuring of the project success would be done using desktop metrics and that there would not be a user study. The metrics that were decided on were code complexity, code diversity, attempt count and run time. The calculation of these metrics and the reasoning behind them will be discussed in the testing and evaluation section.

2.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of the dissertation will be as follows. The background will go through previous work done in the area of debugging and LLMS. It will also give a brief overview of how LLMs work and more importantly how they can be used to generate code, the difficulties that come with using them and where they excel.

The design and implementation will show how the code is structured and will give a brief description of how each part of the code works.

The testing and evaluation section will show the testing that was done on the project and the results of that testing. It will also discuss the metrics used in testing, why they were chosen and how they were calculated.

The conclusion will summarise the project and discuss the future of the project.

3 Background

3.1 Literature Review

Literature review of both debugging, teaching debugging and LLMs

3.2 Summary of LLMs

4 Design and Implementation

4.1 Design Overview

Includes Diagram

4.2 Ollama

4.3 Code generation

4.4 Test case generation

4.5 Bug Insertion

4.5.1 LLM Bug Insertion

4.5.2 AST Bug Insertion

5 Testing and Evaluation

This will discuss the testing of the project which will show the improvement of the project over time. This will also include an evaluation of the final state of the project.

5.1 Metrics

5.1.1 Code Complexity

5.1.2 Code Diversity

5.1.3 Attempt Count

5.1.4 Run Time

6 Conclusion

This will briefly summarise the project and discuss the future of the project.

7 References

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