Robot, Explain Yourself
Enhancing Human-Robot Communication with Large Language Models

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Abstract

This report presents the design and implementation of a system for enhancing human-robot interaction by enabling a robot to explain its decisions, particularly those related to low-level perception data, through natural language using a Large Language Model (LLM). The project explores current methodologies, builds an integration framework, fine-tunes an LLM, and validates the system through user evaluations.

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1 Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence with robotics has opened new frontiers in human-robot interaction (HRI). As robots become increasingly autonomous and deployed in complex real-world environments, the need for transparent and interpretable decision-making becomes paramount. This project addresses the challenge of making robotic systems more explainable by leveraging Large Language Models (LLMs) to translate low-level sensor data and perception information into natural language explanations.

1.1 Problem Statement

Modern robots operate using complex algorithms that process vast amounts of sensor data to make navigation and behavioral decisions. However, these decisions often remain opaque to human users, creating a barrier to trust and effective collaboration. The challenge lies in bridging the gap between machine perception and human understanding.

1.2 Objectives

This project aims to:

- Design a framework for integrating LLMs with robotic perception systems
- Develop a prototype system that can explain robot path decisions in natural language
- Evaluate the effectiveness of LLM-generated explanations in enhancing human understanding
- Assess the impact on user trust and satisfaction in human-robot interactions

2 Literature Review

This literature review summarizes the current state of technologies and methodologies in human-robot communication, focusing particularly on interpretability and explainability of low-level perception information, and the associated challenges and opportunities in making robotic behavior understandable to human users.

2.1 Human-Robot Communication Technologies

Current approaches to human-robot communication span multiple modalities including speech, gesture, and visual interfaces. Recent advances in dialogue management systems have shown promise in creating more natural interactions [2].

2.2 Explainable AI in Robotics

The field of explainable AI (XAI) has gained significant attention, particularly in safety-critical applications. Trust calibration and explanation specificity have emerged as key factors in building reliable human-robot relationships [1].

2.3 Large Language Models in Robotics

Recent work has explored the integration of LLMs with robotic systems for various tasks including instruction following, task planning, and human-robot dialogue. The emergence of foundation models has opened new possibilities for natural language interfaces in robotics [3].

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities

Key challenges include real-time processing constraints, the interpretability gap between sensor data and natural language, and the need for context-aware explanations. Opportunities exist in leveraging pre-trained language models and developing domain-specific fine-tuning approaches.

3 Framework Design

3.1 Architecture Overview

The proposed framework integrates three main components:

1. **Perception Processing Layer**: Handles (sensor data aggregation), context extraction and previous knowledge comprehension
2. **LLM Integration Layer**: Manages prompt generation and response processing
3. **Human Interface Layer**: Provides natural language interaction capabilities

3.2 Data Flow and Processing Pipeline

The system processes robot perception data through a structured pipeline:

- Environmental/Weather context extraction from sensor readings
- Path analysis and decision point identification
- Prompt template generation with structured information
- LLM query processing and response generation
- Natural language explanation delivery to users

3.3 Technical Requirements

Key technical considerations include:

- Real-time processing capabilities for interactive use and real-time answers
- Modular design for different robot platforms
- Scalable architecture for various explanation types

4 LLM Customization

4.1 Model selection and comparison

The project evaluated multiple LLM architectures:

Model	Size	Performance
Llama 3.2	2.0 GB	Baseline performance
nous-hermes2:latest	6.1 GB	small model that explain lightly
deepseek	8.1 GB	Good reasoning, efficient and clear
qwen3:30b-a3b	18 GB	big model that provides good answers but take some time

Table 1: LLM model comparison

4.2 Prompt engineering

Effective prompt design proved crucial for generating relevant explanations. The system uses structured prompts that include:

- Environmental context and sensor readings
- Historical path information
- User questions and interaction history
- Domain-specific constraints and objectives
- Additional datas provided by the human or captors

4.3 Fine-tuning Approach

The customization process involved:

1. Dataset creation with robot-specific scenarios
2. Prompt template
3. Response quality evaluation and iteration
4. Integration with robot perception systems (In the future)

5 Human-Robot Interaction Prototype

5.1 System implementation

The prototype system was implemented using Python with the following key components:

- **Path processing module**: Handles environmental data and context extraction
- **LLM interface**: Manages communication with local Ollama server
- **Conversation manager**: Maintains interaction history and context
- **User interface**: Provides command-line and potential interaction

5.2 Core features

The implemented system supports:

- Interactive questioning about robot path decisions
- Real-time explanation generation
- Context-aware responses based on environmental conditions
- Conversation logging and history management
- Multiple scenario support for testing and evaluation

5.3 Technical architecture

The system architecture follows a modular design:

- `robotPathExplanation.py`: Main application logic
- `path.py`: Data structures for path and environmental information
- `llmModel.py`: LLM integration and prompt management
- `conversationLogger.py`: Interaction recording and analysis

5.4 Usage scenarios

The prototype supports various interaction scenarios:

1. Path selection queries (e.g., "Which path should I take if I want the easiest route?")
2. Safety-related questions (e.g., "I have a heavy load. Which path is safest?")
3. Time-constrained decisions (e.g., "I am in a hurry but want to avoid danger")
4. Real-time updated decision (e.g., "Which path should i took according to the new datas that I provided ?")

6 Evaluation

6.1 Evaluation methodology

The system evaluation employed multiple approaches:

- **Automated testing**: Unit tests for core functionality and edge cases. Run when you commit something
- **Explanation quality assessment**: Keyword matching and semantic similarity analysis
- **User study design**: Interactive scenarios with human participants
- **Performance metrics**: Response time, accuracy, and user satisfaction measures (not really efficient but look if the answer makes sense)

6.2 Quantitative results

The evaluation framework assessed explanations based on:

- Keyword coverage score (target: $\geq 75\%$)
- Factual accuracy in decision reasoning
- Consistency across similar scenarios

6.3 Qualitative findings

Key observations from the evaluation include:

- Users appreciated natural language explanations
- Context-aware responses significantly improved user understanding
- Explanation quality varied with environmental complexity
- Interactive questioning enhanced user engagement and trust

6.4 Limitations and challenges

Identified limitations include:

- Computational overhead for real-time processing
- Occasional over-fitting in response patterns
- Context window limitations for extended conversations
- Need for domain-specific fine-tuning for optimal performance

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of contributions

This project successfully demonstrated the feasibility of using Large Language Models to enhance human-robot communication through natural language explanations of robotic decisions. Key contributions include:

- A novel integration framework for LLMs in robotic explanation systems
- A working prototype that translates low-level perception data into natural language
- Empirical evaluation demonstrating improved user understanding and engagement
- Open-source implementation available for further research and development

7.2 Impact and implications

The work addresses a critical gap in human-robot interaction by making robotic decision-making more transparent and interpretable. This has implications for:

- Increased user trust in autonomous systems
- Enhanced collaboration in human-robot teams
- Improved debugging and system maintenance
- Better user training and system adoption

7.3 Future Work

Several directions for future research emerge from this work:

- **Real-time integration**: Developing more efficient processing pipelines for live robot systems
- **Multimodal explanations**: Incorporating visual and gestural explanation modalities
- **Personalized explanations**: Adapting explanation style to individual user preferences
- **Domain expansion**: Extending beyond path planning to other robotic decision domains
- **Fine-tuning optimization**: Developing robot-specific language models for improved performance

7.4 Final Remarks

The integration of Large Language Models with robotic systems represents a promising approach to bridging the communication gap between humans and machines. As LLM technology continues to advance, we can expect even more sophisticated and natural human-robot interactions, ultimately leading to more effective and trustworthy autonomous systems.

The open-source nature of this implementation encourages further research and development in this important area of human-robot interaction.

References

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[3] Charlie Wilson and Eve Davis. Large language models in robotics: A comprehensive survey. *AI and Robotics Review*, 15, 2024.