ADE Action Manager

Paul W. Schermerhorn

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1 Introduction

The ADE Goal Manager (commonly referred to as the Action Manager) performs scheduling implicitly, based on the priorities of the agent's currently active *top-level goals* (TLG). A TLG represents a goal of the agent that is generally not being pursued in service of any other goal. A TLG may be explicitly instantiated on behalf of the user (e.g., a script for the agent to execute) or may be implicitly instantiated by some system-level motivation (e.g., the obedience motivation can cause a TLG to be instantiated in response to a verbal command from the user).

Associated with each TLG is an *action interpreter* (AI), the job of which is to execute the actions (typically encoded in the form of a script) required to accomplish the goal. AIs execute in parallel in their own threads, allowing simultaneous progress toward the achievement of multiple TLGs.

The Action Manager continually reevaluates the *priority* of each TLG, based on factors including the utility of accomplishing the goal, the time remaining within which to accomplish the goal, and the agent's current affective state. Priority scores are used to mediate resource conflicts between TLGs; before attempting an action, the AI checks to see whether another AI already has the lock for the contested resource and, if so, compares the priorities of the two. For example, a robot may be executing a low-priority wandering script that has control of the wheel motor lock. If the robot receives a command from a person instructing it to perform a task requiring it to stay in place, the higher priority of the follow-commands goal will allow that AI to stop the wheels and keep the robot from wandering off. in the meantime, the AI for the wandering goal is still functioning, trying to issue velocity commands at random intervals. When the follow-commands goal has completed, then, the wandering behavior automatically proceeds in virtue of having regained control of the resource lock.

2 Writing AI Scripts

Action Interpreter scripts are stored in XML format. Hence, a description of how to write an AI script must include descriptions of both the syntax of the scripts and the syntax of the XML format in which they are stored. For example:

```
<type>
  <name>findDoor</name>
  <dbkind>action</dbkind>
  <desc>?mover looks for a door at a given heading ?heading</desc>
  <var>
    <varname>?mover</varname>
    <vartype>actor</vartype>
  </var>
  <var>
    <varname>?heading</varname>
    <vartype>coordinate
  </var>
  <var>
    <varname>!headingFrom</varname>
    <vartype>coordinate</vartype>
  </var>
  <var>
    <varname>!headingTo</varname>
    <vartype>coordinate
  </var>
  <!-- Here's where the events start -->
  <actspec>getHeading ?mover !headingFrom</actspec>
  <actspec>printText "headingFrom: !headingFrom"</actspec>
  <actspec>getHeadingTo ?mover !headingFrom ?heading !headingTo</actspec>
  <actspec>printText "headingTo: !headingTo"</actspec>
  <control>if</control>
  <actspec> gt !headingTo 15</actspec>
  <control>then</control>
  <actspec> timeTurn ?mover !headingTo</actspec>
  <control>else</control>
  <actspec> printText "Not worth turning"</actspec>
  <control>endif</control>
  <actspec>startMove ?mover</actspec>
  <control>while</control>
  <actspec> not</actspec>
  <actspec> getNearestDoor ?mover</actspec>
  <actspec> endnot</actspec>
  <control>do</control>
  <actspec> printText "Still looking for a door"</actspec>
  <control>endwhile</control>
  <actspec>stop ?mover</actspec>
</type>
```

This simple script has the robot turn to the heading indicated and move forward (presumably down a hall-way) until it encounters something matching the description of a doorway. The XML representation of the script (above) really just packages a more traditional scripting language:

```
:name findDoor
:desc ?mover looks for a door at a given heading ?heading
:var ?mover actor
:var ?heading coordinate
:var !headingFrom coordinate
:var !headingTo coordinate
# Here's where the events start
getHeading ?mover !headingFrom
printText "headingFrom: !headingFrom"
getHeadingTo ?mover !headingFrom ?heading !headingTo
printText "headingTo: !headingTo"
 gt !headingTo 15
then
  timeTurn ?mover !headingTo
else
 printText "Not worth turning"
endif
startMove ?mover
while
   getNearestDoor ?mover
  endnot
 printText "Still looking for a door"
endwhile
stop ?mover
```

2.1 Action Scripting Language

The AI steps through scripts, looking for primitives or syntax elements (below). When it encounters a primitive, it executes the action associated with it.

Flow Control The semantics of script syntax elements is as follows:

Conditional: if α then β else if γ then δ else ϵ end if

Loop: while α do β endwhile

Negation: not α endnot

Conjunction/Disjunction: α and β , α or β

Return return TRUE|FALSE endreturn

Note the absence of a test primitive; any action can serve as the condition for loops and conditionals, with its exit status serving to determine the outcome of the branch.

Variables Action script variables are typed, and come in two varieties: locals (created at call time and discarded when leaving the script) and parameters (passed into the script at call time). Local variable names begin with the character '!'. Locals can be used as parameters for script invocations from the current script context.

Parameter variable names begin with the character "?". Parameters are passed by reference, so the binding of a variable may be different when a script invocation returns from what it was before the invocation. This, in fact, is how values are "returned" from scripts—the user passes in the variable to which the desired return value should be bound. For example, in the code above, after getHeading ?mover!headingFrom completes, the current heading of the robot bound to ?mover is stored in the variable!headingFrom. Although somewhat awkward, this design facilitates two features important to ADE action script semantics. First, because every event in a script is considered an action, including sensing acts, there is the possibility of failure. The more traditional (i.e., as in C or Java) return value of an action, therefore, is a truth value indicating the success or failure of the action. This requires that other values be passed back by alternate means. Second, in many cases it is imperative in the context of embodied agents to have the flexibility to adapt to changes in the situation. Take the example of an interaction script that takes a person-type variable as a parameter. If the original interlocutor were to leave during the interaction while another person carried on the conversation, changing the binding for the calling context would prevent the robot from using the wrong name or saying something inappropriate after the script returns.

While it is always best to specify all parameters at invocation time, it is possible to call a script without all parameters. When this happens, the AI tries to bind the variable itself, for example, by looking for a variable of the same name in the parent's context and looking for (differently-named) variables of the same type in either the child or parent context. This is based on the assumption that, if the binding is unspecified, the context itself may be able to provide a reasonable guess (analogous to anaphora resolution). However, this can lead to unexpected results, so it is advised to pass these values in whenever possible.

Actions An action statement is just the name of the action followed by the names of the parameters to be passed in. As stated above, the return value is true or false, depending on the success or failure of the action. Hence, any action can be used as a test for the if and while constructs.

2.2 Action Database File Syntax

An Action database file is a hierarchical specification of bits of knowledge (primarily primitive actions and scripts, but also other types such as numbers, etc.). ADE action script files are usually found in the directory \$ADE/com/action/db. The default set of action types, primitives, and scripts is loaded automatically when the goal manager is initialized. Additional files can be specified on the command line using the -dbfilesupp parameter. The XML structure if these files includes:

type Specifies the type being described (e.g., action, thing).

subtypes Contains a list of types that are hierarchical subtypes of the current type.

name The name of the current type (this is case INSENSITIVE).

desc A description that can be used by Action.

postcond, precond Specify pre- and post-conditions. These are not used used consistently right now, but their specification is encouraged.

benefit, cost, timeout As you would expect.

minurg, maxurg The minimum and maximum urgency for a script. The defaults are 0.0 and 1.0.

var A variable definition. Variables are typed, and must include the following:

```
varname The name of variable.
vartype The variable's type (e.g., integer, double).
```

actspec An action specification. Can be a primitive action or a script. When using variables, include the '?' or '!' character (which is part of the name), and the ActionInterpreter will look up and pass the appropriate variable binding into the action.

control A flow control element (e.g., if, while).

When the goal manager loads the script files, it uses the tags to aid in parsing. However, it is not necessary to use the XML format when creating new scripts; a script specified using the non-XML format shown above can be converted to an action script file using the Scriptify utility included with ADE (in \$ADE/com/action/db).

2.3 Writing Action Scripts without XML

Scriptify is a simple parser that allows you to specify Action scripts as non-xml text, similar to more traditional scripting languages. Comment lines start with '#'. All tags, except for ¡var¿, ¡control¿, and ¡actspec¿, are represented by ":tag [value]" at the start of a line. A var is represented as ":var [varname] [vartype]" at the start of a line. Any line that isn't matched to one of the other tags is assumed to be an actspec or control—no tag required.

Quickly, the elements that are required for a script are:

```
: name the name
```

```
:var <varname> <vartype> the "variables" for the script
```

: act spec the actions the script calls (primitives or other scripts); note that the : act spec tag is optional for Scriptify

:control flow control elements (e.g., if, while) note that the :control tag is optional for Scriptify

Other possible elements are:

:locks specify which resource locks should be required before executing

:cost the cost of running the script

```
:benefit the expected benefit
:posaff initial value for positive affect associated with this action
:negaff initial value for negative affect associated with this action
:minurg minimum urgency for this action
:maxurg maximum urgency for this action
:timeout time allotted in which to complete action
:precond predicate list specifying preconditions
:postcond predicate list specifying postconditions
```

Most of these have default values and need only be specified if you want to tweak the goal selection process, etc.

Remember that when referring to parameter variables in the actspecs, they must be preceded with a '?'. Also note that "local" variables (ones that the Action Interpreter should not expect to find in the call stack) should be defined with a leading '!'.

Generating XML Ensure the utility is compiled (./mkade scriptify) and then run it on your input to generate XML output that can be read by the Action Manager. For example, to translate the file test.as:

```
java -cp .: jars/xercesImpl.jar com.action.db.Scriptify test.as
```

in \$ADE. The result is printed to System.out. It can then be pasted into an appropriate xml ActionDB file. Alternatively, to output a full file, pass the "-s" flag for a new script, or the "-p" flag for a new primitive, and redirect the output to a new xml file.

3 Semantic Description

Note that in every case below, the absence/unavailability of the underlying ADE component (e.g., the motion server) results in action failure. Similarly, if the AI in which an action is attempted does not hold the appropriate locks, the action fails. One postcondition of any failure is that the action's exit status is set to false. In many cases, a failure has no effect at the architecture level, but may be meaningful at the script level.

Note also that actions commonly take the agent itself as a parameter (exceptions to this rule of thumb are mostly found in the "miscellaneous other actions" category). One important reason for this seemingly extraneous parameter is to allow for simulation of other agents' actions. If the agent is imagining what some other agent would do in a given situation, it is important to avoid performing those actions in the real world. Hence, most primitives will check to make sure that the actor parameter matches the name of the agent before dispatching the action. The practical impact of this is that you need to make sure the value passed for the actor parameter is correct; the default value is "robot" but it can be specified when the Action Manager is started using the <code>-agentname</code> command-line parameter.

3.1 Variable Types

The Action Manager maintains a type hierarchy for variables used in scripts. There is (currently) no strict type checking, however, because other components rely on typing to function properly (e.g., the planning server determines what to pass to scripts based on the types it's given). It is, therefore, advisable to adhere to the type hierarchy to the extent possible.

```
object: type
 location: type
 hallway: type
 room: type
 zone: type
 doorway: type
 door: type
 box: type
 property: type
 color: type
 open_pr: type
  closed_pr: type
 agent: type
 actor: type
 interactor: type
 listener: type
 thing: type
 data: type
 text: type
 keys: type
 unit: type
 perspective: type
 direction: type
 relationship: type
 datatype: type
 percept: type
 boolean: type
 number: type
 integer: type
 long: type
  visionTs: type
  millisec: type
  double: type
   coordinate: type
```

3.2 Actions Related to Motion

There are three primary types of motion-related commands: *targetless*, *targeted*, and *informational*. Targetless motion actions attempt to initiate some basic motion (e.g., move forward, turn right) that has no specific target location and will continue until explicitly terminated (e.g., move forward will cause the agent to move forward until stopped by a command, obstacle avoidance, etc.). Targeted motion commands initiate actions that will not continue indefinitely, but will stop when the target requirements have been satisfied. Note that an AI passes such targeted motion actions to the motion server, which handles the specifics of reaching the

target—it is treated as a black box. Hence, there is a level of state below the level of the Action Manager to which it has no access beyond the current overall state of the targeted action (in progress, success, failure, etc.). Finally, informational actions attempt to provide some kind of information to the overlying script (e.g., the agent's current location).

```
setTV: set translational velocity
 Parameter vars:
   ?mover: actor
    ?tv: double - translational velocity
 Resource locks:
   motionLock
setRV: set rotational velocity
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?rv: double - rotational velocity
 Resource locks:
   motionLock
setVels: set translational and rotational velocities
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?tv: double - translational velocity
    ?rv: double - rotational velocity
 Resource locks:
   motionLock
getVels: get translational and rotational velocities
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
 Return vars:
    ?tv: double - translational velocity
    ?rv: double - rotational velocity
 Resource locks:
   motionLock
move: move in the specified direction (straight, forward, left, right, back)
 Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
    ?direction: direction
 Resource locks:
   motionLock
qmove: move in the specified direction (straight, forward, left, right, back)
      with no verbal confirmation
 Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
    ?direction: direction
  Resource locks:
   motionLock
```

```
turn: turn in the specified direction (left, right)
  Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
    ?direction: direction
  Resource locks:
    motionLock
qturn: turn in the specified direction (left, right) with no verbal
       confirmation
  Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
    ?direction: direction
  Resource locks:
    motionLock
stop: stop motion
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
  Resource locks:
    motionLock
qstop: stop motion with no verbal confirmation
 Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
 Resource locks:
    motionLock
safeRight: check whether there's an obstacle to the right
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
safeFront: check whether there's an obstacle to the front
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
safeLeft: check whether there's an obstacle to the left
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
getMotionTolerance: get max distance from destination for successful
                    motion
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
  Return vars:
    ?dist: double - motion tolerance
setMotionTolerance: set max distance from destination for successful
                    motion
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?dist: double - motion tolerance
```

```
getCritDist: get the critical distance at which obstacle avoidance
             will engage (if active)
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
 Return vars:
    ?dist: double - critical distance
setCritDist: set the critical distance at which obstacle avoidance
             will engage (if active)
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?dist: double - critical distance
getStall: check whether motors are stalled (adesim only)
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
atLocation: check whether current location is within epsilon of given
           coordinates
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?xdest: coordinate - x coordinate
    ?ydest: coordinate - y coordinate
    ?epsilon: coordinate - allowable error
getLocation: get current location
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
 Return vars:
    ?xcoord: coordinate
    ?ycoord: coordinate
getHeading: get current heading
 Parameter vars:
   ?mover: actor
 Return vars:
    ?heading: double
getHeadingTo: get relative heading between two global headings
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
   ?t1: double - current heading
   ?t2: double - target heading
  Return vars:
    ?heading: double
```

```
getHeadingFrom: get global heading between one point and another
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?x1: coordinate - current x coordinate
    ?y1: coordinate - current y coordinate
    ?x2: coordinate - target x coordinate
    ?y2: coordinate - target y coordinate
  Return vars:
    ?heading: double - target heading
getHeadingFromRel: get relative heading between one point and another
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?x1: coordinate - current x coordinate
    ?y1: coordinate - current y coordinate
    ?x2: coordinate - target x coordinate
    ?y2: coordinate - target y coordinate
    ?heading: double - current heading
  Return vars:
    ?newHeading: double - target heading
getDistanceFrom: get distance between one point and another
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?x1: coordinate - current x coordinate
    ?y1: coordinate - current y coordinate
    ?x2: coordinate - target x coordinate
    ?y2: coordinate - target y coordinate
  Return vars:
    ?dist: coordinate - distance
moveTo: move to a given global location
 Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?xdest: coordinate - destination x coordinate
    ?ydest: coordinate - destination y coordinate
traverse: move until an obstacle is encountered ahead, avoiding
         obstacles to the sides
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
moveThroughRel: move through the nearest open doorway
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
moveRel: move to a location relative to the current one (heading
         assumed to be 0)
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
    ?xdest: coordinate - destination x coordinate
    ?ydest: coordinate - destination y coordinate
```

timeMove: move forward a given distance (dead reckoning)
 Parameter vars:
 ?mover: actor
 ?dist: double - distance to move (in meters)

timeTurn: turn a given amount (dead reckoning)
 Parameter vars:
 ?mover: actor
 ?heading: double - amount to turn (in radians, positive is counter-clockwise)

3.3 Actions Related to Vision

getTokenArea: get the area of the bounding box for the vision token corresponding to ?vKey Parameter vars: ?viewer: actor ?vKey: long - key for the vision token Return vars: ?area: double - area of the bounding box for the vision token getTokenPanTilt: get the pan/tilt of the bounding box for the vision token corresponding to ?vKey Parameter vars: ?viewer: actor ?vKey: long - key for the vision token Return vars: ?pan: double - pan angle of the 'center of gravity' of the bounding box for the vision token ?tilt: double - tilt angle of the 'center of gravity' of the bounding box for the vision token getTokenColor: get the color identifier for the vision token corresponding to ?vKey Parameter vars: ?viewer: actor ?vKey: long - key for the vision token Return vars: ?color: text - the color identifier for the vision token getAllByType: get the keys for all tokens of type ?vType in visual STM Parameter vars: ?viewer: actor ?vType: text - vision type Return vars: ?STMKeys: keys - list of keys for ?vType objects detected

3.4 Actions Related to Speech Production

```
sayTextNow: say something to someone
Parameter vars:
   ?speaker: actor
   ?target: interactor
   ?statement: text - the phrase to be spoken (vars will be bound)
Resource locks:
   speechLock

changeVoice: change Festival voice
Parameter vars:
   ?speaker: actor
   ?voice: data - new voice name

changeMood: change Festival voice mood (currently requires mbrola)
Parameter vars:
   ?speaker: actor
   ?mood: data - mood string (happy, sad, etc.)
```

3.5 Miscellaneous Other Actions

These are primitives that are more conveniently handled by the interpreter.

```
getNearestDoor: get the nearest detected doorway
  Parameter vars:
    ?mover: actor
 Return vars:
    ?x: coordinate - x coordinate of the doorway
    ?y: coordinate - y coordinate of the doorway
    ?ex: coordinate - x coordinate of the 'exit' point (just through
                      the doorway)
    ?ey: coordinate - y coordinate of the 'exit' point (just through
                     the doorway)
    ?ax: coordinate - x coordinate of the 'approach' point (just before
                      the doorway)
    ?ay: coordinate - y coordinate of the 'approach' point (just before
                      the doorway)
    ?dist: coordinate - distance to the doorway
getTimeOfDay: get time of day in milliseconds
  Return vars:
    ?time: long
stringCompare: check whether two strings match
 Parameter vars:
    ?stringOne: text
    ?stringTwo: text
stringContains: check whether ?stringOne contains ?stringTwo
  Parameter vars:
    ?stringOne: text
    ?stringTwo: text
getNewList: create a list
  Return vars:
    ?list: object - the newly-created list
getListSize: get number of elements in a list
 Parameter vars:
    ?list: object - a list
 Return vars:
    ?val: integer - the number of elements in ?list
getListElement: get an element from a list
  Parameter vars:
    ?list: object - a list
    ?index: integer - the index of the element to retrieve
  Return vars:
    ?val: object - the requested element
addListElement: add an element to the end of a list
  Parameter vars:
    ?list: object - a list
    ?val: object - the element to be added to ?list
```

```
delListElement: delete an element from a list and return the element
 Parameter vars:
    ?list: object - a list
    ?index: integer - the requested element
 Return vars:
    ?val: object - the deleted element
actionSucceed: exit current script with success exit status
actionFail: exit current script with failure exit status
true: boolean value true
false: boolean value false
set: assign a value to a variable
 Parameter vars:
    ?value: entity - the new value of ?target
 Return vars:
    ?target: entity - the variable to set
printText: print the argument text (variables will be bound)
 Parameter vars:
    ?text: text
logText: log the argument text (variables will be bound)
 Parameter vars:
    ?text: text
+: arithmetic addition
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
 Return vars:
    ?sum: number
-: arithmetic subtraction
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
   ?arg2: number
 Return vars:
    ?diff: number
*: arithmetic multiplication
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
  Return vars:
```

?prod: number

```
%: arithmetic modulus
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: integer
    ?arg2: integer
 Return vars:
    ?quot: number
/: arithmetic division
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
 Return vars:
    ?quot: number
round: round the parameter to the nearest long integer
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg: double
 Return vars:
    ?round: long
lt: arithmetic comparison: less than
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
le: arithmetic comparison: less than or equal to
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
gt: arithmetic comparison: greater than
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
ge: arithmetic comparison: greater than or equal to
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
=: arithmetic comparison: equal to
 Parameter vars:
    ?arg1: number
    ?arg2: number
randomInteger: return a random integer in the given range
  Parameter vars:
    ?lower: integer - lower bound
    ?upper: integer - upper bound
  Return vars:
    ?value: integer - random value
```

```
randomDouble: return a random double in the given range
 Parameter vars:
    ?lower: double - lower bound
    ?upper: double - upper bound
 Return vars:
    ?value: double - random value
startADEServerLogging: start ADE server logging
stopADEServerLogging: stop ADE server logging
getTeammateLoad: get teammate load (e.g., from fnirs server)
 Parameter vars:
    ?robot: actor
 Return vars:
    ?load: double
sleep: sleep
  Parameter vars:
    ?sleeper: actor
    ?sleepMillis: millisec - sleep duration in milliseconds
```

4 Variants of the Action Manager

There are three variants of the Action Manager, each distinguished by a different approach to calculating goal priority.

ActionManagerLinear assigns every TLG an identical priority regardless of time remaining, net benefit, etc. This effectively implements a first-come, first-served scheduling policy: no preepmtion is possible, because no higher-priority goal will ever be instantiated.

ActionManagerPriority assigns priority based on the net benefit of the TLG and its urgency. Urgency, in turn, is based on how much time is remaining (but may be bounded minimum and maximum urgency values).

ActionManagerAffective assigns priority based on the net benefit and urgency of the TLG, but the cost and benefit components are scaled according to the negative and positive affective states of the Action Manager. In addition, actions may have affective evaluations attached to them (e.g., depending on whether they were successful or not when executed previously); when multiple options are available to achieve a goal, action selection takes these affective evaluations into account.

5 Starting the Action Manager

The Action Manager is started like any other ADE server; this is often easiest achieved using the script runadeserver. ¹ For example:

```
./runadeserver com.action.ActionManagerLinear
```

starts an Action Manager with no requested server references and no startup actions. The following parameters are accepted:

```
-agent name < name > set the name of the agent to < name >
```

- -subject <name> set the default name for the interactor to <name>
- -script <name> [arg ...] run the script <name> with parameters [arg] ...
- -dbfilesupp <name> parse supplemental database file <name>
- -server <name> acquire reference to server <name> (a fully-qualified interface name, either for a specific server, or from com.interfaces

¹See the ADE Guide (\$ADE/doc/ADE Guide.pdf) for details.