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The Development of Ball Control Techniques for Robot Soccer based on Predefined Scenarios

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Abstract: Robotic soccer is an attractive topic in artificial intelligence and robotics research. However, to develop techniques and algorithms in this domain is a complex task. This study presents the development of ball control techniques and algorithms for robot soccer based on several predefined scenarios. In this study, we study the robot can do ball passing, obstacle avoiding and ball shooting according to certain situations. A vision system is used in this case where it calculates the robot position in x, y coordinates to make sure the robots move to the right direction. The velocity of each robot wheel is manipulated to control the speed of the robots and allow them to make turning and shooting. Algorithm testing was carried out by using a robot soccer simulator. Several techniques in obstacle avoiding and positioning were successfully implemented. The results prove these algorithms can be applied to execute the given tasks.

Key words: Ball control, position algorithm, predefined scenario, robot soccer strategy

INTRODUCTION

Robotic soccer is a common task in artificial intelligence and robotics research. This task permits the evaluation of various theories, the design of algorithms and agent architectures (Pratomo *et al.*, 2010). Robot Soccer was introduced in 1994 with the theoretical background to develop multi-robots adaptive, co-operative, autonomous systems solving common tasks (Asada and Kitano, 1999). A group of robots shall interact and self-organize autonomously in order to achieve a common goal. Further technical aspects besides co-operative and coordinated behavior are miniaturization of a complex electro-mechanical system, precise movement and optimal power efficiency (Kim *et al.*, 1997a). There are several categories in robot soccer: Simurosot, MiroSot, Narosot and HuroSot, classified by the size of the robots and the number of playing robots. SimuroSot consists of a server which has the soccer game environments (playground, robots, score board, etc.) and two client programs with the game strategies (Kim *et al.*, 1997b).

In this study, we implement several algorithms for robot soccer strategies. We create a strategy which makes the robot dribbles a ball while avoids obstacles and moves towards a passing position before makes the ball passing. Simultaneously, another robot avoids an opponent robot to move to the shooting area, receives the ball and shoots the ball to the goal. The robot shooter has to beat the opponent's goal keeper to score a goal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Figure 1 shows the development steps. We develop and test numerous strategies using the prototyping approach in the Laboratory of Computational Intelligence, Faculty of Information Science and Technology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. We adopt the best strategy in the robot soccer game to complete the required task.

Task: A pictorial scenario based on several tasks as mentioned earlier, is shown in Fig. 2. We need to analyze

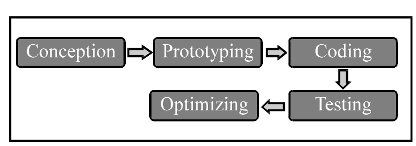

Fig. 1: Development steps

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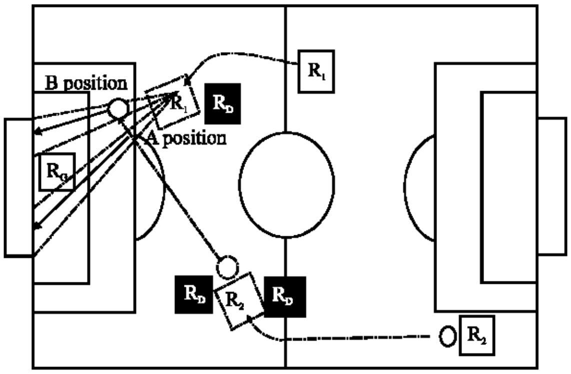

Fig. 2: Scenario of the game

and understand the situation to identify the best movements for the robots as depicted in Fig. 2. Briefly, the R_1 robot must avoid the R_D robot that acts as an obstacle, chase and shoot the ball into the goal. At the same time, the R_2 robot dribbles the ball along the bottom field and passes the ball through two R_D robots as shown in Fig. 2. The R_G robot must stop the ball from enter the goal. In our scenarios all the R_D robots are the defender in the static positions. These robots act as the obstacles.

Approach: The code of robot soccer strategy is developed using Microsoft Visual C++. We divide the scenario into two parts, Part A and Part B as shown in Fig. 3 (refer to Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 for the detailed version).

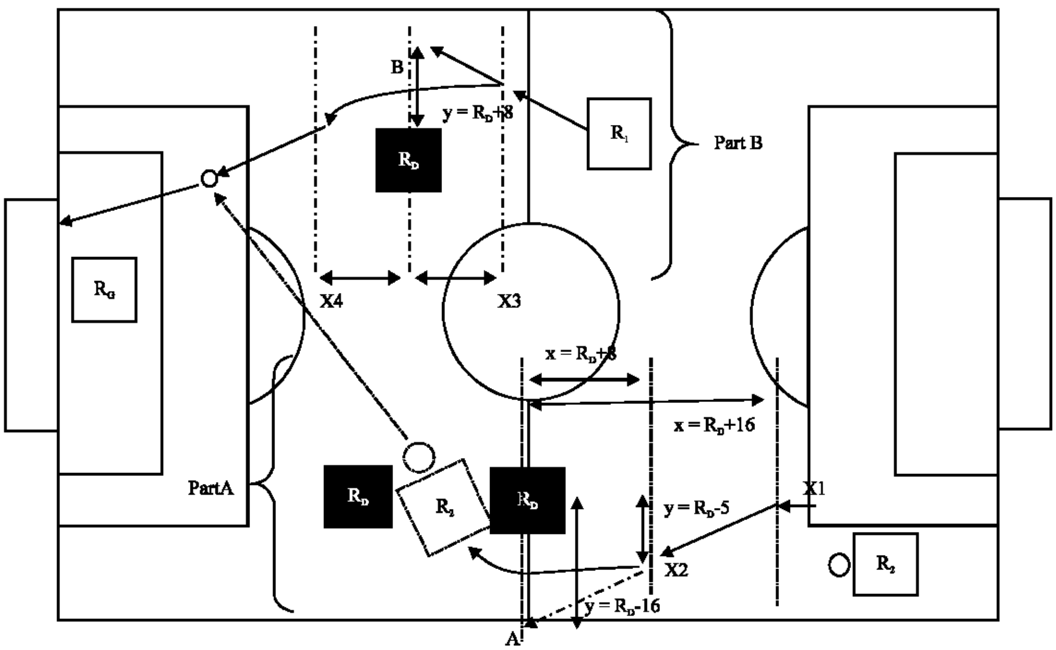

Fig. 3: Strategy plan

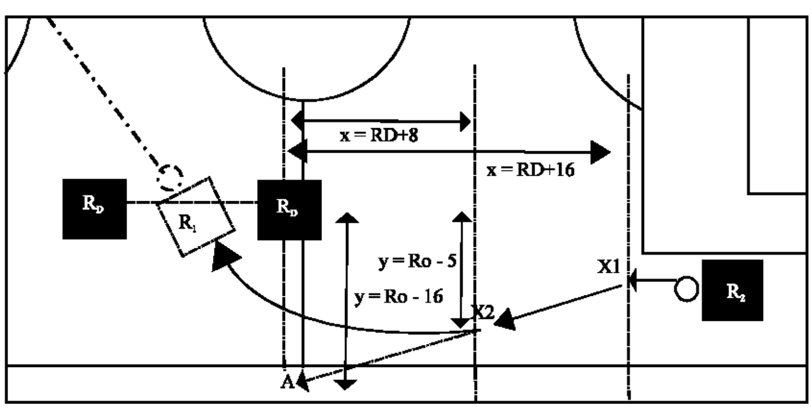

Fig. 4: The part A strategy

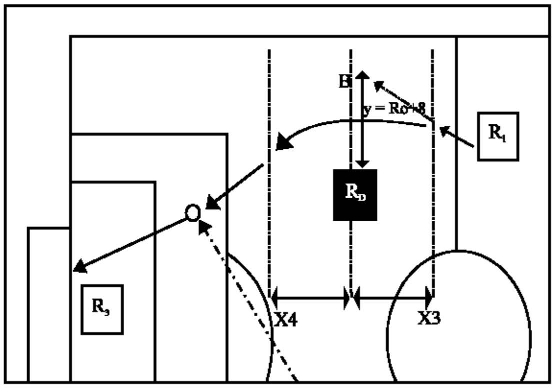

Fig. 5: The part B strategy

The task of part A is to assign movement for the R_2 robot to dribble the ball along the bottom field and to shoot the ball through two R_D robots. On the other hand, the part B is to assign movement for the R_1 robot to avoid R_D robot, chase the ball that moves towards it and shoot the ball straight to the goal. Those scenes are divided in such away to facilitate the source code development.

Development of the part A strategy: First, we assign a movement to the R_2 robot to move forwards slowly until x_1. Then, the robot changes its direction to point A which is located below the R_D robot. The distance between the R_2 robot and the R_D robot is shown in Fig. 4. Our vision system used 640×480 image resolution that makes 2,67 pixels equivalent to 1 cm in real measurement. When the R_2 robot arrives at x_2, it makes a half circle turn approaching the field obstacles and hits the ball through two R_D robots. We fix the coordinate of x_1 and x_2 according to the Fig. 4.

Development of the part B strategy: We assign the movement for the R_1 robot as the followings. The R_1 robot avoids the R_D robot and then chases the ball that moves towards it. Then, the R_1 robot shoots the ball into the goal. The R_1 robot only starts moving when the R_1 robot and the R_2 robot are in parallel of each other in its way to x4-axis. The R_1 robot will approach x3-axis and B point. At x3-axis, the R_1 robot makes a turn slightly to avoid the third R_D robot, and gradually approaches the x4-axis. From x4-axis, the R_1 robot chases the ball using a predict ball function and shoots it into the goal. We fix the x3 and x4 -coordinates according to Fig. 5.

Algorithms: We develop algorithms of strategy part A and B based on flow chart as depicted in Fig. 6 and 7 subsequently.

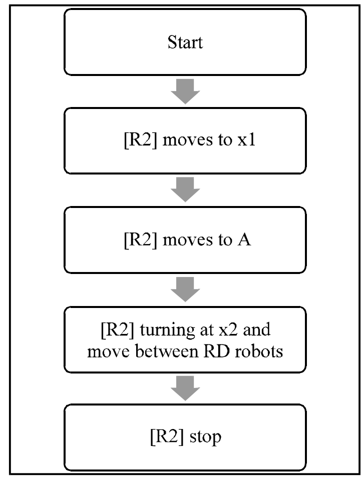

Fig. 6: The part A plan

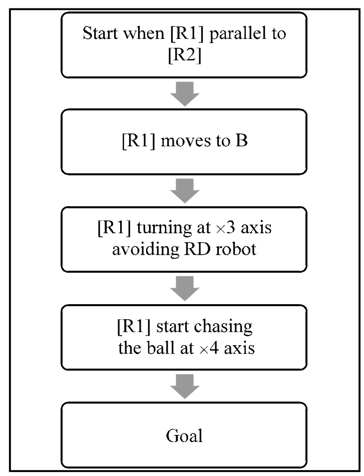

Fig. 7: The part B plan

Testing: We conducted several tests and then we recorded the number of success goal and the percentage of successfully performed the required tasks. We checked the unsuccessful task by replaying the simulator. We noted down the problems and improved them by changing the algorithms and setting parameters such as robots position, turning point, speed of the robot and velocity for turning.

Optimization: To optimize the performance and to produce the acceptable results in this task, we try out many methods and change the setting parameters to increase the number of success goal. First, we adjusted the constant value that indicates the robot passing time. Second, we initialized the position of the three robots in this task. The position must be exactly the same as the given scenario in order to get more accurate movement.

RESULTS

In this task, we used fuzzy algorithm. The position and predict algorithms are included in mathematical functions such as method to calculate angle, distance and position prediction of the ball and desired position of the robot (Egly *et al*., 2005; Huang, 2009).

The R_2 dribbles the ball: The ball dribbling is a technique to control the ball and to bring it to the desired location (Liu *et al*., 2004). We used the best method and strategy to control the ball. In the robot soccer, each player has its own velocity coefficient to chase or shoot the ball. From the algorithm, we set the velocity of the robot into a consistent value during ball dribbling. We also set the robot's speed into a constant value to ensure that both wheels are in balance. The speed will only change when it meets the R_D obstacle. The R_2 robot changes its position when it meets the R_D obstacle and automatically tries to pass the ball to the R_1.

The R_2 avoids the obstacles to the R'_2 position and then passes the ball to the shooting area: Figure 8 shows a scenario when the R_2 dribbles the ball and changes its action after it meets the obstacles and passes through the center line.

Here, we employ the two techniques. First, we use the Cartesian plane (coordinates) concept when the ball is near to the R_D obstacles. Second, we use obstacle avoiding strategy when the R_1 faces both the R_D robots. By using these two strategies, the R_2 can pass the ball through the two R_D robots and move forward to the shooting area as shown in Fig. 9.

The R_1 moves to the R'_1 position and avoids the robot opponent defender R_D: As shown in the Fig. 10, after the R_1 meets the R_D obstacles, it will shoot the ball to the shooting area (refers to the circle in the Fig. 10).

In this situation we provide two attacking strategies. In the first strategy, the simulator has FBOT (field bottom) and FTOP (field top) values to determine the center line. After the ball crosses the center line, the R_1 starts to move forward and will try to avoid the R_G obstacle. In the second strategy, after the ball moves through the center line and meets the R_D obstacle, the R_2 takes the action to shoot the ball. We combine both of the strategies to make the R_1 and the R_2 move simultaneously. The R_1 and R_2 share their own positions values in order to move to the shooting area and finally to make a goal.

The R_1 receives or chases the ball: Figure 11 shows the robot receives and chases the ball. In this situation, we try to find the best strategy. Based on the previous scenario strategy, the basic concept of the ball chasing as well as the obstacles avoidance is known. We create the codes to detect how far is the R_G's obstacles. The R_1 will try to catch the ball and kick the ball towards goal regardless of the ball position. The ball might not exactly at the desired location because of human errors during the ball and robots setting before the game.

The R_1 shoots the ball to the goal in A or B position: Basically, the attacker will try to make a goal as fast as possible with a high kicking speed. It is the same situation as shown in Fig. 12. The R_1 will shoot the ball immediately after the ball is received. When the attacker reached the goalie area, we increase the R_1 speed

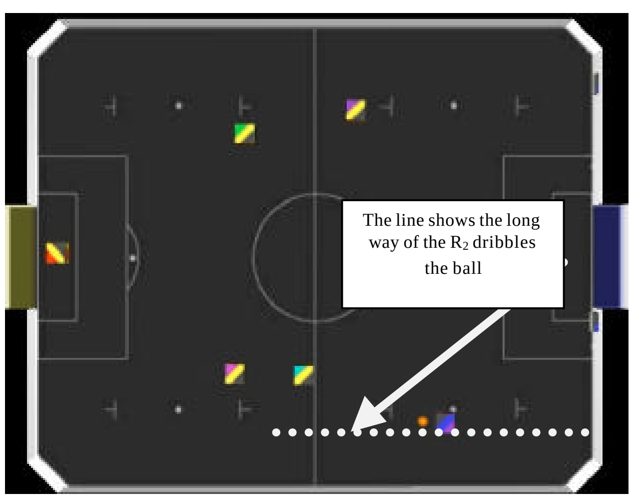

Fig. 8: The R_2 dribbles the ball

Fig. 9: The R_2 dribbles the ball and changes its action

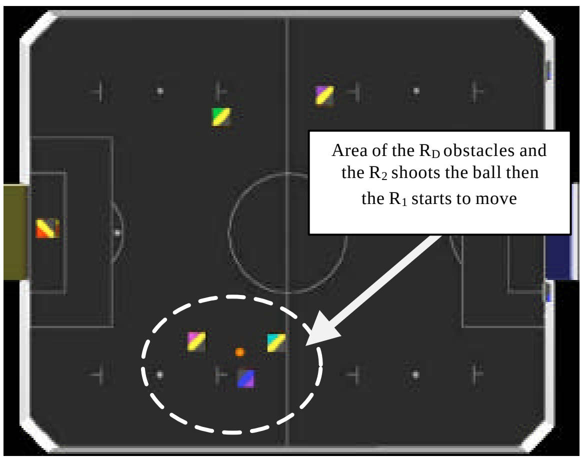

Fig. 10: The R_2 shoots the ball and the R_1 starts to move

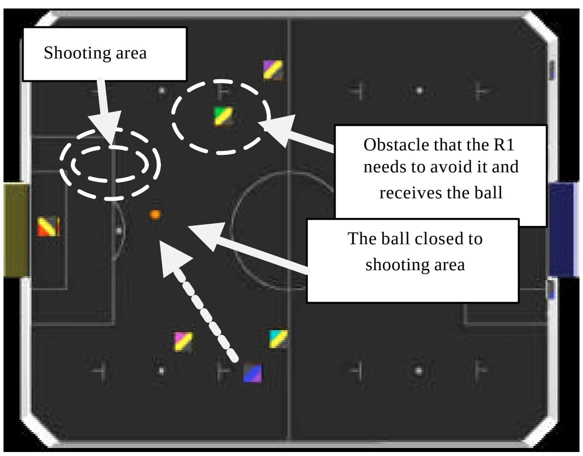

Fig. 11: The R_1 avoids the R_G obstacles and the ball closed to shooting area

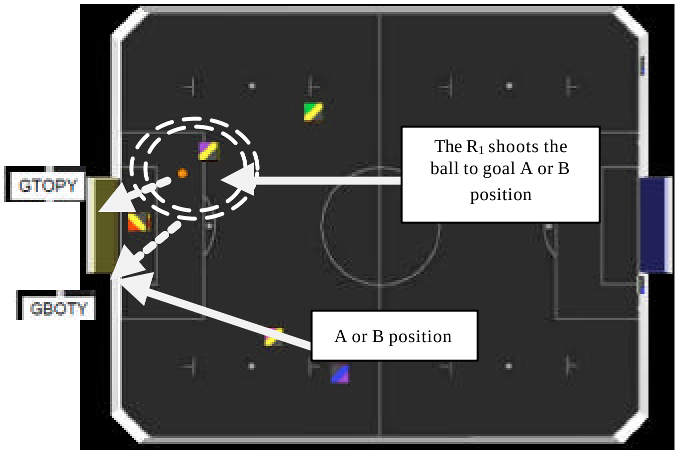

Fig. 12: The R_1 shoots the ball in A or B position

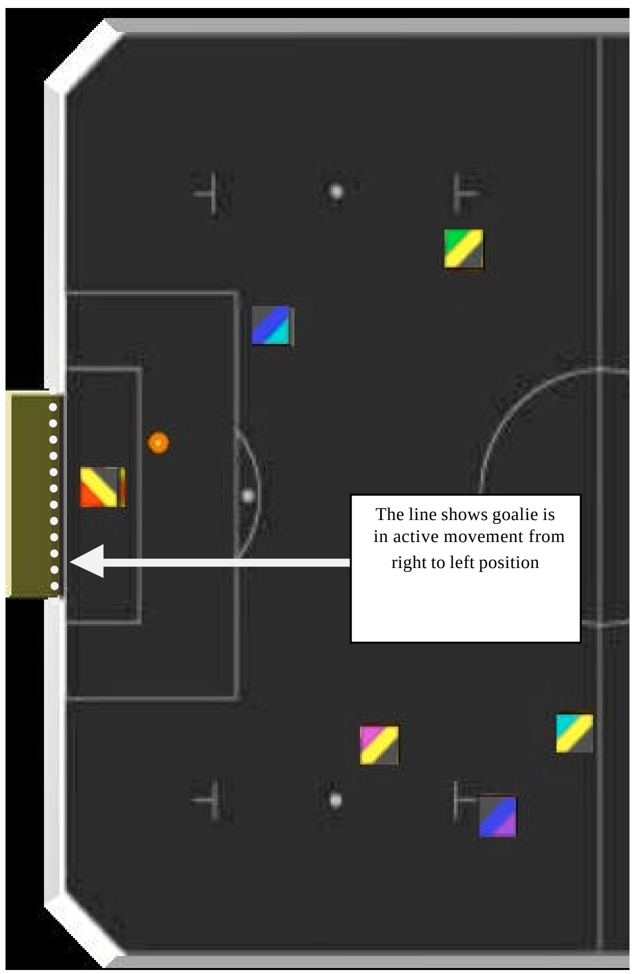

Fig. 13: Goalie defends the goal

Table 1: Tasks definition

Task	Definition
T_1	The R2 robot dribbles, avoids the obstacles (R_D) and passes the ball
T_2	The R1 robot moves and avoids an obstacle (R_D)
T_3	The R1 robot is in the right position and shoots the ball
T_4	The ball enter the goal

immediately. If the ball is very near to GTOPY or GBOTY corner (goal line or goal box), we set or give more velocity to the R_1.

Goalkeeper robot, R_G, defends the goal: The attacker will always try to make a goal and the goalie will defend the goal area. In this situation, we increase the attacker velocity to shoot the ball regardless whether the goalie is ready or not. The implementation of the idea into the robot soccer simulator is shown in Fig. 13.

DISCUSSION

The developed ball control techniques based on predefined scenarios were successfully tested. The tasks are defined as shown in Table 1.

The experiment shows that almost all T_1 tasks are successfully implemented. It can be observed that T_2 task has correlation to the achievement of T_3 and T_4 tasks. The shooting accuracy in T_3 task depends on the performance of T_1 task. Besides, T_3 task determined by the accuracy of the ball prediction as well. Furthermore, T_4 task will be achieved when the T_3 task is successfully done.

CONCLUSION

Many possible strategies and techniques can be applied to the robot soccer. The programmer can implement their own idea into the code regardless of the code structure. The important idea is the programmers must have a basic knowledge in robot soccer and know the related strategies and techniques in robot soccer. In this case, we applied our ideas into robot soccer game simulation. The first idea is using the Cartesian concept. Second, we calculated the area in simulator. Third, we used an existing strategy of robot soccer. Finally, we modified the robot soccer parameters such as increases the attacker speed, obstacles avoiding in near position, and dribbling with controlled velocity. Furthermore, we combined all the strategies and techniques to get the optimum result.

After the task completed, we then applied a variety of interesting ideas of the robot soccer movement. We combined all possible techniques such as dribbling, chasing, and shooting. The results show the strategies and techniques had been successfully implemented. The position and prediction algorithms have proved can be applied in the real robots.

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