Guiding a Reinforcement Learner with Natural Language Advice

Initial Results in RoboCup Soccer

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Project Overview

- Human provides assistance to learning agents
- Many types of interaction possible
- Interaction:
  - Human observes agent learning to perform task by RL
  - Gives advice in natural language
    * specifies condition and advised action
- Components:
  1. Translate natural language advice into formal representation
  2. Integrate advice into learning agent
Domain: RoboCup Simulator

- **Distributed**: each player a separate client
- Server models dynamics and kinematics
- Clients receive *sensations*, send *actions*

- Parametric actions: *dash, turn, kick, say*
- *Abstract, noisy* sensors, hidden state
  - *Hear* sounds from limited distance
  - *See* relative distance, angle to objects ahead
- > $10^{923}$ states
- **Limited resources**: stamina
- Play occurs in *real time* ($\approx$ human parameters)
CLang

- **Standardized Coach Language**
  - independent of coachable player’s behavior representation

- If-then rules:
  \[ \{ \text{condition} \} \rightarrow \{ \text{action} \} \]

- Example:
  If our player 7 has the ball, then he should pass to player 8 or player 9

  (definerule pass789 direc
   ((bowner our \{7\})
    (do our \{7\} (pass \{8 9\}))))
Learning to Map NL to CLang

- Parsing NL and translating into formal language
  - Manageable with current NLP technology for restricted task
  - Labor-intensive to construct parser by hand
- Instead learn parser from input/output pairs
- Exploring several methods
Task: 3 vs. 2 Keepaway

- Play in a **small area** \((20m \times 20m)\)
- **Keepers** try to keep the ball
- **Takers** try to get the ball
- **Episode:**
  - Players and ball reset randomly
  - Ball starts near a keeper
  - Ends when taker gets the ball or ball goes out of bounds
- Performance measure: average episode duration
Keeper’s State/Action Space

- **Inputs:** 11 distances among players, ball, and center and 2 angles to takers along passing lane
- **Actions:** Basic skills from CMUnited-99 team
Function Approximation: Tile Coding

- Full soccer state
- Few state variables (continuous)
  - Sparse, coarse, tile coding
  - Huge binary feature vector (about 400 1’s and 40,000 0’s)

- Linear map
  - Action values
SMDP Sarsa(\(\lambda\))

- **Linear Sarsa(\(\lambda\))**
  - **On-policy method**: advantages over e.g. Q-learning
  - Not known to converge, but works (e.g. [Sutton, 1996])

- Only update when ball is kickable for **someone**:
  Semi-Markov Decision Process

```
Kick: k1 k1 k1 k2 k2 k3 k3
Update: ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
```

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Prior Results Without Advice (Stone & Sutton, 2001)

- Results scaled up to 6 vs. 5
- Robust to limited vision, and varying field sizes and state representations.
• If no opponents are within 8m then **hold**.
• If a teammate is in a quadrant with no opponents then pass to that teammate.
Example Advice (contd.)

- If a passing lane is open then *use it.*
Example Advice (contd.)

- Don’t pass along edges.
Integrating Advice

- **Unchanged CMAC** computes action value.
- **New Advice Unit** computes advice \((0, +/-2)\)
- **Values added** to compute Q-value.
  - \(Q(s,a) = \text{CMAC}(s,a) + \text{Advice}(s,a)\)
- **Example:** hold advice
  - If no opponents are within 8m in s
    - then \(Q(s, \text{hold}) = \text{CMAC}(s, \text{hold}) + 2\)
    - else \(Q(s, \text{hold}) = \text{CMAC}(s, \text{hold})\)
Integrating Advice (contd.)

- Learner and advisor can have **different state representations**
- Should still be able to **refine advice**

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“Hold” Advice

Episode Duration (seconds)

Training Time (hours)

Hold Advice

No Advice
“Quadrant” Advice

Episode Duration (seconds) vs. Training Time (hours)

- Quadrant Advice
- No Advice
"Lane" Advice

Episode Duration (seconds) vs. Training Time (hours)

Lane Advice vs. No Advice
Conclusion and Future Work

- Simple, intuitive high-level advice can improve learning in a challenging, dynamic task.
- Advice helps learner find better policies
- Future enhancements:
  - Combined advice produces additive effect
  - Advice speeds up learning
  - Bad advice can be unlearned
- Future work in learning English to CLang mapping