

The ACC Mobile Robot Control Program

Claudiu Pozna, Fritz Troester

University Transilvania Brasov, Romania cp@unitbv.ro

University of Applied Science Heilbronn, Germany troester@hs-heilbronn.de

Abstract: Present work is a part of the ACC autonomous car project. On this paper we will focus on of the control program architecture. To design this architecture we will start from the human driver behavior model. Using this model we have constructed a three level control program. Preliminary results are presented.

Keywords: Control Program, Behavior model, Autonomous car, Mobile robot

1 Introduction

One of the main projects of Applied Sciences University Heilbronn, Germany is named “The Automotive Competence Centre (ACC)”. The aim of this project is to improve knowledge in the field of car locomotion control engineering. More precisely, we intend to develop control algorithms which can be used to control an entirely autonomous car. To achieve our purpose, we have transformed a car into a mobile robot [16], [17]. The next level in our project will be to imagine and implement the soft which will control the robot under changeable driving circumstances. Present work focuses on the control program architecture design. The idea is to imagine architecture based on human driver decisions model.

2 The Driver’s Behaviour Model

Some discussions about other ideas are necessary. From the references ([1]...[8]) we know that the “Driver’s Behaviour” model is used in the simulation field [3], [4] and also in autonomous or mixed manual and autonomous field [2]. The first researches on the subject start in 1950 [3] and begin with the “Skill-based driving model”, continue with the “Motivational model” which considers the drivers emotional state (from this class we can enumerate the “Risk compensation”, “Risk avoidance” and “Risk threshold models”) and in the last years is developed in a “Hierarchical control structure” (by Milchon). The “Hierarchical control

structure” divides driving into three levels of control: a strategic level which establishes the goal of the driving; a tactical level which finds the solution to accomplish the goal; an operational level that implements this solution on the low level control of the vehicle. Behind this “Hierarchical control structure” many scientific papers consider and develop problems like: “Longitudinal behaviours models” [2]; “Lateral behaviours model” [5], [1]; “Brake behaviour” [2], etc. The solutions of these problems are varied: “Linear optimal Control”, “Heuristic human driver models”, “Adaptive control strategy”, “Neuronal Network and fuzzy logic”, “Mental models”, etc.

Because we intended to make a heuristic approach, we were interested to find control programs architectures which model de human behaviour. Such architecture is presented in [3] and [4]. Some conclusions about these briefly overviews are the following:

- In the scientific literature referring to “Driver Behaviour Model” we have found several results which can be adapted and used in the ACC robot control;
- Recent works accept the Milchon three levels architecture;
- Many papers are focusing in developing the tactical level where the program must find the solutions in condition of changeable driving circumstance.

Model design is a possible solution of this problem. In this case the model is the “human driver behaviour”. Our idea starts from this point: we consider that is more suitable to model, and implement the “human driver decisions act” than the “human driver actions”.

To obtain the human driver behaviour a preliminary analyze must answer to the following questions: “*how a common driver acts, or what is a driving behaviour?*”; “*can we obtain some fundamental true about this behaviour and use them in our construction?*” and more “*can we identify tools to transpose this behaviour in soft?*”

To answer to the first question we must give the definition of the “behaviour” by underlining the semantic characteristics of “Driving behaviour”. First it is important to establish the category tree of this word: from [15] we have {act → activity → (behaviour, practice,...)}. According to this the behaviour is: “*an action or a set of actions performed by a person under specified circumstances that reveal some skill, knowledge or attitude*”. From the scientific literature which concern the driving behaviour ([1]...[8]) and from our experience the driving behaviour has a special character. To describe this character we focus on the word “custom” which is from the same category tree {act → activity → practice → custom,} and which is defined like: “*accepted or habitual practice*”. In many situations these customs have a special nature: automatism: *any reaction that occurs automatically without conscious thought or reflection*. Now we can present what we understand by “Driving Behaviour”: *an action or a set of actions performed by a person under driving circumstances, action which tend to be*

transformed in customs and even in automatisms; in fact the “Driving Behaviour” is composed from a collection of behaviours (the driver’s behaviour when he makes the ignition, the driver’s behaviour when he stops the car,...).

From the same theoretical and practical research, we establish the following “fundamental truth” for the “Driving Behaviour”:

- 1 a priori the driver establishes the current driving goal;
- 2 a behaviour is a set of actions;
- 3 these behaviours are linked together creating a system which allows to obtain solutions in the driving circumstance;
- 4 the translation from one behaviour to other is triggered by brow casting an event;
- 5 this system is developed by learning - experience;
- 6 behaviours presume decisions with an incomplete set of information;
- 7 in time, these set of actions tend to be transformed in customs and automatisms;

These propositions are in accord with the well known three level architecture of Milchon: the strategically level where the driver establishes his goal, the tactical level where the driver finds the solution to accomplish the goal and the operational level where the driver implements these solutions. Using these propositions we can focus on the tactical level and model (approximate) the “Driving Behaviour” by a collection of high linked programs (behaviours) which are stored in a memory. The decision to run a certain program is made by a manager program. This decision is based on the goal of driving and acknowledging about the environment (driving circumstance). Each program (behaviour) is a succession of instructions (action) which impose parameters and trigger actuators.

For a better understanding of this concept we will compare it with the well know Lego toys concept where several buildings (goals) can be made (solve the driving circumstance) using a finite type of bricks (program - behaviour). Using this analogy we will underline that it is very important to provide the interconnections of the bricks, and have an appropriate collection of them.

In what concerns the soft implementation, starting from these propositions, we can imagine the utility of state machine for handling the behaviours, fuzzy logic to enable the decisions based on incomplete information, or in describing the environment, and neuronal network to implement the learning processes.

After we have answer to the analyze questions a graphical representation of all these results will make our concept more understandable (see Figure 1).

Some explanations are necessary:

- The strategically level, where the robot must compute his goal is replaced with an interface where the human operator imposes the goal;
- The “Program Manager” analyzes the goal in the driving circumstances which are obtained from the sensors; the result of this process is the status vector of the robot (the desired position, velocity, etc.) and the decision to run certain program from the “Behaviours” subsystem;
- The “Behaviours” are composed by three parts:
 - o The “Error Machine” which compares the status vector with state vector (the positions, velocity, etc. obtained from the sensors);
 - o The “Behaviours Programs”: is a collection of programs (bricks); each program is able to solve a special environment situation (ignition, emergency stop, zero position, errors....);
 - o The “Actuators Manager” which manage the actuators of the robot;
- The “Output Interface” allows to the human operator to read the state vector and the errors of the robot and also memorizes the robot state history;
- The “Actuators Communications” outputs data to the microcontrollers of each actuator;
- The “Sensors” inputs data from the sensors;

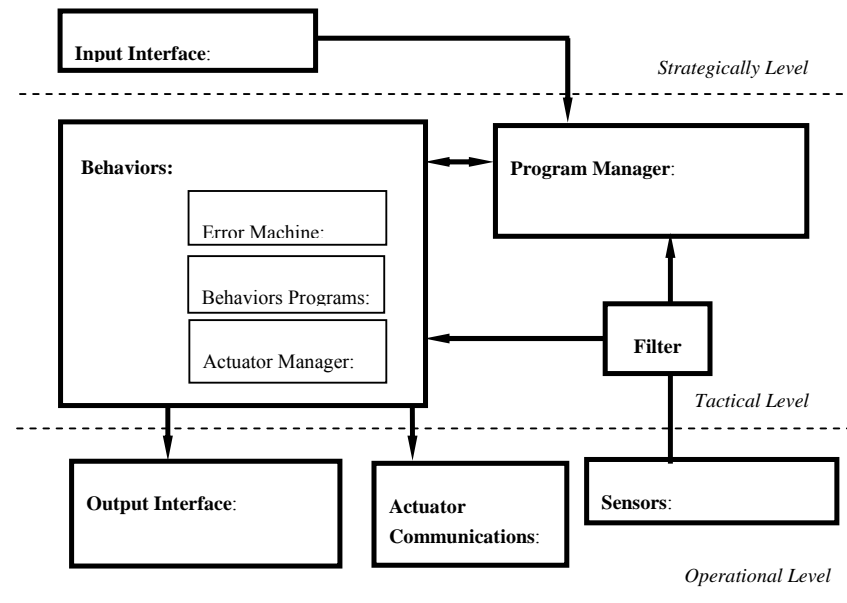


Figure 1
The program architecture

To build the “Behaviours” subsystem it is important to imagine the structure of the programs (bricks). Understanding that this subsystem can, and will, be enriched in Figure 2 we propose three different structures, named: “basic behaviours”, “error behaviour” and “simple behaviour”. The main differences between these bricks are the connection type (P previous, N next, E error, QI quick in, QO quick out) and also the direction of information flow.

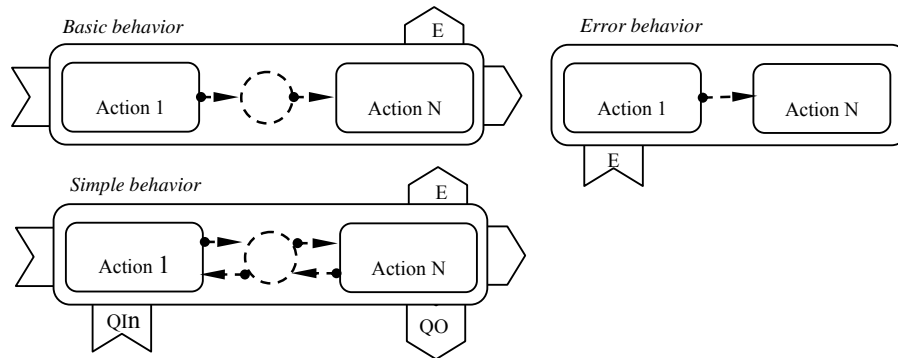


Figure 2
The behaviors structure (bricks)

In the “Behaviours” subsystem an “Error Machine” program is running. The aim of this program is to compare the “status vector” (the desired variable of the robot: car speed, steering angle etc.) with the “state vector” (the real variable read from the sensors: car speed, steering angle etc.). The decisions, about which brick must be connected, are made by the “Program Manager”. This program compares the goal of the robot with the driving circumstance; establishes the status vector and enables the brick which must run. After these decisions the program continues to compare the robot goal with driving circumstance. If the result is acceptable, nothing is changed (the same brick is run), in contrary, a “Crisis” or a “Failure” event is broadcasted. “Crisis” means that a new behaviour is needed, so the status vector as well as the brick is changed. “Failure” means that we don’t have solutions (behaviours) to solve the problem and we must stop safely the robot. We present these processes using the diagram from Figure 3.

Conclusions about the program architecture are necessary:

- The structure of the program is a Milchon type structure;
- In this case the goal of the robot is imposed by the human operator via the “Input interface”;
- The tactical level finds solution, linking several programs (bricks). A brick is a succession of action; an action sets up parameters and trigger actuators;

- The human behaviour approximation consist in modelling the human decision process and not the human acting process;
- There are two control loops:
 - A high level control solved by the “Manager Program”: goal (robot status) versus robot performance (robot state),
 - Operational level control, low level control solved by each actuator microcontroller, desired value versus current value.

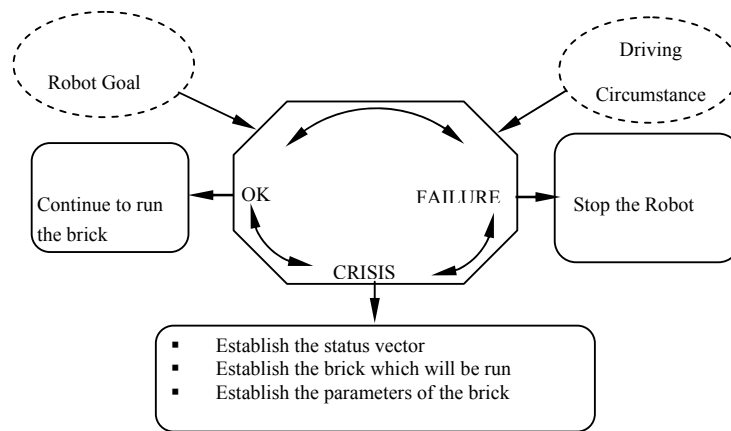


Figure 3
The Program Manager structure

3 Preliminary Results

This paper presents only partial results on our control program construction. The control program is made in Matlab and use the xPC toolbox. We have started by creating the communication tools, via CANopen network, between the actuators, sensors and the control program. Using these tools we have created the operational level. The next step was the “Behaviors” subsystem composed by several “bricks” which allows to: start the car; stop the car; perform emergency brakes; follow a desired trajectory etc. Based on this architecture, the control program plotted in Figure 4, past successfully the experimental test.

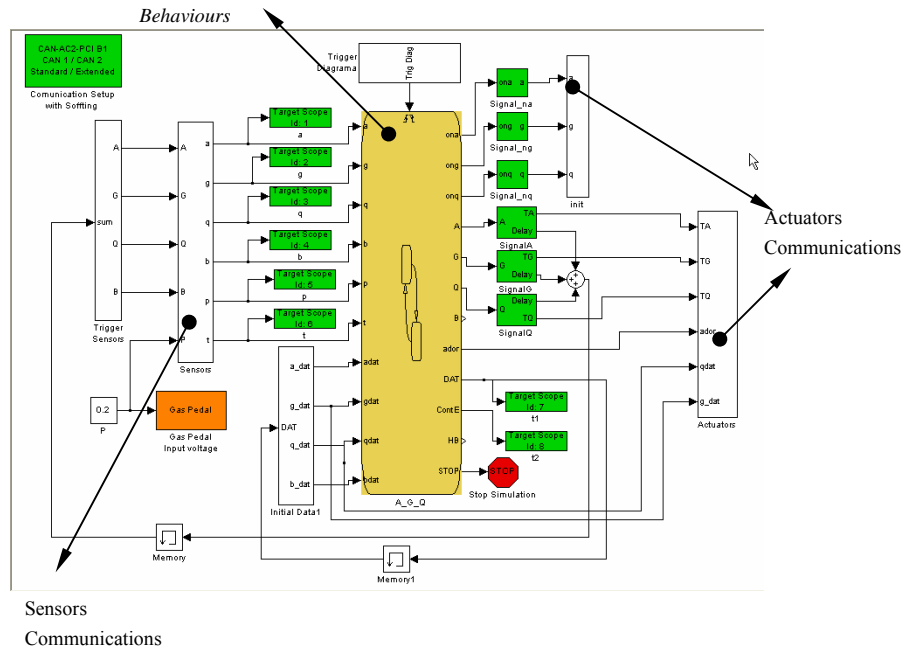


Figure 4
The control program (Simulink)

Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to present the control program architecture that we have imagined for the ACC mobile robot. After we have designed and realized the mechanical and electrically subsystem of the robot the next challenge was to implement the control program. Because the control task is complex, we intend to solve it approximating the human driver behaviour. More precisely we don't intend to model how the driver is steering, pushing the gas pedal etc. Our intention is to model the driver decisions process: the human (robot) decides to brake; the human (robot) driver decides to steer etc.

In actual state of work only a part of this construction is made: de operational level and the structure of the "Behaviours" (a part of the tactical level). In this system we implemented several behaviours (bricks): start the car, enable the motor, put the car in zero position, etc. Future developments are focus in the tactical level: creating new bricks, creating the program manager, the filters etc.

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