Language Models as Agents

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What are agents?

Anything that can be viewed as **perceiving** its environment through sensors and **acting** upon that environment through actuators.



How to get started in LLM Agents

- Tasks and Applications
- Training-free Methods for Building Agents
- Evaluation Environment and Benchmark
- Training Methods for Improving Agents

Tasks and Applications For LLM Agents

Why do we want agents?

Imagine if things get done by just talking...

How People Interact with Computers? • Traditionally ...





- What about using natural language?
- Save time, natural, accessible, no need to browse, no programming learning curve, etc.



Natural Language Interfaces to Computers



Virtual Assistants

Set an alarm at 7 AM
 Remind me for the meeting at 5pm

Play Jay Chou's latest album

•	Untitled-1	
ເ	Jntitled-1 ●	
1	my_list = [3, 5, 1]	
2	sort in descending order $igodot$	
3	<pre>sorted(my_list, reverse=True</pre>)
4		
5		
પ્રુ કે હ	master* 🕂 Python 3.6.5 64-bit	\otimes

Natural Language Programming

Sort my_list in descending order
 Copy my_file to home folder
 Dump my_dict as a csv file output.csv

Yin et al. 17'

Tool Integrations into Chatbots

ChatGPT plugins

We've implemented initial support for plugins in

ChatGPT. Plugin language model help ChatGPT ad computations, o

ChatGPT plugins

R Expedia

Bring your trip plans to life-get there, stay there, find things to see and do.

K.

Klarna Shopping Search and compare prices from thousands of online shops.

Speak

...

Learn how to say anything in another language with Speak, your Al-powered language tutor.

...

FN

FiscalNote

information.

Milo Family Al Giving parents superpowers to turn the manic to magic, 20 minutes each day. Ask: Hey Milo, what's magic today?

Provides and enables access to select

market-leading, real-time data sets for

legal, political, and regulatory data and

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Wolfram

Access computation, math, curated knowledge & real-time data through Wolfram Alpha and Wolfram Language.

Instacart Order from your favorite local grocery

stores.

..

OpenTable

KAYAK

Search for flights, stays and rental cars. Get recommendations for all the places you can go within your budget.

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Shop Search for millions of products from the world's greatest brands.



Interact with over 5,000+ apps like Google Sheets, Trello, Gmail, HubSpot, Salesforce, and more.

Provides restaurant recommendations.

with a direct link to book.

Robots



Turn and go with the flow of traffic. At the first traffic light turn left. Go past the next two traffic light, As you come to the third traffic light you will see a white building on your left with many American flags on it. Touchdown is sitting in the stars of the first flag.



Chen et al., 18'

Robots



You are in the middle of a room. Looking quickly around you, you see a safe 1, a shelf 4, a drawer 2, a bed 1, a drawer 1, a shelf 5, a shelf 2, a sidetable 2, a shelf 3, a drawer 3, a shelf 1, a sidetable 1, a desk 1, and a garbagecan 1.

Your task is to: examine an alarmclock with the desklamp.

> go to desk 1

You arrive at loc 8. On the desk 1, you see a pen 1, a bowl 1, a alarmclock 2, a pencil 2, a pencil 3, a creditcard 3, a book 1, a alarmclock 3, a keychain 3, and a book 2.

> take alarmclock 2 from desk 1

You pick up the alarmclock 2 from the desk 1.

AlfWorld, Shridhar et al. 21'

Games



MineDojo, Fan et.al 22'

Games



SIMA, DeepMind SIMA Team 24'

Software Development

Devin (https://www.cognitionlabs.com/introducing-devin)

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UI Automation

Click the "Menu" button, and then find and click on the item with the icon.



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A Home

"Play some synthwave songs"

Training-free Methods for Building Agents

How to let LLM become an agent

Observation

- Text input
- Visual Input
- Audio Input
- Structured Input
- Need for Multimodal LLMs





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How to let LLM become an agent

 Planning and reasoning ability Chain-of-thoughts (CoT) "Let's think step by step"



CoT (Wei et al. 22')

You are in the middle of a room. Looking quickly around you, you see a cabinet 6, a cabinet 1, a coffee machine 1, a countertop 3, a stove burner 1, and a toaster 1. Your task is to: Put some pepper shaker on a drawer.

Ask LLM:

What should I do next? Let's think step by step:

First I need to find a pepper shaker ... more likely to appear in cabinets (1-6), countertops (1-3) ...

After I find pepper shaker 1, next I need to put it on drawer 1

How to let LLM become an agent

- Tool-use ability
 - Generate action calls
 - Execute the actions in environment
 - Put new observation back in prompt

```
You are in the middle of a room. Looking quickly around
you, you see a cabinet 6, a cabinet 1, a coffee machine 1,
a countertop 3, a stove burner 1, and a toaster 1.
Your task is to: Put some pepper shaker on a drawer.
```

Reasoning

Traces

Ask LLM:

What should I do next? Let's think step by step: First I need to find a pepper shaker ... more likely to appear in cabinets (1-6), countertops (1-3) ... Action: GOTO Cabinet 1

Observation: On cabinet 1, there is a vase 2

Observations

Env

Actions

LM

Toolformer (Schick et al. 23') ReAct (Yao et al. 23')

How to let LLM becor

 Planning and reasoning ability Chain-of-thoughts (CoT) "Let's think step by step"

• Tool-use ability

Generate API calls with arguments Execute the API calls Get API call results as new observation

What if lots of APIs?

Supposing you have the following APIs, answer the given question.

Available APIs:

1. weather(location): for getting the weather information given a location 2. location(): for getting the location of the user.

3. bus_route(start, end): for finding the current bus route from the start position to the end position.4. count_characters(s): for counting the number of characters in a string s.

Question: Is it okay to go hiking today?

To know the answer, we first need to know the current location of the user. API call: location() = Seattle. Next, we need to know the current weather in Seattle. API call: weather(Seattle) = Cloudy with a chance of rain.

Based on this information, it is not recommended to go hiking today in Seattle.

Available APIs:

weather(location): for getting the weather information given a location
 location(): for getting the location of the user.

3. bus_route(start, end): for finding the current bus route from the start position to the end position.

4. count_characters(s): for counting the number of characters in a string s.

Question: how long does it take to take a bus to Vancouver?

To answer this question, we first need to know the current location of the user. API call: location() = Seattle. Next, we need to find the bus route from Seattle to Vancouver. API call: bus_route(Seattle, Vancouver) = 4 hours.

Therefore, it takes 4 hours to take a bus from Seattle to Vancouver.

How to let LLM become ar

• Generate code to perform the task Reasoning + planning + action unified PAL (Gao et al. 23')

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Assuming you can use Python, you have installed all the common APIs and you h all the authentication steps, answer the following task.

Task 1: set up a meeting with Noah tomorrow at 10am.

I'm sorry, but as an AI language model, I don't have the capability to directly set u meeting or send invitations. However, I can guide you on how to use Python to in with calendar APIs to set up a meeting.

Here's a sample code to set up a meeting with Noah using the Google Calendar / Python:

```
Copy code
python
import datetime
import pytz
from google.oauth2.credentials import Credentials
from googleapiclient.discovery import build
# Set up the credentials
creds = Credentials.from_authorized_user_file('token.json', SCOPES)
# Set up the calendar service
service = build('calendar', 'v3', credentials=creds)
# Set up the meeting details
event = \{
    'summary': 'Meeting with Noah',
    'location': 'Virtual',
    'description': 'Discussing project updates',
    'start': {
        'dateTime': datetime.datetime(2023, 2, 22, 10, 0, 0, tzinfo=pytz.UTC
        'timeZone': 'UTC',
   },
    'end': {
        'dateTime': datetime.datetime(2023, 2, 22, 11, 0, 0, tzinfo=pytz.UTC
        'timeZone' 'UTC',
   },
    'reminders':
        'useDefault': True,
   },
}
# Create the event
event = service.events().insert(calendarId='primary', body=event).execute()
print(f'Event created: {event.get("htmlLink")}')
```

Evaluation Environment and Benchmark

Evaluation of LLM Agents

- Simplified environments and basic tasks
- Performance is saturating.
 - 1.Stateless, non interactive environment, e.g. *Mind2Web (Deng et al. 2023)* has only dumped pages.
 - 2.Checking action sequence accuracy (step-wise, surface form only)

3.Simple interactive environment, short horizon, e.g. WebShop (Yao et al. 2023), MiniWoB++ (Humphreys et al. 2022)

Task									
Follow one of the team leaders of one of the NHL teams from the Atlantic Division									
Actio	ons			•					
1.	HOVER	>	[link] <i>ESPN NHL Home Page</i>						
2.	CLICK	>	[link] <i>Teams</i>						
3.	CLICK	>	[heading] <i>Boston Bruins</i>						
4.	CLICK	>	[link] <i>Full Team Statistics</i>						
5.	CLICK	>	[heading] <i>David Pastrnak RW</i>						
6.	CLICK	>	[button]	•					

Move the cube around so that "5" is the active side facing the user.	Set the sliders to the combination [13,20,13] and submit.	Draw the number "2" in the checkboxes using the example on the right and press Submit when finished.	Drag Ree to the 4th position.	Keep your mouse inside the circle as it moves around.	Enter the value of Country into the text field and press Submit.
5.4 Submit	14 19 17 Submit	Submit	Jade Jade Ree Karlen Millie Noelyn		GenderMaleFirst nameAnnecorinneCountryGuamYear of Birth1734ReligionHinduism
Drag all triangles into the black box.	Select 09/23/2016 as the date and hit submit.	Sort the numbers in increasing order, starting with the lowest number at the top of the list.	Copy the text from the 1st text area below and paste it into the text input.	Select all the shades of blue and press Submit.	Find the 4th word in the paragraph, type that into the textbox and press "Submit".
k Submit	Date: Sul Sul Sul Sul Sul Sul Sul Sul	9 • -12 • 49 • -28 Submit	Blandit auisque. Amet ac odio aliquam. Ultrices ornare Submit	Image: Submit state	Non arcu ut utricles est. Gravida gravida. Porta erat nulla eget condimentum posuere a Submit
Click the button in the dialog box labeled "Cancel".	Highlight the text in the paragraph below and click submit.	Highlight the text in the paragraph below and click submit.	Find the 11th word in the paragraph, type that into the textbox and press "Submit".	Move the cube around so that "2" is the active side facing the user.	Drag the smaller box so that it is completely inside the larger box.
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Instruction: i am looking for x-large, red color women faux fur lined winter warm jacket coat, and price lower than 70.00 dollars

Current Query: women fur jacket coat

Results

Page 1 (1-10) of 50 total results





Current Action: click [Fjackets Real Lambskin...]





Key to Agent Benchmarks

Environment:

- Diverse functionality.
- Rich and realistic content.
- Interactive
- Easily Extendable
- Reproducible

Tasks:

- Long horizon tasks
- Enough difficulty
- Involves multiple websites

Evaluation:

- Reliable metrics
- Encourage final goal rather
- than partial satisfaction.

WebArena Environment Design

Environment:

- Diverse functionality.
- Rich and realistic content.
- Interactive
- Easily Extendable
- Reproducible

A sandbox Internet:

- Open source, production-ready
 implementation of the websites
 Data populated from real-world
 websites
- Easily distributable Dockers,
- AWS images, etc.



WebArena (Zhou et al. 23')

Collecting Realistic Intents

We checked our own web browsing history!

- Information seeking
 - "When was the last time I bought shampoo?"
- Site navigation
 - "Checkout merge requests assigned to me."
- Content & configuration operation
 - "Post my question, "is a car necessary in NYC", in a subreddit where I'm likely to get an answer."

Example Tasks in WebArena

合

"Create a plan to visit Pittsburgh's art museums with minimal driving distance starting from Schenley Park. Log the order in my "awesome-northeast-us-travel" repository

webarena.wikipedia.com

Wikipedia

Pittsburgh museums

List of museums in Pittsburgh

This **list of museums in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania** encompasses museums defined for this context as institutions (including nonprofit organizations, government entities, and private businesses) that collect and care for objects of cultural, artistic, scientific, or historical interest and make their collections or related exhibits available for public viewing. Also included are university and non-profit art galleries. Museums that exist only in cyberspace (i.e., virtual museums) are not included.

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Wikimedia Commons has media related to Museums in Pittsburgh @.

See also: List of museums in Pennsylvania

▼Museums



Search for museums in Pittsburgh



webarena.openstreetmap.com



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"

Outcome/Execution-based Evaluation

Goal: directly validate the correctness of the execution

- "When was the last time I bought shampoo?"
- Directly compare with the annotated answer: Answer is "Dec 15th, 2022"

Outcome/Execution-based Evaluation

Post my question, "is car necessary in NYC", in a subreddit where I'm likely to get an answer

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Postmi	ll Forums	Wiki	٩		
(←) /f/ny	/C				

is car necessary in NYC?

```
Need your answer
Submitted by convexeggtarxxx 0 seconds ago in nyc
is car necessary in NYC?
No comments Edit Delete
<div class="submission_row"> flex
<div class="submission_inner"> == $0
<header class="submission_header"> ... 
<div class="submission_content flow-slim">
<div class="submission_content flow-slim">
<div class="submission_body break-text text-flow">
```

</div>

```
"f/nyc" in page.url
```

"Is car necessary in NYC?" in document.querySelector(".su bmission_inner").outText

Observation & Action Space

Keyboard: type



Mouse: click, hover, scroll

Browser: New tab, go back

Prompting LLM as Agent

• Few-shot in-context learning: General guideline + two examples

You are an autonomous intelligent agent tasked with navigating a web browser. You will be given web-based tasks. These tasks will be accomplished through the use of specific actions you can issue.

You can observe the following information:

You can do the following actions:

•••

...

...

Prompting LLM as Agent

• Few-shot in-context learning: General guideline + two examples

Example input:

OBSERVATION:

[1744] link 'HP CB782A#ABA 640 Inkjet Fax Machine (Renewed)'

[1757] button 'Add to Cart'

URL: http://onestopmarket.com/office-products/office-electronics.html OBJECTIVE: What is the price of HP Inkjet Fax Machine PREVIOUS ACTION: None

Example output:

Let's think step-by-step. This page lists ... the next action I will perform is ``click [1744]``` (Optional chain-of-thought reasoning) (Issued action)

WebArena is Challenging



- Chain-of-thought prompting provides *limited* benefits.
- GPT-4 remains *significantly behind* human performance.
- Prompt engineering emphasizes LLMs' sensitivity to subtle instruction changes that typically don't affect humans.

Failures: Not Knowing How



Show me the customers who have expressed dissatisfaction with Olivia zip jacket

Either going to the catalog (product) section or the marketing (review) section



Decided to go to customers section which is not easy to select and filter reviews

Ŵ	Customers	×	
DASHBOARD	All Customers		
\$	Now Online		
SALES	Login as Customer Log		
CATALOG	Customer Groups		
			t of your business' performance, using our dynamic product, order, and sustemer reports
			a of your business performance, using our dynamic product, order, and customer reports

Failures: Not being Accurate

"... and set the due date to 2023/12/23"

Due date

2023/12/23



"... and set the due date to 2023-12-13"

Due date

2023-12-13



Due date

2023-12-13								
December 2023								
sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat		
					1	2		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
31								

Failures: Trivial Errors



Search query

DMV areaDMV areaDMV area

Search

- GPT-4 : 21% examples failed due to repeated typing.
- May be related to hallucination effect, generates repeated actions
- Irrelevant content in a webpage hurts!

Failures: (Not So) Trivial Errors

• "Assign this issue to myself."

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Training Methods for Improving Agents

Learning of LLM Agents

- In-Context Learning Learning from few-shot exemplars
- Supervised Finetuning Learning From *Experts*
- Reinforcement Learning Learning from *Environment*

In-context Learning

• LM performs a task just by *conditioning on input-output examples*, without optimizing any parameters.

Circulation revenue has increased by 5% in Finland.\nPositivePanostaja did not disclose the purchase price.\nNeutralPaying off the national debt will be extremely painful.\nNegativeThe company anticipated its operating profit to improve. \n_____



In-context Learning

example_user OBSERVATION: [1744] link 'HP CB782A#ABA 640 Inkjet Fax Machine (Renewed)' [1749] StaticText '\$279.49' [1757] button 'Add to Cart' [1760] button 'Add to Cart' [1761] button 'Add to Wish List' [1761] button 'Add to Compare' URL: http://onestopmarket.com/office-products/office-electronics.html OBJECTIVE: What is the price of HP Inkjet Fax Machine PREVIOUS ACTION: None

example_assistant

Let's think step-by-step. This page lists the information of HP Inkjet Fax Machine, which is the product identified in the objective. Its price is 279.49. I think I have achieved the objective. I will issue the stop action with the answer. In summary, the next action I will perform is ``` stop [279.49]```

Supervised Finetuning

• Collect large amount of expert trajectories (e.g. from human annotation)

task_intent, [(obs_1, action_1), ...,(obs_N, action_N)]

• Finetune the LLM with standard cross-entropy loss.

Supervised Finetuning



Supervised Finetuning

- Data hungry
- Cannot learn much from failed trajectories
 - a_1, a_2, a_3, ... ,a_10 Success
 - a_1, a_2, a_3, ... ,a_10 Fail (Wasted)
- Need human trajectory?
 - Data augmentation techniques

Create More Training Data



Data Augmentation

- Continue pre-train on large amount of data automatically mined
- Even noisy, not clear trajectories, provide domain adaptation.



MineDojo, Fan et al. 22' Don't Stop Pretraining, Gururangan et al., 20'

Reinforcement Learning

Lots of on-going research in this area!

Recall RLHF: Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback:



RLHF, Ouyang, et al. 22'

Reinforcement Learning Compared to RLHF: Given environment, *reward function*

(trajectory, reward) pairs without human





Trial and Error (Song et al. 24')

Reinforcement Learning

- Closed loop, interactive environment
- Need good reward functions

 \circ What if the task success/fail is not easy to automatically assess?

• Need good initial models

 \odot Has decent basic knowledge ability, sparse rewards

• Scalability

The environment takes 10 seconds to env.step()
 The reward function takes 100 seconds to get a scalar reward

Reinforcement Learning

- No access to policy model parameters? (e.g. GPT-4)
- We can train with environment reward a second LLM (smaller open source models), that generates additional "reflection" prompts.



Retroformer, Yao, et al. 23'