

DESCRIPTION

ROBOT AND ITS CONTROL METHOD AND RECORDING MEDIUM



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TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a robot and its control method and recording medium, and is suitably applied to a pet robot.

BACKGROUND ART

In recent years, a four-legged walking pet robot that performs actions autonomically responding to the direction from the user and the surrounding environment has been developed by the applicant of the present invention. Such pet robot has the similar shape to dogs and cats being raised in general households and acts responding to the direction from the user and the surrounding environment.

In such pet robot, if the emotion such as "anger" and "joy" can be expressed in response to the action of the user such as "hit" and "pat", the user can communicate with the pet robot smoothly. Hence, it is considered that the user's affection and curiosity to the pet robot can be improved and entertainment factor can be further improved.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been done considering the above point and is proposing a robot and its control method and recording medium capable of further improving the entertainment factor.

To obviate such problem according to the present invention, we provide a light emitting means to function as eyes for the sake of appearance, an external sensor for detecting the external condition and/or the input from the outside, and a control means for flashing the light emitting means in order to express emotions based on the output of the external sensor in the robot. Accordingly, the user can easily recognize emotion of said robot. Thus, communications between the user and the robot can be conducted smoothly and the robotic device capable of further improving the entertainment factor can be realized.

Furthermore, according to the present invention, since in the control method of the robot comprising the light emitting means functioning as eyes for the sake of appearance and the external sensor for detecting the external condition and input from the outside, the first step for recognizing the external condition and/or the input from the outside based on the output of the external sensor and the second step for flashing the light emitting means in order to express emotions are provided, the user can easily recognize the emotion of the robot based on the light emitting condition of the light emitting means of the robot. Thus, communications between the user and the robotic device can be

conducted smoothly. Thereby, the control method of the robot capable of further improving the entertainment factor can be realized.

Furthermore, according to the present invention, in the recording medium on which the control program of the robot having the light emitting means functioning as eyes for the sake of appearance and the external sensor for detecting the external condition and/or input from the outside is recorded, the control program having the first step for recognizing the external condition and/or the input from outside based on the output of the external sensor and the second step for flashing the light emitting means to express emotions is recorded. As a result, according to the control program recorded onto this recording medium, since the user can easily recognize emotions of said robotic device based on the light emitting condition of the light emitting means of the robotic device, the communications between the user and the robotic device can be smoothly conducted. Thus, the recording medium capable of further improving the entertainment factor of the robotic device can be realized.

Furthermore, according to the present invention, there is provided a pet robot with a head, comprising

- light emitting means, provided on the head, comprising apparent eyes;

- control means for controlling the flashing of the light emitting means;

- a semi-transparent cover arranged so that the apparent eyes of the robot can be seen from outside only when the light emitting means flashes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view showing the construction of a pet robot according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing the construction of a pet robot.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view showing the construction of LED.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view showing the construction of LED.

Fig. 5 is a block diagram illustrating the processing of controller.

Fig. 6 is a brief linear diagram illustrating each emotion.

Fig. 7 is a conceptual diagram illustrating the probability automaton.

Fig. 8 is a conceptual diagram showing the condition transition table.

Fig. 9 is a brief linear diagram illustrating the other embodiment.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

With reference to the accompanying drawings one embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail hereunder.

(1) Construction of Pet Robot 1 according to the Embodiment of the Present Invention

In Fig. 1, 1 generally shows a pet robot according to the embodiment of the present invention. And this pet robot 1 is comprised of leg units 3A ~ 3D connected respectively to the front and back and left and right of the body unit 2, and a head unit 4 and a tail unit 5 connected respectively to the front edge part and the rear edge part of the body unit 2.

In this case as shown in Fig. 2, a controller 10 for controlling the whole operation of this pet robot 1 and a battery

11 as the power source of this pet robot 1, and an internal sensor unit 14 comprised of a battery sensor 12 and a temperature sensor 13 are stored in the body unit 2.

Moreover, in the head unit 4 a CCD (charge coupled device) camera 15 which functions as actual "eyes", an external sensor unit 18 comprised of a microphone 16 to function as ears and a touch sensor 17, and LED (light emitting diode) to function as "eyes" for the sake of appearance, and a speaker 20 to function as "mouth" are placed respectively on the predetermined positions.

Furthermore, actuators $21_1 \sim 21_n$ for several degrees of freedom are placed respectively to the joints of leg units 3A ~ 3D, the connecting parts of leg units 3A ~ 3D and the body unit 2, the connecting part of the head unit 4 and the body unit 2, and the root part of the tail 5A in the tail unit 5 (Fig. 1).

Then, the CCD camera 15 of the head unit 4 shoots picture of surrounding condition, and transmits the resultant image signal S1A to the controller 10. Moreover, the microphone 16 collects the command sounds such as "walk", "lie-down" or "chase after a ball" to be given from the user as musical scales via a sound commander (not shown in Fig.) and transmits the resultant audio signal S1B to the controller 10.

Furthermore, as it is clear in Fig. 1, the touch sensor 17 is provided on the upper part of the head unit 4, and detects the pressure received by the physical action such as "pat" and "hit" from the user and outputs the detection result to the controller

10 as a pressure detection signal S1C.

Furthermore, the battery sensor 12, detecting the remaining quantity of the battery 11, outputs the detection result to the controller 10 as a battery remaining quantity detection signal S2A. While the temperature sensor 13 detects the internal temperature of the pet robot 1 and transmits the detection result to the controller 10 as a temperature detection signal S2B.

The controller 10 judges the surrounding and internal condition of the pet robot 1, directions from the user, and the existence or non-existence of actions from the user based on the image signal S1A, audio signal S1B and the pressure detection signal S1C (hereinafter these are all together referred to as external sensor signal S1) to be supplied respectively from the CCD camera 15, the microphone 16 and the touch sensor 17 of the external sensor unit 18, and the battery remaining quantity detection signal S2A and the temperature detection signal S2B (hereinafter these are all together referred to as internal sensor signal S2) to be supplied respectively from the battery sensor and the heat sensor of the internal sensor unit 14.

Then, the controller 10 determines the following action based on this judgement result and the control program stored in the memory 10A in advance, and by driving necessary actuators 21₁ ~ 21_n based on the determined result, makes the head unit 4 swing up and down, and right and left, or makes the tail of the tail unit 5 swing, or driving each of leg units 3A ~ 3D, makes the robot walk.

Furthermore, in this case, by giving the predetermined audio signal S3 to the speaker 20 as required, the controller 10 outputs sounds based on said audio signal S3 to outside, or by outputting the LED driving signal S4 to the LED 19 as "eyes" in appearance, it makes the LED 19 flash.

Accordingly, this pet robot 1 can act autonomically based on the surrounding and internal condition and the existence or non-existence of the command or approach from the user.

Hence the detailed construction of the LED 19 as "eyes" for the sake of appearance of the pet robot 1 will be shown in Fig. 3. As is clear from Fig. 3, the LED 19 comprises a pair of red colors LED 19R₁ and 19R₂ emitting red light respectively and a pair of green colors LED 19G₁ and 19G₂ emitting green light respectively.

In this case, each of red colors LED 19R₁ and 19R₂ of which the light emitting unit has a rectilinear shape with the predetermined length. And these are placed approximately on the middle stage in the longitudinal direction of the head unit 4 so that these becomes closer as proceeding frontward of the head unit 4 shown by an arrow a. Thus, in this pet robot 1, by lighting up these red LED 19R₁ and 19R₂ together, this pet robot 1 can show the expression of "anger" as if it gets angry turning up its eyes.

Furthermore, each of green colors LED 19G₁ and 19G₂ of which the light emitting unit has an arc shape with the predetermined length. And these are placed on the immediately proceeding places of the corresponding red colors LED 19R₁ and 19R₂ on the head unit

4 placing inside of the arc in the front direction (an arrow a). With this arrangement, by lighting up these red colors LED 19G₁, 19G₂ together, this pet robot can show the expression of "joy" as if it is laughing.

In this pet robot 1, the upper part of the box body from the near front edge of the head unit 4 to the immediately before the touch sensor 17 is covered with the black semi-transparent cover 4A formed of such as synthetic resin so that these red colors LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and green colors LED 19G₁, 19G₂ are covered up.

Thus, in this pet robot, these are difficult to be confirmed from the outside when the LED 19 is not lighted up. On the other hand, when the LED 19 is lighted up, these can be easily confirmed visually from the outside. Thereby, the feeling of physical disorder caused by the exposure of "eyes" of two kinds (red color LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and green color LED 19G₁, 19G₂) can be effectively avoided.

In this connection, in this pet robot 1, the optical axis of the CCD camera 15 which functions as actual "eyes" are placed in parallel with an arrow a on the edge part of the head unit 4. Thus, the front condition to which the head unit 4 is faced can be certainly photographed by this CCD camera 1.

(2) Processing of Controller 10

Next, the processing of controller 10 in the pet robot 1 will be described in detail as follows:

The controller 10 executes various processings as described

above according to the control program stored in the memory 10A. And the processing contents of this controller 10 can be classified according to the functions as shown in Fig. 5; i.e., a condition recognition unit 30 for recognizing external and inner conditions, an emotion/instinct model unit 31 for determining the condition of feeling and instinct based on the recognition result of the condition recognition unit 30, an action determining unit 32 for determining the succeeding action based on the recognition result of the condition recognition unit 30 and the output of the emotion/instinct model unit 31, and an action forming unit 33 for making the pet robot form the action corresponding to the determination result of the action determining unit 32.

Then, these condition recognition unit 30, the motion/instinct model unit 31, the action determining unit 32 and the action forming unit 33 will be described in detail as follows.

(2-1) Construction of Condition Recognition Unit 30

The condition recognition unit 30 recognizes the specific condition based on the external information signal S1 to be given from the external sensor unit 18 (Fig. 2) and the internal information signal S2 to be given from the internal sensor unit 14 (Fig. 2) and notifies the recognition result to the motion/instinct model unit 31 and the action determining unit 32 as a condition recognition information S10.

In practice, the condition recognition unit 30 constantly monitors the image signal S1A given from the CCD camera 15 (Fig.

2) of the external sensor unit 18. And when it detects such as "red round article" or "vertical plane", it recognizes that "there is a ball" or "there is a wall" and notifies the recognition result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action determining unit 32.

Furthermore, the condition recognition unit 30 constantly monitors the audio signal S1B to be given from the microphone 16 (Fig. 2). And when it recognizes that the command sound such as "walk", "lie down", or "chase after a ball" is entered based on the audio signal S1B, it notifies the recognition result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action determining unit 32.

Furthermore, the condition recognition unit 30 constantly monitors the pressure detection signal S1C (Fig. 2) to be given from the touch sensor 17 (Fig. 2). And when it detects the pressure of more than the predetermined threshold value and the short period of time (such as less than 2 seconds), it recognizes that "it is hit (is scolded)". And when it detects the pressure of less than the predetermined threshold value and the long period of time (such as over 2 seconds), it recognizes that "it is patted (it is praised)" and notifies the recognition result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action determining unit 32.

Furthermore, the condition recognition unit 30 constantly monitors the temperature detection signal S2B (Fig. 2) to be given from the temperature sensor 13 (Fig. 2) of the internal sensor unit 14 (Fig. 2). And when it detects the temperature of more than

predetermined temperature, it recognizes that "internal temperature has gone up" and informs the recognition result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action determining unit 32.

(2-2) Construction of Emotion/Instinct Model Unit 31

The emotion/instinct model unit 31 holds the parameter to show the strength of emotional action on the total of 6 emotional actions, "joy", "sadness", "surprise", "fear", "disgust" and "anger", in each emotional action. Then the emotion/instinct model unit 31 successively updates the parameter value of each emotional action based on the specific recognition result such as "is hit" and "is patted" to be given from the condition recognition unit 30 respectively as the condition recognition information S10, the action determining information S12 showing the determined output action to be given from the action determining unit 32 and the time elapsed.

More specifically, based on the degree of recognition result to be obtained based on the condition recognition information S10 and the output action based the action determining information S12 act upon that emotional action (that is preset) and the degree of control and stimulation received from the other emotional action, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 calculates the parameter value of the emotional action in the following cycle E [t + 1] in utilizing the following EQUATION:

$$E [t + 1] = E [t] + k_0 \times \Delta E [t] \quad \dots \dots (1)$$

Where the quantity of change of emotional action to be calculated by the predetermined Equation = $E [t]$;

The current parameter value of emotional action = $E [t]$;

Coefficient showing the degree of change its emotional action corresponding to the recognition result = k_0 .

Then, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 updates the parameter value of that emotional action by replacing this calculation result with the current parameter value of emotional activity $E [t]$. In this connection, which emotional action parameter value to each recognition result and each output activity would be updated is predetermined. For example, when the recognition result such as "hit" is given, the parameter value of emotional action of "anger" rises and the parameter of emotional action of "joy" drops. And when the recognition result such as "patted" is given, the parameter of emotional action of "joy" rises and the parameter value of emotional action "sadness" drops. In this connection, more detailed explanations on each emotional action and an example of concrete causes that these emotional actions vary will be shown in Fig. 6.

Similarly, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 holds the parameter showing the strength of desire per desire on four independent desires, "desire for exercise", "desire for love", "appetite for food" and "curiosity". Then the emotion/instinct model unit 31 successively updates these parameter values of

desires based on the recognition result from the condition recognition unit 30, the time elapsed and the notice from the action determining unit 32.

More specifically, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 calculates the parameter value of the desire $I[k + 1]$ in the following cycle using the following EQUATION at the fixed cycle based on the output action of the pet robot 1, the time elapsed and the recognition result on the "desire for exercise", "desire for love" and "curiosity".

$$I[k + 1] = I[k] + k_1 \times \Delta I[k] \quad \dots \dots (2)$$

where the quantity of desire change to be calculated by the predetermined Equation to be $\Delta I[k]$;
the parameter value of desire of subtraction to be $I[k]$; and
the coefficient showing the sensitivity of that desire to be k_1 .
And by replacing this calculation result with the current desire parameter value $I[k]$, that desire parameter value will be updated. In this connection which desire parameter value to be changed is determined in advance. And when a notice informing that the action has been taken is received from the action determining unit 32, the parameter value of "desire for exercise" will drop.

Moreover, based on the battery remaining quantity detection signal S2A (Fig. 2) to be given via the condition recognition unit 30, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 calculates the parameter

value of "appetite for food" $I[k + 1]$ using the following EQUATION at the fixed cycle.

$$I[k] = 100 - B_t \quad \dots \dots (3)$$

Where the remaining quantity of battery to be B_t

Then, the emotion/instinct model unit 31 updates the parameter value of "appetite for food" by replacing this calculation result with the current appetite parameter value $I[k]$.

In this connection, according to the embodiment of the present invention, the parameter value of each motion and each desire is regulated so that these will change within the range from 0 to 100, and also coefficient values k_0 and k_1 are set individually per each emotion and each desire.

(2 - 3) Construction of Action Determining Unit 32

The action determining unit 32 determines the next action based on the condition recognition information $S10$ to be supplied from the condition recognition unit 30, the parameter value of each emotion and each desire in the emotion/instinct model unit 31, the action model stored in the memory 10A in advance and the time elapsed, and sends out the determination result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action forming unit 33 as the action determination information $S12$.

In this case, as a method to determine the next action, the action determining unit 32 uses the algorithm called as

probability automaton for determining whether to transit from one node $NODE_0$ to the same or which other node $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$ based on the transition probability $P_0 \sim P_n$ set respectively to arcs $ARC_0 \sim ARC_n$ connecting between each $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$.

More specifically, a condition transition table 40 per each node $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$ as shown in Fig. 8 is stored in the memory 10A as an action model, and the action determining unit 32 determines the next action based on this condition transition table 40.

At this point, in the condition transition table 40, the input events (recognition result of the condition recognition unit 30) making the transition as prerequisite in that $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$ are listed in the column of "Input Event" in priority order, and additional conditions on that condition are described on the corresponding lines in the columns of "Name of Data" and "Range of Data".

Accordingly, in the node $NODE_{100}$ defined in the condition transition table of Fig. 8, the following becomes the prerequisite for transferring to the self or the other node; i.e., when the recognition result "detected a ball (BALL)" is given, "size (SIZE)" of the ball to be given with said recognition result is in "the range from 0 to 1000 (0, 1000)", and when the recognition result "obstacle is detected (OBSTACLE)" is given, "the distance (DISTANCE)" to that obstacle to be given with said recognition result is "the range from 0 to 1000 (0, 1000)".

Furthermore, in this node $NODE_{100}$, even in the case where no

recognition result is put in, when either one of parameter values of emotional actions "joy (JOY)", "surprise (SURPRISE)" or "sadness (SADNESS)" among the parameter values of each emotional action and each desire of the emotion/instinct model unit 31 to which the action determining unit 32 refers periodically is in "the range from 50 to 100 (50, 100)", it can be transferred to its own or the other node.

Furthermore, in the condition transition table 40, names of nodes that can be transited from the node $\text{NODE}_0 \sim \text{NODE}_n$ are listed in rows of "Node of transiting end" in the column of "Transit probability to other node". And simultaneously, the transit probability of that node $\text{NODE}_0 \sim \text{NODE}_n$ at the time when all conditions described in each line of "Name of input event", "Data value" and "Range of data" are satisfied will be described on the line of the node $\text{NODE}_0 \sim \text{NODE}_n$ in the column of "Transit probability to other node", and the action or motion to be output at this moment will be described on the line of "Output action". In this connection, the sum of transition probability of each line on the column of "Transition probability to other node" becomes 100[%].

Accordingly, regarding the node NODE_{100} of this example, when the recognition result that "the size (SIZE)" of that ball is from "the range of 0 to 1000 (0, 1000)" is given, it can be transferred to "the node NODE_{120} (node 120)" in the probability of "30[%]", and at this moment, the action or motion of "ACTION" will be sent out.

Then, the action model is comprised of a number of nodes $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$ described as the condition transition table 40 linked together.

With this arrangement, when the condition recognition information S10 is supplied from the condition recognition unit 30 and/or the fixed time has been elapsed since the action is conducted the last, the action determining unit 32 determines the next action or motion (action or motion described on the line of "Output action") in utilizing the condition transition table 40 of the corresponding node $NODE_0 \sim NODE_n$ from among action model stored in the memory 10A, and outputs the determination result to the emotion/instinct model unit 31 and the action forming unit 33 as the action determination information S12.

(2 - 3) Processing of Action Forming Unit 33

Based on the action determination information S12 to be given from the action determining unit, the action forming unit 33 transmits driving signals $S13_1 \sim S13_n$ to the necessary actuators $21_1 \sim 21_n$ (Fig. 2), and transmits the necessary audio signal S3 to the speaker 20 (Fig. 2), and sends out the LED driving signal S4 to the LED 19.

Thus, based on the driving signals $13_1 \sim 13_n$, the action forming unit 33 drives the necessary actuators $21_1 \sim 21_n$ to the predetermined state, and/or outputs sounds based on the audio signal 3 from the speaker 20, and/or flashes the LED 19 with the flashing pattern based on the LED driving signal S3.

(3) Relationship between Emotion and "Eye" Flashing

Then, in this pet robot 1, the relation between the emotion expression and the flashing of LED 19 tat functions as "eyes" for the sake of appearance will be described in the following paragraphs.

In this pet robot 1, the succeeding action and motion will be determined based on the corresponding condition transition table 40 (Fig. 8) in the action determining unit 32 that is one of functions of the controller 10 as described above.

In this case, the action to flash each green color LED 19G₁, 19G₂ out of LED 19 is connected to each output action (such as "ACTION 2" in Fig. 8) corresponded to the recognition result of "patted (PAT)".

Furthermore, at the time when the recognition result of "pat" is given from the condition recognition unit 30, the action determination unit 32 determines the succeeding action and motion in utilizing the corresponding condition transition table 40 as described above, and as well as transmitting the determined action and motion to the action forming unit 33 as the action determining information S12, reads the parameter value of "joy" in the emotion/instinct model unit 31, and informs this to the action forming unit 33.

Thus, at this moment, by driving the necessary actuators 21₁ ~ 21_n, the action forming unit 33 makes it act to express the specified "joy". And also or in place of this, it flashes each

green color LED 19G₁, 19G₂ in order that the larger said value becomes the faster the flashing cycle becomes. With this arrangement, the pet robot 1 can express the emotion of "joy" as if it is laughing.

Similarly, the action to flash each red color LED 19R₁ ~ 19R₂ in the LED 19 is connected to each output action (such as "ACTION 3" in Fig. 8) corresponded to the recognition result such as "hit (HIT)" in the condition transition table.

Furthermore, when the recognition result "hit" is supplied from the condition recognition unit 30, the action determining unit 32 determines the following action and motion using the corresponding condition transition table 40, and as well as sending the determined action and motion out to the action forming unit 33 as the action determination information S12, reads out the value of parameter of "anger" in the emotion/instinct model unit 31, and informs this to the action forming unit 33.

Thus, at this moment, the action forming unit 33, by driving the necessary actuator 21₁ ~ 21_n based on the action determination information S12 to be given from the action determining unit 32, makes the robot act to express the specified "anger", and also or instead, makes each red color LED 19R₁, 19R₂ flash corresponding to the value of parameter of "anger" at that time so that the larger said value becomes the faster the flashing cycle becomes. With this arrangement, the pet robot 1 can express the emotion of "anger" as if it gets angry.

On the other hand, the action to flash each red color LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and each green LED 19G₁, 19G₂ of LED is connected to each output action (such as "ACTION 4" in Fig. 8) corresponded to the specific recognition result to express the predetermined "surprise" such as "large sound input (SOUND)" in the condition transition table 40.

Furthermore, when the action determining unit 32 is supplied with the specific recognition result to express "surprise" from the condition recognition unit 30, determines the following action and motion in utilizing the corresponding condition transition table 40 and informs the determination result to the action forming unit 33.

Thus, at this moment, the action forming unit 33, by driving the necessary actuator 21₁ ~ 21_n based on the action determination information S12 to be given from the action determining unit 32, makes the pet robot 1 conduct the action showing the specified "surprise" and simultaneously, flashes each red color LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and each green LED 19G₁, 19G₂ successively and alternately. Thus, the pet robot 1 can express the emotion of "surprise" by alternately repeating the expression of laughing and the expression of anger.

With the above arrangement, this pet robot 1 can express the emotion of "joy" to be "patted", the emotion of "anger" to be "hit", and the emotion of "surprise" to the specific recognition result by the flashing each of red LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and/or each green

LED 19G₁, 19G₂ as expressions.

(4) Operation and Effects of the Present Embodiment

According to the foregoing construction, in this pet robot 1 when the user hits the upper part (touch sensor 17) of the head unit 4, red LED 19R₁ and 19R₂ flash simultaneously and said robot expresses the emotion of "anger" as if it gets angry by turning up its eyes. On the other hand, when the user pats said robot, green LED 19R₁, 19R₂ simultaneously flash, and the robot expresses the emotion of "joy" as if it is laughing. Moreover, when loud sound is generated in the surrounding area, red LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and green LED 19G₁, 19G₂ flash alternately and the robot expresses the emotion of "surprise" as if it is surprised by opening and closing its eyes.

Accordingly, in this pet robot 1, the user can easily recognize the emotion condition of this pet robot 1 based on the flashing condition of LED 19. Moreover, since the robot expresses the emotion corresponding to the action of the user such as "pat" and "hit", communications between user and the robot can be more smoothly carried out.

According to the foregoing construction, since the emotion of the pet robot 1 is realized by flashing the LED 19 as "eyes" for the sake of appearance, the communication with the user can be more smoothly conducted, and thereby the pet robot capable of improving the entertainment factor remarkably can be realized.

(5) Other Embodiments

The embodiment described above has dealt with the case of applying the present invention to a four-legged walking pet robot 1 constructed as Fig. 1. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also can be widely applied to the robotic device having various other shapes (including such as Toy).

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of applying the LED 19 as the light emitting means. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also in short, various other light emitting means that emit lights can be widely applied.

In such cases, such as the light emitting element 50 arranged in the array shape and color or black and white display can be applied. And also by applying these light emitting means, a variety of shapes can be displayed as eyes for the sake of appearance, and thereby, a variety of expressions can be expressed.

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of expressing three (3) emotions (emotional actions), "joy", "anger" and "surprise" according to the light emitting condition of the LED 19 functioning as eyes for the sake of appearance. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also in addition to these emotions or in place of these emotions, the other emotions (emotional actions) may be expressed according to the light emitting condition of the LED 19.

Moreover, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of utilizing the LED for 2 colors of red LED 19R₁, 19R₂ and

green LED 19G₁, 19G₂ as the LED 19. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also the LED of one color or more than three colors may be prepared and these may be emitted the light with the predetermined light emitting pattern corresponding to emotions.

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of making the flashing cycle of the LED 19 faster as the stronger the emotion becomes. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also the brightness of light emitting of the LED 19 may be increased as the stronger the emotion becomes. In short, if the light emitting pattern of the LED 19 would be changed corresponding to the strength of emotion, various other light emitting patterns can be applied as the light emitting pattern.

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of applying the CCD camera 15, microphone 16 and the touch sensor 17 as the external sensor for detecting the external condition and the external input. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also, in short, if the sensor that can detect the external condition and the external input, various other sensors can be widely applied as external sensors in addition to and in place of these sensors.

Moreover, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of applying the memory 10A as the recording medium for recording the control program in the pet robot 1. However, the

present invention is not only limited to this but also, in short, if the recording medium that can record the control program and can reproduce this, various other recording media can be widely applied.

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of placing the touch sensor 17 on the upper part of the head unit 4 of the pet robot 1. However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also the touch sensor may be placed on the other place. However, by arranging the touch sensor 17 on the forehead or the vertex of the head part, communications between the pet robot 1 and the user can be easily conducted and makes the user easily transfer his feelings toward the pet robot 1. And this is apparent experimentally and from experience.

Furthermore, the embodiment described above has dealt with the case of applying the touch sensor 17 as the means for detecting the motion from the user such as "hit" or "pat". However, the present invention is not only limited to this but also a switch may be placed in place of the touch sensor 17. And detecting the motion such as "hit" from the user by on/off of said switch, the LED 19 may be flashed based on said detection result, and the emotion of pet robot may be expressed.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

The present invention can be applied to an entertainment robot such as a pet robot.

CLAIMS

1. A robot comprising:
 - a light emitting means for functioning as eyes for the sake of appearance;
 - an external sensor for detecting the external condition and input from outside; and
 - a control means for flashing said light emitting means in order to express the emotion based on the output of said external sensor.
2. A robot as defined in Claim 1, characterized by:
 - said light emitting means is formed of light emitting diode.
3. A robot as defined in Claim 1, characterized by:
 - said control means;
 - expresses the strength of said emotion by flashing pattern of said light emitting means.
4. A robot as defined in Claim 1, comprising:
 - a plurality of light emitting means emitting lights of different colors respectively; and characterized by:
 - said control means;
 - expresses said emotion by said color of said light emitting means flashing the light.

5. A robot as defined in Claim 1, comprising:
a moving unit; and a driving means for driving said moving unit; and characterized by:
said control means;
expresses said emotion by controlling said driving means and driving said moving unit with the predetermined pattern in addition to the flashing of said light emitting means.
6. A robot as defined in Claim 1, characterized by:
said control means;
updates the emotion model which the pre-held emotion is modeled based on the output of said external sensor; and
determines the emotion based on the emotion model updated;
and
flashes said light emitting means so that said emotion determined will be expressed.
7. A robot as defined in Claim 1, characterized by:
said light emitting means;
has the light emitting unit of a plurality of shapes according to said emotion to be expressed.
8. A robot as defined in Claim 1, characterized by:
said robot comprising a head; and

said light emitting means; is placed on said head and covered with a semi-transparent cover.

9. A control method of the robot comprising the light emitting means to function as eyes for the sake of appearance and an external sensor for detecting the external condition and/or inputs from the outside, comprising:

the first step for recognizing said external condition and/or said input from the outside based on the output of said external sensor; and

the second step for flashing said light emitting means to express emotions based on said recognition result.

10. A control method of the robot as defined in Claim 9, characterized by:

said second step;

expresses the strength of said emotion according to the flashing pattern of said light emitting means.

11. A control method of the robot as defined in Claim 9, characterized by:

said robot comprising multiple light emitting means that emit lights with different colors respectively; and

said second step;

expresses the emotion by flashing said colors of said light

emitting means.

12. A control method of the robot as defined in Claim 9, characterized by:

said robot comprising; a moving unit, and a driving means for driving said moving unit; and

said second step;

expresses said emotion by controlling said driving means and driving said moving unit in addition to the flashing of said light emitting means.

13. A control method of the robot as defined in Claim 9, characterized by:

said second step;

updates the emotion model which the pre-held emotion is modeled based on outputs of said external sensor;

determines emotion based on the emotion model updated; and

flashes said light emitting means so that said emotion determined will be expressed.

14. A recording medium in which the control program of the robot having the light emitting means to function as eyes for the sake of appearance and an external sensor for detecting the external condition and/or inputs from the outside is recorded, characterized by:

said control program comprising;
the first step for recognizing the external condition and/or input from the outside based on the output of said external sensor; and
the second step for flashing said light emitting means to express emotions based on said recognition result; and
said control program is recorded onto said recording medium.

15. A recording medium as defined in Claim 14, characterized by:
in said second step;
the strength of said emotion is expressed by the flashing pattern of said light emitting means.

16. A recording medium as defined in Claim 14, characterized by:
said robot comprising multiple light emitting means emitting lights with different colors respectively; and
said second step;
expresses said emotion by said colors' flashing of said light emitting means.

17. A recording medium as defined in Claim 14, characterized by:
said robot comprising;
a moving unit, and a driving means for driving said moving unit; and
said second step;

expresses said emotion by driving said moving unit with the predetermined pattern controlling said driving means in addition to flashing said light emitting means.

18. A recording medium as defined in Claim 14, characterized by:
said second step;

updates the emotion model which the pre-held emotion is modeled based on the recognition result at the first step;

determines emotion based on said updated emotion model; and

flashes said light emitting means to express said emotion determined.

19. A pet robot with a head, comprising

light emitting means, provided on said head, comprising apparent eyes;

control means for controlling the flashing of said light emitting means;

a semi-transparent cover arranged so that said apparent eyes of said robot can be seen from outside only when said light emitting means flashes.

20. The robot according to Claim 19 further comprising

a plurality of said light emitting means each having a different light shape and/or light color, and wherein

said control means selectively flashes corresponding said light emitting means out of said plurality of light emitting means.

21. The robot according to Claim 20, wherein

said light shape and/or said light color of each said light emitting means has a different shape and/or color corresponding to an emotion.

22. The robot according to Claim 21 further comprising

an external sensor for detecting the external conditions and/or inputs from outside, and wherein

said control means selectively flashes corresponding said light emitting means out of said plurality of light emitting means, based on the output of said external sensor.

23. The robot according to Claim 22, wherein
said control means determines said emotion of said robot itself on the basis of the output of said external sensor and previously stored emotion models created by modeling emotions, and selectively flashes corresponding said light emitting means out of said plurality of light emitting means based on the determination result.
24. The robot according to Claim 23, wherein
said control means flashes said corresponding light emitting means in a flashing pattern corresponding to the strength of said determined emotion.
25. The robot according to Claim 24, wherein
said flashing pattern is a flashing cycle.
26. The robot according to any one of Claims 22 to 25 further comprising
a moving unit; and
driving means for driving said moving unit, and wherein
said control means controls said driving means to drive said moving unit, in addition to flashing said light emitting means.
27. The robot according to Claim 20, wherein
said plurality of light emitting means is arranged in a depth direction of said head at prescribed positions on said head.