

Robot or Not?

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1. Definition of Robot

The definition for the term 'robot' is not very clear. There are conflicting opinions as to what a robot is and what it is suppose to be able to do. The idea of a robot is part of the modern day culture. Fiction stories about robots have been around since the early 20th century. These robots are usually humanoid in form and have capabilities far beyond modern science.

One dictionary defines robot as

1. a machine capable of carrying out a complex series of actions automatically, esp. one programmable by a computer.
2. • (esp. in science fiction) a machine resembling a human being and able to replicate certain human movements and functions automatically.
3. • used to refer to a person who behaves in a mechanical or unemotional manner : terminally bored tour guides chattering like robots.

ORIGIN from Czech, from robota 'forced labor.' The term was coined in K. Čapek's play R.U.R. 'Rossum's Universal Robots' (1920). [1]

2. Robot or Not?

There are many different products on the market for kids that use the term robot. One day a week, some of the robotics team members met to work on an extra activity. The project involved putting together several robot kits. These included a robotic insect, a robot beetle, and a remote controlled car. All used the term robot or robotic in the advertising. We decided to compare these machines to simple robots that we have built in our robotics program here at school and some robots used in the real world. Some of the robots that we have built are Tank Bot, FIRST LEGO League [2] robots, the Botball [3] demobot, and our current Botball robots. Our team also attended a presentation from the local police department. An officer demonstrated the Vanguard Robot [4] used for disarming bombs and dealing with hazardous material. Our project will involve a discussion of the term 'robot' and which of types of 'robots' are really robots. It will include pictures and video of the different machines.

References:

[1] Dictionary 1.0.1 Copyright © 2005 Apple Computer, Inc.

[2] FIRST LEGO League www.firstlegoleague.org

[3] Botball: www.botball.org

[4] Vanguard ROV <http://www.allen-vanguard.com/Catalogue/RO/555/909403.html>