Resolved-Rate Motion Control in Robotics

Lecture Notes

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Contents

1 Introduction

Resolved-Rate Motion Control is a fundamental concept in robot control used to compute joint velocities that achieve a desired end-effector velocity. This method is essential for tasks requiring precise motion in Cartesian space, such as path following, object manipulation, and interacting with the environment.

These lecture notes provide an in-depth exploration of resolved-rate motion control, including mathematical foundations, derivations, handling of redundancy and singularities, and practical examples.

2 Fundamentals of Resolved-Rate Motion Control

2.1 Problem Statement

In robotic manipulation, the goal is often to control the position and orientation of the robot's end-effector to perform a specific task. At a given instant, we may have a desired end-effector velocity $\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d$ in Cartesian space (also known as task space). The problem is to find the necessary joint velocities $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ that will produce this desired end-effector velocity.

2.2 Relation Between Joint Space and Task Space

The relationship between the joint velocities and the end-effector velocities is characterized by the manipulator's **Jacobian matrix** $\mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta})$:

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}} = \mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \tag{1}$$

where:

- $\dot{\mathbf{x}} \in \mathbb{R}^m$ is the end-effector velocity vector, including both linear and angular components.
- $\mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}$ is the Jacobian matrix, which depends on the current joint configuration $\boldsymbol{\theta}$.
- $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is the joint velocity vector.
- \bullet *n* is the number of joints in the manipulator.
- m is the dimension of the task space velocity (typically m = 6 for 3D position and orientation).

Equation (??) is fundamental in robotics as it provides a linear approximation of the relationship between joint velocities and end-effector velocities around the current configuration.

2.3 Resolving Joint Velocities

Given the desired end-effector velocity $\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d$, our objective is to find $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ such that:

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d = \mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \tag{2}$$

Solving for $\dot{\theta}$ depends on the characteristics of the Jacobian matrix $\mathbf{J}(\theta)$.

2.3.1 Non-Redundant Manipulators (n = m)

When the manipulator is **non-redundant**, meaning the number of joints equals the number of task space dimensions (n = m), and if **J** is invertible, we can directly compute:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{-1}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d \tag{3}$$

2.3.2 Redundant Manipulators (n > m)

For **redundant** manipulators, where n > m, the system is underdetermined, and there are infinitely many joint velocities that achieve the desired end-effector velocity. In this case, we use the **pseudoinverse** of the Jacobian to find a solution that minimizes the joint velocities in the least-squares sense:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{\dagger}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d \tag{4}$$

where \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} is the Moore-Penrose pseudoinverse of \mathbf{J} .

Because of redundancy, we can also exploit null space motions to achieve secondary objectives:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{\dagger}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d + \left(\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{J}^{\dagger}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \,\mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta})\right) \mathbf{v} \tag{5}$$

where $\mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is an arbitrary joint velocity vector projected into the null space of \mathbf{J} .

3 Mathematical Foundations

3.1 The Jacobian Matrix

3.1.1 Definition

The Jacobian matrix $J(\theta)$ arises from the differentiation of the forward kinematics $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{f}(\theta)$. The forward kinematics map joint positions to end-effector positions. The Jacobian provides a linear approximation:

$$\mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{\partial \mathbf{f}(\boldsymbol{\theta})}{\partial \boldsymbol{\theta}}$$

3.1.2 Structure of the Jacobian

In three-dimensional space, the end-effector's velocity is composed of linear velocity ${\bf v}$ and angular velocity ${\boldsymbol \omega}$:

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{v} \\ \boldsymbol{\omega} \end{bmatrix} = \mathbf{J}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) \, \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \tag{6}$$

Thus, the Jacobian can be partitioned as:

$$\mathbf{J}(oldsymbol{ heta}) = egin{bmatrix} \mathbf{J}_v(oldsymbol{ heta}) \ \mathbf{J}_\omega(oldsymbol{ heta}) \end{bmatrix}$$

where \mathbf{J}_v corresponds to the linear velocity components, and \mathbf{J}_{ω} corresponds to the angular velocity components.

3.1.3 Computing the Jacobian

The Jacobian can be computed using the geometric approach, considering the contribution of each joint to the end-effector's velocity.

For joint i, the i-th column of the Jacobian J_i is given by:

• Revolute Joint:

$$\mathbf{J}_{i} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{z}_{i-1} \times (\mathbf{o}_{n} - \mathbf{o}_{i-1}) \\ \mathbf{z}_{i-1} \end{bmatrix}$$
 (7)

• Prismatic Joint:

$$\mathbf{J}_i = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{z}_{i-1} \\ \mathbf{0} \end{bmatrix} \tag{8}$$

where:

- \mathbf{z}_{i-1} is the unit vector along the axis of joint i expressed in the base frame.
- \mathbf{o}_{i-1} is the origin of frame attached to link i-1.
- \mathbf{o}_n is the origin of the end-effector frame (link n).

Example: Consider a planar 2-DOF manipulator with joint angles θ_1 and θ_2 . The Jacobian can be derived step by step for each joint.

3.2 Pseudoinverse of the Jacobian

3.2.1 Definition

When the Jacobian J is not square or not of full rank, its pseudoinverse J^{\dagger} can be used to find a solution to equation (??).

The Moore-Penrose pseudoinverse is defined as:

$$\mathbf{J}^{\dagger} = \mathbf{J}^T (\mathbf{J} \mathbf{J}^T)^{-1} \tag{9}$$

provided that \mathbf{JJ}^T is invertible, which is the case when \mathbf{J} has full row rank.

3.2.2 Properties

The pseudoinverse has several important properties:

- It provides the minimal-norm solution to the least-squares problem.
- It satisfies $\mathbf{J}\mathbf{J}^{\dagger}\mathbf{J} = \mathbf{J}$.
- For any vector $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$, the difference $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} \dot{\mathbf{x}}_d$ lies in the null space of \mathbf{J} .

3.3 Null Space and Redundancy

3.3.1 Null Space of the Jacobian

The null space of the Jacobian J is the set of joint velocities that result in zero end-effector velocity:

$$\mathrm{Null}(\mathbf{J}) = \left\{ \dot{\boldsymbol{ heta}} \in \mathbb{R}^n \, | \, \mathbf{J} \dot{\boldsymbol{ heta}} = \mathbf{0} \right\}$$

3.3.2 Exploiting Redundancy

For redundant manipulators (n > m), the extra degrees of freedom can be utilized to achieve secondary objectives while still accomplishing the primary task.

Let $\mathbf{N} = \mathbf{I} - \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} \mathbf{J}$ be the projection operator onto the null space of \mathbf{J} . Then, any joint velocity of the form:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} \dot{\mathbf{x}}_d + \mathbf{N} \mathbf{v}$$

results in the desired end-effector velocity $\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d$, while \mathbf{v} can be chosen to satisfy secondary objectives.

3.3.3 Secondary Objectives

Secondary objectives may include:

- Joint Limit Avoidance: Keeping joint angles within safe or optimal ranges.
- Obstacle Avoidance: Ensuring the manipulator avoids collisions.
- Minimizing Energy Consumption: Reducing actuator effort.
- Optimizing Manipulability: Maintaining configurations where the manipulator can move effectively.

Implementation One common approach is to define a cost function $H(\theta)$ representing the secondary objective and to set:

$$\mathbf{v} = -\alpha \nabla H(\boldsymbol{\theta})$$

where α is a positive scalar gain.

4 Control Law Derivation

4.1 Error Dynamics

Define the end-effector position error:

$$\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = \mathbf{x}_d - \mathbf{x} \tag{10}$$

Take the time derivative to obtain the error in the end-effector velocity:

$$\tilde{\dot{\mathbf{x}}} = \dot{\mathbf{x}}_d - \dot{\mathbf{x}} = \dot{\mathbf{x}}_d - \mathbf{J}\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$$

Our goal is to drive the position error $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$ to zero.

4.2 Proportional Control in Task Space

Implement a proportional controller in task space:

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d = \mathbf{K}_x \tilde{\mathbf{x}} \tag{11}$$

where \mathbf{K}_x is a positive-definite gain matrix.

Substituting into the error dynamics:

$$\tilde{\dot{\mathbf{x}}} = \mathbf{K}_x \tilde{\mathbf{x}} - \mathbf{J} \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$$

Rewriting:

$$\mathbf{J}\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{K}_{x}\tilde{\mathbf{x}} - \tilde{\dot{\mathbf{x}}}$$

Assuming that the error dynamics are dominated by the proportional term (neglecting $\tilde{\dot{\mathbf{x}}}$), we set:

$$\mathbf{J}\dot{\boldsymbol{ heta}} = \mathbf{K}_x \tilde{\mathbf{x}}$$

4.3 Resolved-Rate Control Law

We solve for $\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}$ using the pseudoinverse:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{\dagger}(\mathbf{K}_x \tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \tag{12}$$

Remarks:

- This control law attempts to minimize the position error in task space.
- The use of proportional control may require tuning of the gain matrix \mathbf{K}_x to ensure stability and acceptable performance.
- \bullet For redundant manipulators, null space motions can be incorporated as before.

5 Singularity Handling

5.1 Singularities in the Jacobian

A manipulator is said to be at a **singular configuration** when the Jacobian matrix J loses rank. At singularities:

- The manipulator loses the ability to move or apply forces in certain directions.
- Determinants of square submatrices of **J** go to zero.
- Inverse kinematic solutions become unstable or undefined.

5.2 Problems Near Singularities

Near singular configurations, attempting to compute \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} can result in:

- Large joint velocities to achieve relatively small end-effector velocities.
- Numerical instability due to ill-conditioning of J.

5.3 Damped Least-Squares Solution

To mitigate these issues, we can use a **damped least-squares** approach, introducing a damping factor λ :

$$\mathbf{J}^{\dagger} = \mathbf{J}^{T} (\mathbf{J} \mathbf{J}^{T} + \lambda^{2} \mathbf{I})^{-1} \tag{13}$$

Benefits:

- The term $\lambda^2 \mathbf{I}$ ensures that the matrix inversion is well-conditioned.
- Helps prevent joint velocities from becoming excessively large near singularities.

Choice of Damping Factor:

- The damping factor λ can be constant or vary with the magnitude of the singular values of **J**.
- \bullet Adaptive schemes adjust λ based on the distance to singularity.

6 Examples

6.1 Example 1: 2-DOF Planar Manipulator

Consider a planar manipulator with 2 revolute joints. Let:

- Link lengths: l_1 , l_2 .
- Joint angles: θ_1 , θ_2 .

6.1.1 Forward Kinematics

The position of the end-effector (x, y) is given by:

$$\begin{cases} x = l_1 \cos \theta_1 + l_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \\ y = l_1 \sin \theta_1 + l_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \end{cases}$$

6.1.2 Jacobian Computation

Compute partial derivatives of x and y with respect to θ_1 and θ_2 :

$$\mathbf{J} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial x}{\partial \theta_1} & \frac{\partial x}{\partial \theta_2} \\ \frac{\partial y}{\partial \theta_1} & \frac{\partial y}{\partial \theta_2} \end{bmatrix}$$

Calculations:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial x}{\partial \theta_1} &= -l_1 \sin \theta_1 - l_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \\ \frac{\partial x}{\partial \theta_2} &= -l_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \\ \frac{\partial y}{\partial \theta_1} &= l_1 \cos \theta_1 + l_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \\ \frac{\partial y}{\partial \theta_2} &= l_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \end{aligned}$$

Thus,

$$\mathbf{J} = \begin{bmatrix} -l_1 \sin \theta_1 - l_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) & -l_2 \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \\ l_1 \cos \theta_1 + l_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) & l_2 \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \end{bmatrix}$$

6.1.3 Resolved-Rate Control

Given a desired end-effector velocity $\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d = [\dot{x}_d, \dot{y}_d]^T$, compute joint velocities:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{-1}\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d$$

Example Computation Let $l_1 = 1$ m, $l_2 = 1$ m, and current joint angles $\theta_1 = 30^{\circ}$, $\theta_2 = 45^{\circ}$. First, compute the Jacobian numerically:

$$\theta_1 = 30^\circ = \frac{\pi}{6}, \quad \theta_2 = 45^\circ = \frac{\pi}{4}$$

Compute sin and cos values:

$$\sin \theta_1 = \sin \left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right) = \frac{1}{2}$$

$$\cos \theta_1 = \cos \left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right) = \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}$$

$$\theta_1 + \theta_2 = \frac{\pi}{6} + \frac{\pi}{4} = \frac{5\pi}{12}$$

$$\sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) = \sin \left(\frac{5\pi}{12}\right) \approx 0.9659$$

$$\cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) = \cos \left(\frac{5\pi}{12}\right) \approx 0.2588$$

Compute Jacobian elements:

$$J_{11} = -1 \times \frac{1}{2} - 1 \times 0.9659 = -0.5 - 0.9659 = -1.4659$$

$$J_{12} = -1 \times 0.9659 = -0.9659$$

$$J_{21} = 1 \times \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} + 1 \times 0.2588 = 0.8660 + 0.2588 = 1.1248$$

$$J_{22} = 1 \times 0.2588 = 0.2588$$

So,

$$\mathbf{J} = \begin{bmatrix} -1.4659 & -0.9659 \\ 1.1248 & 0.2588 \end{bmatrix}$$

Assuming a desired end-effector velocity:

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d = \begin{bmatrix} 0.1\\0.2 \end{bmatrix}$$
 m/s

Compute the inverse of J (assuming it's invertible):

$$\mathbf{J}^{-1} = \frac{1}{\det(\mathbf{J})} \begin{bmatrix} J_{22} & -J_{12} \\ -J_{21} & J_{11} \end{bmatrix}$$

First, compute the determinant:

$$\det(\mathbf{J}) = (-1.4659)(0.2588) - (-0.9659)(1.1248) = -0.3795 + 1.0878 = 0.7083$$

Compute the inverse:

$$\mathbf{J}^{-1} = \frac{1}{0.7083} \begin{bmatrix} 0.2588 & 0.9659 \\ -1.1248 & -1.4659 \end{bmatrix} \approx \begin{bmatrix} 0.3655 & 1.3643 \\ -1.5884 & -2.0691 \end{bmatrix}$$

Compute joint velocities:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{-1}\dot{\mathbf{x}}_d = \begin{bmatrix} 0.3655 & 1.3643 \\ -1.5884 & -2.0691 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0.1 \\ 0.2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.3655 \times 0.1 + 1.3643 \times 0.2 \\ -1.5884 \times 0.1 - 2.0691 \times 0.2 \end{bmatrix}$$

Compute:

$$\dot{\theta}_1 = 0.03655 + 0.27286 = 0.3094 \text{ rad/s}$$

 $\dot{\theta}_2 = -0.15884 - 0.41382 = -0.5727 \text{ rad/s}$

Thus, to achieve the desired end-effector velocity, joint 1 should move at 0.3094 rad/s and joint 2 at -0.5727 rad/s.

6.2 Example 2: Redundant 7-DOF Manipulator

Consider a 7-DOF anthropomorphic manipulator (e.g., a robotic arm) performing a task requiring only 6 DOF in task space (position and orientation).

6.2.1 Computing the Pseudoinverse

The Jacobian **J** is a 6×7 matrix. Since n > m, the pseudoinverse is computed as:

$$\mathbf{J}^{\dagger} = \mathbf{J}^T (\mathbf{J} \mathbf{J}^T)^{-1}$$

This involves computing the inverse of a 6×6 matrix.

6.2.2 Including a Secondary Objective

Suppose the secondary objective is to minimize the deviation of joint positions from their center position to avoid joint limits. Define the cost function:

$$H(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \frac{1}{2} (\boldsymbol{\theta} - \boldsymbol{\theta}_c)^T (\boldsymbol{\theta} - \boldsymbol{\theta}_c)$$

where θ_c are the center joint positions.

Compute the gradient:

$$\nabla H(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \boldsymbol{\theta} - \boldsymbol{\theta}_c$$

Then the joint velocities become:

$$\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} = \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} \dot{\mathbf{x}}_d - \alpha \left(\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{J}^{\dagger} \mathbf{J} \right) \left(\boldsymbol{\theta} - \boldsymbol{\theta}_c \right)$$

where $\alpha > 0$ is a gain parameter.

This control law ensures the manipulator follows the desired end-effector motion while keeping the joints away from their limits.

7 Implementation Considerations

7.1 Discrete-Time Control

In practical applications, control actions are computed at discrete time intervals Δt . Joint velocities need to be integrated to obtain joint positions.

7.1.1 Euler Integration

A simple integration method is Euler integration:

$$\boldsymbol{\theta}(t + \Delta t) = \boldsymbol{\theta}(t) + \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}(t)\Delta t$$

7.1.2 Higher-Order Integration

More accurate methods include:

- Runge-Kutta Methods
- Adams-Bashforth Methods

7.2 Stability Analysis

To ensure the stability of the control system:

- Choose gain matrices \mathbf{K}_x such that the closed-loop system is stable.
- Avoid high gains that can lead to excessive joint velocities or oscillations.
- Consider the dynamics of the manipulator if velocities are high, as acceleration effects become significant.

7.3 Limitations and Practical Issues

- Model Accuracy: Assumes perfect knowledge of the manipulator's kinematics and Jacobian.
- Dynamic Effects: Neglects inertia, Coriolis, and gravitational forces, which may be significant, especially at high speeds or with heavy payloads.
- Actuator Limits: Joint velocities computed may exceed actuator capabilities; velocity and acceleration limits should be enforced.
- **Sensor Noise**: Position and velocity measurements may be noisy; filtering or estimation techniques may be necessary.
- Computational Delays: Real-time computation of the pseudoinverse can be computationally intensive; efficient algorithms or approximations may be required.

8 Advanced Topics

8.1 Operational Space Control

Operational Space Control extends resolved-rate control by including the robot's dynamics to control forces and accelerations in task space.

8.1.1 Equation of Motion

The dynamic equation of the manipulator is:

$$\mathbf{M}(\boldsymbol{\theta})\ddot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} + \mathbf{C}(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}})\dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}} + \mathbf{g}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \boldsymbol{\tau}$$

where:

- $\mathbf{M}(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ is the mass (inertia) matrix.
- $\mathbf{C}(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}})$ represents Coriolis and centrifugal effects.
- $\mathbf{g}(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ is the gravity vector.
- au is the vector of joint torques.

8.1.2 Task Space Dynamics

By mapping dynamics to task space using the Jacobian, we obtain:

$$\mathbf{\Lambda}(\boldsymbol{\theta})\ddot{\mathbf{x}} + \boldsymbol{\mu}(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \dot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}) + \mathbf{p}(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = \mathbf{F}_{\mathrm{ext}}$$

where:

- $\Lambda(\theta) = (\mathbf{J}\mathbf{M}^{-1}\mathbf{J}^T)^{-1}$ is the task space inertia matrix.
- $\mu(\theta, \dot{\theta})$ represents task space Coriolis and centrifugal effects.
- $\mathbf{p}(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ is the task space gravity vector.
- \bullet $\,{\bf F}_{\rm ext}$ is the external force applied at the end-effector.

8.1.3 Control Law

An operational space control law aims to regulate $\ddot{\mathbf{x}}$ directly:

$$oldsymbol{ au} = \mathbf{J}^T \left(\mathbf{\Lambda}(oldsymbol{ heta}) \mathbf{u} + oldsymbol{\mu}(oldsymbol{ heta}, \dot{oldsymbol{ heta}}) + \mathbf{p}(oldsymbol{ heta})
ight) + \left(\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{J}^T \mathbf{J}^\dagger
ight) oldsymbol{ au}_{ ext{null}}$$

where \mathbf{u} is the desired task space acceleration, and $\boldsymbol{\tau}_{\text{null}}$ represents joint torques projected into the null space.

8.2 Obstacles and Constraints

8.2.1 Obstacle Avoidance

Integrate obstacle avoidance into the control law using potential fields or optimization techniques.

Artificial Potential Fields Define a repulsive potential U_{rep} increasing near obstacles and generate a corresponding force:

$$\mathbf{F}_{\mathrm{rep}} = -\nabla U_{\mathrm{rep}}(\mathbf{x})$$

8.2.2 Constraints Handling

Use constrained optimization techniques to handle joint limits and collision constraints, such as:

- Quadratic Programming (QP): Formulate the control problem as a QP with equality and inequality constraints.
- Null Space Projection: Adjust joint velocities within the null space to satisfy constraints.

9 Conclusion

Resolved-rate motion control provides a practical and effective method for controlling robotic manipulators in Cartesian space by mapping desired end-effector velocities to joint velocities through the Jacobian matrix. Mastery of the mathematical tools, including Jacobians, pseudoinverses, and null space projections, is essential.

Understanding the limitations and challenges, such as singularities, redundancy, and dynamic effects, allows for the development of more robust and sophisticated control strategies, including operational space control and constraint handling.

By incorporating these advanced techniques, robots can perform complex tasks with higher precision, flexibility, and safety, which is crucial for their successful deployment in various applications ranging from manufacturing to service robotics.

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