

MASTER THESIS

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Engineering at the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien - Degree Program Robotics Engineering

Algorithmic Payload Estimation

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Vienna, November 20, 2025

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Kurzfassung

Im Kontext der digitalen Fabrik an der UAS Technikum Wien, wo Menschen und Roboter sich die Aufgaben und den Arbeitsbereich teilen, ist die sichere und effiziente Handhabung von Nutzlasten von entscheidender Bedeutung. In der digitalen Fabrik der UAS werden Nutzlasten derzeit noch ohne Kenntnis ihrer internen Parameter gehandhabt, was zu potenziellen Manipulationsfehlern führen kann, die Menschen Schaden zufügen. Diese Studie beschreibt die Entwicklung einer fortschrittlichen Methode zur Kraft-/Drehmomentabschätzung, um die Fähigkeit eines UR5-Roboters zu verbessern, verschiedene Nutzlastbedingungen zu erkennen und zu handhaben. Diese Fähigkeit gewährleistet die Wahrnehmung des auf einer mobilen Industrieroboterplattform montierten UR5-Roboters, um den sicheren und effizienten Transfer von Nutzlasten zwischen verschiedenen Arbeitsbereichen innerhalb der Fabrik zu erleichtern. Die modernsten Methoden zur Kraft-/Drehmomentabschätzung für Industrieroboter nutzen neuronale Netze und Gauß-Prozesse als führende Methoden für genaue Nutzlastabschätzungen. Es wurde ein Gauß-Prozess-Modell entwickelt, um die Kräfte und Drehmomente abzuschätzen, die vom Roboter bei der Ausführung von Trajektorien erzeugt werden. In einem zukünftigen Projekt kann das Bewusstsein für Nutzlasten auf dem UR5-Roboter hinzugefügt werden. Auf diese Weise zielt die Studie darauf ab, die Intelligenz von Robotersystemen in industriellen Umgebungen zu verbessern und den Weg für eine höhere Produktivität und Sicherheit in digitalen Fertigungsumgebungen zu ebnen. Dieses Projekt führte auch zu einer Simulation, die eine Grundlage für die Aufzeichnung der Sensordaten aus dem UR5-Interieur.

Schlagworte: Gaussian Process, Force Estimation, Newton/Euler, UR5 Robot, Rigid Body

Abstract

In the context of the digital factory, at UAS Technikum Vienna, where humans and robots share the tasks and the workspace, the safe and efficient handling of payloads is essential. At the UAS digital factory payload is still handled without recognising anything about the payloads internal parameters, leading to potential manipulation failures causing human harm. This study describes the development of an advanced force/torque estimation method to improve a UR5 robots ability to recognize and handle different payload conditions. This capability ensures the perception of the UR5 robot mounted on a mobile industrial robot platform to facilitate the safe and efficient transfer of payloads between different workspaces within the factory. The state of the art methods of force/torque estimation for industrial robots serve neuronal networks and gaussian processes as the leading methods for accurate payload estimations. A gaussian process model has been developed to estimate the forces and torques generated by the robot when executing trajectories. In a future project face, an awareness of payloads can be added on the UR5 robot. In this way, the study aims to improve the intelligence of robotic systems in industrial environments and pave the way for higher productivity and safety in digital manufacturing environments. This project face also yeelted in a simulation that provides a basis to record the sensor data from the UR5's internal sensors and a force/torque sensor and a pipeline to train and evaluate gaussian process models.

Keywords: Gaussian Process, Force Estimation, Newton/Euler, UR5 Robot, Rigid Body

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

Robots play a central role in modern industry and manufacturing, but with increasing complexity of tasks and the need for closer human-robot collaboration, new challenges arise. Safe manipulation of payloads and safe interaction with humans are the two main challenges in human-robot collaboration. Both require the knowledge of the inertial parameters of the payload.

2 State of the Art

2.1 One-page condensed SoA summary for Q1

Category Q1 groups classical **model-based methods for robot and payload dynamics and interaction force estimation**, mostly based on **linearly parameterised rigid-body dynamics (RBD) and LS/WLS regressors**, sometimes combined with observers and Kalman filters.

Across the papers [1] [2] [3], **Least Squares (LS), Weighted LS (WLS) and LS–Newton–Euler (LS–NE) regressors** are the dominant tools for both **robot dynamic parameter identification (RDPI)** and **payload dynamic parameter identification (PDPI)**. They are used in joint space, in motor-current space and in sensor frames, and provide **strong performance for mass, centre of mass (CoM) and joint-torque prediction** when trajectories are sufficiently exciting.

A large subset of works demonstrates that **neither a nominal CAD-based RBD model nor an FT sensor is strictly necessary**. [4], [5], [6], [7], [1], Q1.5–Q1.8, Q1.13, Q1.15 and Q1.16 build the regressor directly from measured joint states and controller torques, sometimes in **fully decoupled formulations** or via **residual-torque decomposition**. They use **constant-velocity/acceleration S-curve trajectories, Fourier trajectories or repeated sections** to decorrelate parameters and improve conditioning. These approaches typically obtain **very good mass estimates and acceptable CoM, with inertia remaining the weakest part of the identification**, especially for short trajectories.

Several methods employ **two-stage pipelines**: static poses for mass and CoM, followed by dynamic trajectories for inertia (e.g. Q1.5 and Q1.7). Q1.7 also shows that such schemes scale to **heavy ($\sim 40\text{ kg}$) payloads**, and can feed into **contact force estimation and compensation** with moderate batch times ($\approx 10\text{ s}$ for contact, $\approx 40\text{ s}$ for payload).

Where an **NRB model is available or identified offline**, it is commonly combined with **observers** for external torque and force estimation. Q1.2 and Q1.3 use LS–NE-based torque

prediction together with **momentum or sliding-mode observers** to estimate external joint torques and EE forces. Q1.4 and Q1.17 combine RBD with **(adaptive) Kalman filters / disturbance observers** and explicit friction models (Stribeck or NN-based). These approaches can yield **good EE force estimation and collision detection**, but they are sensitive to model mismatch and friction modelling; Q1.17 reports good behaviour without external forces but large errors (up to $\approx 9 \text{ Nm}$) under contact. **Sensorless interaction-force estimation** is addressed in Q1.3, Q1.12 and Q1.17. Q1.12, for example, uses LS–NE identification of $M(q)$, $C(q)$ and $G(q)$, then runs a **High-Order Finite-Time Observer (HOFFTO)** in joint space, using an FT sensor only as ground truth. This yields **good joint-torque prediction and acceptable EE force estimates**, but still depends on accurate offline dynamics. Finally, Q1.14 shows that combining LS–NE predicted torques with measured joint torques enables **robust collision detection and localisation of the collided joint** using simple residual thresholds, again assuming a reasonably accurate NRB.

In summary, **Q1 methods show that classical LS-type identification and observers are mature and effective:**

- **Mass and CoM** can be identified very reliably, even **without NRB and without FT sensors**.
- **Inertia** is consistently harder and requires **carefully designed dynamic excitation**, and still tends to be less accurate or weakly validated.
- **Torque prediction, contact detection and simple EE force estimation** are already at a high level with these methods, but they **rely on good friction modelling and reasonably accurate dynamics**.

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