Assignment 2

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***Abstract*—This document explains how to find the shortest distance between two lines if and when the two lines are not intersecting with each other.**

Download all python codes from

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https://github.com/Zeeshan−IITH/IITH−EE5609/
    new/master/codes
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and latex-tikz codes from

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https://github.com/Zeeshan−IITH/IITH−EE5609
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1 Problem

Find the shortest distance between the lines

$$L_1 : \boldsymbol{x} = \begin{pmatrix}1\\2\\1\end{pmatrix} + \lambda_1 \begin{pmatrix}1\\-1\\1\end{pmatrix} \tag{1}$$

$$L_2 : \boldsymbol{x} = \begin{pmatrix}2\\-1\\-1\end{pmatrix} + \lambda_2 \begin{pmatrix}2\\1\\2\end{pmatrix} \tag{2}$$

2 construction

When two lines are not intersecting the distance between them is non-zero.The equation of above mentioned lines in symmetric form is

$$L_1 : x - 1 = 2 - y = z - 1 \tag{3}$$

$$L_2 : \frac{x-2}{2} = y + 1 = \frac{z+1}{2} \tag{4}$$

The above line equations have no point of intersection as for no value of x, y, z both the equations (3) and (4) are satisfied.

3 solution

Let $\boldsymbol{A}$ be a point on line L_1 and $\boldsymbol{B}$ be point on the line L_2.Then the shortest distance between two skew lines will be the length of line perpendicular to both the lines L_1,L_2 and passing through $\boldsymbol{A}$ and $\boldsymbol{B}$.

The shortest distance between the lines will be the projection of any line between the points on L_1,L_2 on to the unit vector which is perpendicular to both L_1,L_2.

The unit vector perpendicular to lines

$$Line_1 : \boldsymbol{x} = x_1 + \lambda_1 \boldsymbol{b_1}$$
$$Line_2 : \boldsymbol{x} = x_2 + \lambda_1 \boldsymbol{b_2}$$

can be found by calculating

$$\frac{\boldsymbol{b_1} \times \boldsymbol{b_2}}{\|\boldsymbol{b_1} \times \boldsymbol{b_2}\|}$$

In our question the value of $\boldsymbol{b_1} = \begin{pmatrix}1\\-1\\1\end{pmatrix}$ and $\boldsymbol{b_2} = \begin{pmatrix}2\\1\\2\end{pmatrix}$
So the unit vector perpendicular to both L_1 and L_2 is

$$\boldsymbol{u} = \frac{\begin{pmatrix}1\\-1\\1\end{pmatrix} \times \begin{pmatrix}2\\1\\2\end{pmatrix}}{\|\begin{pmatrix}1\\-1\\1\end{pmatrix} \times \begin{pmatrix}2\\1\\2\end{pmatrix}\|} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\begin{pmatrix}-1\\0\\1\end{pmatrix}$$

The points $\boldsymbol{A} = \begin{pmatrix}1\\2\\1\end{pmatrix}$ and $\boldsymbol{B} = \begin{pmatrix}2\\-1\\-1\end{pmatrix}$ lie on the line L_1,L_2 respectively.

The shortest distance between the lines is the absolute value of projection of the vector $\boldsymbol{B} - \boldsymbol{A}$ on to the unit vector $\boldsymbol{u}$.

$$\|(\boldsymbol{B} - \boldsymbol{A})^T \boldsymbol{u}\| = \|\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\begin{pmatrix}1\\-3\\-2\end{pmatrix}^T \begin{pmatrix}-1\\0\\1\end{pmatrix}\| = \frac{3}{\sqrt{2}}$$

Therefore the shortest distance between the given lines is $\frac{3}{\sqrt{2}}$