

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

<https://github.com/Zeehan-IITH/IITH-EE5609/new/master/codes>

and latex-tikz codes from

<https://github.com/Zeehan-IITH/IITH-EE5609>

1 PROBLEM

Find the shortest distance between the lines

$$L_1: \mathbf{x} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} + \lambda_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (1)$$

$$L_2: \mathbf{x} = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix} + \lambda_2 \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (2)$$

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

$$L_1: x - 1 = 2 - y = z - 1 \quad (3)$$

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

The above line equations have no point of intersection as for no value of λ_1, λ_2 both the equations (3) and (4) are equal.

If the two line intersect then (3)=(4) i.e.

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} + \lambda_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix} + \lambda_2 \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (5)$$

$$\lambda_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} - \lambda_2 \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -3 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (6)$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & -2 \\ -1 & -1 \\ 1 & -2 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -3 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (7)$$

The Augmented matrix will be

(8)

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & -2 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 & -3 \\ 1 & -2 & -2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (9)$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & -2 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 & -3 \\ 1 & -2 & -2 \end{pmatrix} \xrightarrow{R_1 = R_1 - R_2} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 3 \\ -1 & -1 & -3 \\ 1 & -2 & -2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (10)$$

The above matrix has a $rank = 3$. Hence the lines do not intersect

3 SOLUTION

Let \mathbf{A} be a point on line L_1 and \mathbf{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 \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{B} .

The vector passing through \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{B} will be

$$\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} = \mathbf{x}_1 - \mathbf{x}_2 + (\mathbf{m}_1 - \mathbf{m}_2) \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (11)$$

The vectors $\mathbf{m}_1, \mathbf{m}_2$ are both perpendicular to the line \mathbf{AB} . So the dot product of $\mathbf{m}_1, \mathbf{m}_2$ with the line \mathbf{AB} is zero.

The dot product of \mathbf{m}_1 with the line \mathbf{AB} is

$$\mathbf{m}_1^T (\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B}) = 0$$

$$\mathbf{m}_1^T (\mathbf{x}_1 - \mathbf{x}_2) + \mathbf{m}_1^T (\mathbf{m}_1 - \mathbf{m}_2) \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = 0 \quad (12)$$

The dot product of \mathbf{m}_2 with the line \mathbf{AB} is

$$\mathbf{m}_2^T (\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B}) = 0$$

$$\mathbf{m}_1^T (\mathbf{x}_1 - \mathbf{x}_2) + \mathbf{m}_2^T (\mathbf{m}_1 - \mathbf{m}_2) \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = 0 \quad (13)$$

Combining the equations (12) and (13) in matrix form we get

$$\begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{m}_1^T \mathbf{m}_1 & -\mathbf{m}_1^T \mathbf{m}_2 \\ \mathbf{m}_2^T \mathbf{m}_1 & -\mathbf{m}_2^T \mathbf{m}_2 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{m}_1^T (\mathbf{x}_1 - \mathbf{x}_2) \\ \mathbf{m}_2^T (\mathbf{x}_1 - \mathbf{x}_2) \end{pmatrix} = 0 \quad (14)$$

simplifying it further

$$\begin{pmatrix} m_1^T m_1 & -m_1^T m_2 \\ m_2^T m_1 & -m_2^T m_2 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} m_1^T (x_2 - x_1) \\ m_2^T (x_2 - x_1) \end{pmatrix} \quad (15)$$

To find the points on the lines which make up the shortest distance we need to find λ_1 and λ_2 using the following expression

$$\begin{pmatrix} m_1^T m_1 & -m_1^T m_2 \\ m_2^T m_1 & -m_2^T m_2 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} m_1^T (x_2 - x_1) \\ m_2^T (x_2 - x_1) \end{pmatrix} \quad (16)$$

we know that

$$x_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}, x_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix}, m_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \text{ and } m_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

Using the above expression, we get the points as

$$\frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 27 \\ -3 \\ 27 \end{pmatrix} \text{ and } \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 10 \\ -19 \\ -26 \end{pmatrix} \text{ on the line } L_1, L_2 \text{ respectively.}$$

The shortest distance between the lines is the absolute value of projection of the vector \mathbf{AB} on to the unit vector \mathbf{u} .

$$\|(\mathbf{B} - \mathbf{A})\| = \left\| \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 27 \\ -3 \\ 27 \end{pmatrix} - \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 10 \\ -19 \\ -26 \end{pmatrix} \right\| = \frac{3}{\sqrt{2}} \quad (17)$$

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

The unit vector perpendicular to lines

$$\text{Line}_1: \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}_1 + \lambda_1 \mathbf{m}_1 \quad (18)$$

$$\text{Line}_2: \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}_2 + \lambda_1 \mathbf{m}_2 \quad (19)$$

can be found by

$$\frac{\frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 27 \\ -3 \\ 27 \end{pmatrix} - \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 10 \\ -19 \\ -26 \end{pmatrix}}{\left\| \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 27 \\ -3 \\ 27 \end{pmatrix} - \frac{1}{12} \begin{pmatrix} 10 \\ -19 \\ -26 \end{pmatrix} \right\|} \quad (20)$$

So the unit vector perpendicular to both L_1 and L_2 is

$$\mathbf{n} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \begin{pmatrix} -1 \\ 0 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (21)$$

