Udacity: Robotic Arm Pick & Place Report

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1 Introduction & Background

The Amazon Pick and Place Robotics Challenge is a competition designed to help increase collaboration between the industrial and robotics research communities. Amazon has successfully implemented a number of robotic systems which largely eliminate the need for activities like searching and walking in their fulfilment centres, however, one of the main challenges that Amazon is yet to solve is picking and stowing objects reliably in an unstructured environment. To successfully achieve this objective, there are a number of tasks that need to be successfully completed. These include:

- 1. Identification of the target object in the unstructured environment;
- 2. Manipulator path planning to the object;
- 3. Successful execution of a reach and grasp manoeuvre; and
- 4. Physical relocation of the grasped object to the desired location.

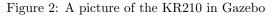


Figure 1: Kuka KR210 anthropomorphic industrial robot with 6 degrees of freedom

Path planning and execution of the desired manoeuvre is largely a solved problem. The move execution is dependent on a field of robotics called inverse kinematics. The inverse kinematics (IK) of a robot is the mathematical conversion of position in Cartesian space to the joint angles which allows the robot end effector to reach the desired position. Briefly, the end effector position in space can be thought of in 2 separate domains: Cartesian world coordinates, or Joint Angle space. Typically, analytical work is done in Cartesian space - three dimensional space is the native environment that humans live in and is easier to conceptualise. Robots, however, position themselves by making adjustments to electrical or hydraulic actuators - these actuators receive instructions based on Joint Angle. This project explores the IK derivation, and implementation, for the Kuka KR210. The

KR210 is a 6 degree of freedom (dof) anthropomorphic robotic arm shown in Figure 1. The project culminates with the implementation of an IK server, which is a ROS service receiving a series of points in Cartesian space (world coordinate frame), and returning a vector of Joint Angles after applying the IK transform. The implementation will be undertaken in ROS, which utilises simulation engines Rviz and Gazebo. Figures 2 and 3 show the Kuka KR210 in simulation.





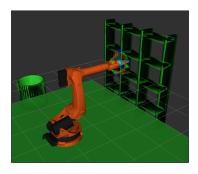


Figure 3: A picture of the KR210 in Rviz

2 Methods & Implementation

2.1 Determining the Denavit-Hartenburg Parameters

Forward and Inverse kinematic analysis relies heavily on successful specification of transformation matrices between the physical elements of the robot, which we call links. In order to determine these transformation matrices, we need to assign coordinate frames to the robot links. Doing this in an arbitrary fashion will often result in the determination of 6 parameters for each transformation matrix, which makes this process undesirably complex. Denavit and Hartenburg (1955) determined an algorithmic approach to the assignment of coordinate frames to the robot's links which reduces the number of parameters needed to describe each transformation matrix to 4. Assuming that \hat{x}_i , \hat{y}_i , and \hat{z}_i are the x, y, and z axes respectively for coordinate frame i, then these parameters are defined in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of the Denavit-Hartenburg parameters

Parameter	Description
α_{i-1}	Twist angle, and is determined by the angle between the \hat{z}_{i-1} and \hat{z}_i , measured about the \hat{x}_{i-1} axis
a_{i-1}	Distance from \hat{z}_{i-1} to \hat{z}_i measured along \hat{x}_{i-1} , where \hat{x}_{i-1} is orthogonal to \hat{z}_{i-1} , and \hat{x}_{i-1} is orthogonal to \hat{z}_i
d_i	Signed distance between \hat{x}_i and \hat{x}_{i-1} , measured along \hat{z}_i
θ_i	Angle between $\hat{x_{i-1}}$ and \hat{x}_i , measured about \hat{z}_i

The KR210 has a base link, 6 degrees of freedom, and an end effector. Each of the links require a coordinate frame assignment, making a total requirement of 8 coordinate frames. Each of the joints were systematically labelled from 1 to 6, starting with the joint closest to the base_link. Following this, each of the links were assigned a number from 0 to 7. It must be noted that link 0 is actually the base_link, and link 7 is the end_effector. For the sake of simplicity, the base_link

and end_effector will retain their names throughout this report. Coordinate frames were assigned to the links according to the DH procedure. Each link can be thought of as being associated with a joint. The base_link is associated with the fixed ground, link 1 is associated with joint 1, and so on. To assign the coordinate frame to a link, DH requires the \hat{z}_i coordinate axis for link i to pass through the joint i axis of rotation. To start the DH convention of coordinate frame assignment, the base frame is assigned arbitrarily. Each \hat{x}_i axis, for coordinate frame i, is determined using \hat{z}_i , and \hat{z}_{1+1} . The \hat{x}_i axes are assigned dependent on whether the \hat{z}_i , and \hat{z}_{i+1} axes are:

- 1. **Skewed:** if the \hat{z}_i and \hat{z}_{i+1} axes are skewed, then the \hat{x}_i axis is assigned along the normal from \hat{z}_i to \hat{z}_{i+1} .
- 2. **Intersecting:** if the \hat{z}_i and \hat{z}_{i+1} axes intersect, then the \hat{x}_i axis is assigned in an arbitrary position such that it is normal to the plane formed by \hat{z}_i and \hat{z}_{i+1}
- 3. Coincident: if the \hat{z}_i and \hat{z}_{i+1} axes are parallel or coincident, then the \hat{x}_i axis assignment is arbitrary along the $\hat{z}_i axis$

To reiterate, the \hat{x}_i axis is assigned dependent on the geometric orientation of the \hat{z}_i , and \hat{z}_{i+1} axes. The \hat{y}_i axis is assigned to complete the right handed coordinate frame assignment. The full DH coordinate frame assignment for the KR210 can be seen in Figure 4.

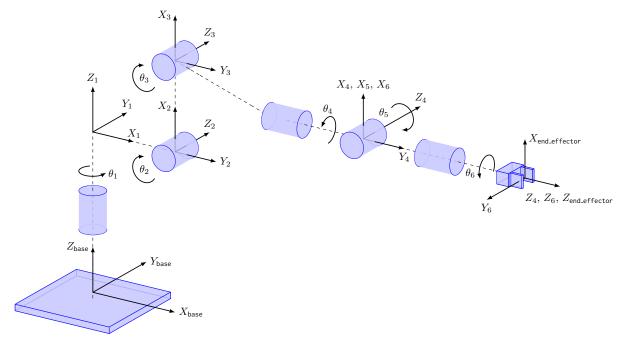


Figure 4: Sexy robot drawing

The DH parameters, which are used to specify the transformations from one coordinate frame to another, are determined once the coordinate frames have been assigned. The full DH parameter specification can be seen in Table 2. It must be noted that the values for d_i and a_{i-1} were found using the unified robot description format (urdf) file, which contains the model specifications for Gazebo. The full urdf file can be seen in Appendix A. The DH parameter specifications are used in conjunction with equation (1) to specify the transformation matrices from coordinate frame i-1 to coordinate frame i - this is further explored in Section 2.2.

$$T_i = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta_i & -\sin \theta_i & 0 & a_{i-1} \\ \sin \theta_i \cdot \cos \alpha_{i-1} & \cos \theta_i \cdot \cos \alpha_{i-1} & -\sin \alpha_{i-1} & -d_i \cdot \sin \alpha_{i-1} \\ \sin \theta_i \cdot \sin \alpha_{i-1} & \cos \theta_i \cdot \sin \alpha_{i-1} & \cos \alpha_{i-1} & d_i \cdot \cos \alpha_{i-1} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$
 (1)

Table 2: DH parameter table

$i-1T_i$	d_i	$ heta_i$	α_{i-1}	a_{i-1}
$^{base}T_1$	0.750	$ heta_1$	0	0.000
$^{1}T_{2}$	0.000	$\theta_2 - \frac{\pi}{2}$	$-\pi/2$	0.350
2T_3	0.000	θ_3	0	1.250
3T_4	1.500	θ_4	$-\pi/2$	-0.054
4T_5	0.000	$ heta_5$	$\pi/2$	0.000
$^{5}T_{6}$	0.000	θ_6	$-\pi/2$	0.000
$^6T_{ m end_eff}$	0.303	0	0	0.000

2.2 Forward Kinematics

The forward kinematics problem is concerned with taking the agular positions of the individual joints and finding the position of the robot's end effector in three dimensional Cartesian space. This section of the report is broken down into three subsections:

- 1. Derivation of the transformation matrices, $^{i-1}T_i$
- 2. The correction of transformation matrices NEED TO FINISH THIS DESCRIPTION
- 3. Verification of transformation matrices

2.2.1 Derivation of the transformation matrices

Using the DH parameters derived in Section 2.1, in addition to equation (1), we can derive a series of matrices, $^{i-1}T_i$, which describe the transformation of a vector in one coordinate frame i, to that of another coordinate frame i-1.

The individual transformation matrices are shown below:

$$^{\text{base}}T_1 = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_1 & -\sin\theta_1 & 0 & 0 \\ \sin\theta_1 & \cos\theta_1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0.75 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad ^1T_2 = \begin{bmatrix} \sin\theta_2 & \cos\theta_2 & 0 & 0.35 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \cos\theta_2 & -\sin\theta_2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$^2T_3 = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_3 & -\sin\theta_3 & 0 & 1.25 \\ \sin\theta_3 & \cos\theta_3 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad ^3T_4 = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_4 & -\sin\theta_4 & 0 & -0.054 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1.5 \\ -\sin\theta_4 & -\cos\theta_4 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$^4T_5 = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_5 & -\sin\theta_5 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 \\ \sin\theta_5 & \cos\theta_5 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad ^5T_6 = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_6 & -\sin\theta_6 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ -\sin\theta_6 & -\cos\theta_6 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$^5T_{\text{end.eff}} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0.303 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

The full transformation from the base_link to the end_effector is determined by matrix multiplication, shown in equation.

$$^{\text{base_link}}T_{\text{end_effector}} = ^{\text{base_link}}T_1 \cdot ^1T_2 \cdot ^2T_3 \cdot ^3T_4 \cdot ^4T_5 \cdot ^5T_6 \cdot ^6T_{\text{end_effector}}$$
 (2)

For the sake of brevity, the full specification for equation (2), which is $^{\text{base_link}}T_{\text{end_effector}}$, has not been shown - showing this transformation matrix without evaluating θ_i would take several paragraphs.

2.2.2**Correction of Transformation Matrices**

The orientation of the DH base frame, shown in Figure 3, has been selected so that it aligns with the world simulation frame (defined in the urdf file). It must be noted, however, that the final DH frame for the gripper does not have the same orientation as the urdf file since the DH algorithm was employed to assign the frames. This has ramifications for any forward kinematic analysis we perform using transformation matrices defined with DH parameters. The difference in frame orientation can be better understood by comparing Figures 5 and 6.

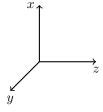


Figure 5: The orientation of the DH frame with respect to the world frame which is loure 6



cated at the base of the robot, shown in Fig- Figure 6: The orientation of thhe world coordinate frame.

Verification of Transformation Matrices 2.2.3

To provide some assurance that the Python implementation is correct, analysis was undertaken using a script called forwardKinematics.py, which can be found in Appendix B. The ROS launch script, forward_kinematics.launch, provided a simulation of the robot in which the joint angles could be manually adjusted, and the position and orientation of the robot's frames observed. This is shown in Figure 5.

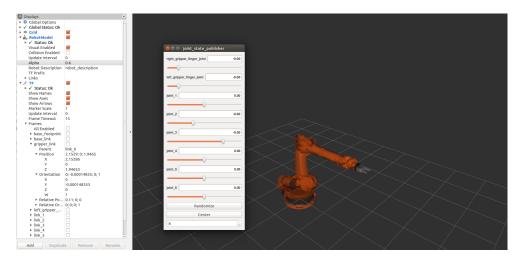


Figure 7: text

The postion of the gripper frame was directly reported as a position vector, however, the gripper orientation was reported in Quarternions, which was then converted to a rotation matrix. The Python script forwardKinematics.py

2.3 Inverse Kinematics

Inverse kinematics is the process of determining the joint angles for each of the degrees of freedom. In the case of the Kuka XXXX there are 6 degrees of freedom, and hence, there are 6 joint angles which need to be determined. The anthropomorphic arm design allows us to exploit the fact that the last 3 joints are a spherical wrist (their axes of rotation intersect?), which means that these joints do not have an influence on the position of the wrist centre. This allow us to kinematically decouple the the first three joints and the last three joints, providing the ability to find a closed form solution to the problem. The closed form solution is presented below, in two parts: first three joint angles, and final three joint angles

2.3.1 First Three Joint Angles $(\theta_1, \theta_2, \text{ and } \theta_3)$

Mathematics to show the derivation of the first three angles

2.3.2 Final Three Joint Angles $(\theta_4, \theta_5, \text{ and } \theta_6)$

Mathematics to show the derivation of the final three angles

3 Results & Conclusion

Discussion of the results of the robot kinematics.

4 Further Enhancements

The wrist turns around a bit - need to make sure that this doesn't happen and why this is happening. It happens because the wrist has more that 360 twist capability, however, the way it is set up does not allow for this (it has hard clamps at $-\pi$ and π). Also an error tracking capability would be nice on the project also.

5 Appendix A

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