WORKSPACE SIMULATION AND TRAJECTORY PLANNING FOR TOMATO SORTING DELTA ROBOT

番茄分拣 DELTA 机器人作业空间和轨迹规划仿真

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ABSTRACT

Robotic simulations are an effective approach to validate various models and design schemes. A tomato sorting Delta parallel mechanism was validated in this study for the purposes of end-effector motion planning via simulation analysis. Real-world conditions of the robot as well as its forward and inverse kinematics were obtained, followed by simulation analysis to determine whether its workspace meets relevant operation requirements. The motion trajectory of the end-effector is planned according to the simulation results and the motion requirements for tomato sorting. A sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve is applied as the motion law on the arc trajectory of the end-effector; said motion trajectory is found to be smooth and conducive to stable running of the robot based on MATLAB software analysis. A prototype was designed based on the simulation results and utilized to successfully complete 31 sorting tasks in one minute while smoothly and stably running.

INTRODUCTION

Grading of agricultural products creates added value. In China, the annual yield of tomato products exceeds 34 million tons (Qiao et al., 2014), creating an urgent need for automatic tomato sorting machines (Saber, 2018; Rupanagudi et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2018; Semary et al., 2015). An automatic tomato sorting robot must have rapid speed, high precision, and stable operation for the lossless and accurate sorting of tomatoes. The Delta robot is compact in structure, fast, precise, and is widely used for sorting applications in today’s food and electron industries (Feng et al., 2014; Kuo, 2016; Cheng and Li, 2018; Coronado et al., 2016). Simulations are commonly used to assess research results and establish models (Garg et al., 2018; Mukherjee, 2017); many scholars have investigated the Delta robot via simulation (Zhou and Zhang, 2017; Kidokoro et al., 2015; Hou et al., 2017). Jinzhao Du et al., for example, established a simplified dynamic model of the Delta robot and verified its effectiveness by simulation (Du and Lou, 2017). Chi-Sheng Tsai et al. designed a fully operable rotating Delta robot and validated its kinematic model through simulation (Tsai et al., 2016). Jingjun Zhang et al. obtained a constraint equation and Jacobian matrix by analyzing the kinematic mechanism of a Delta robot based on ADAMS software simulations.
(Zhang et al., 2009). Tuong Phuoc Tho et al. used the adaptive neuro-fuzzy inference system to solve inverse kinematic problems of a Delta parallel robot; they verified the effectiveness of this method based on virtual reality technology and MATLAB software (Tho et al., 2015).

In the present study, MATLAB software was adopted to validate the workspace of a tomato sorting Delta robot and the effectiveness simulation-based trajectory planning. The system construction, kinematic analysis, and simulated end-effector workspace and trajectory are discussed below. An experiment conducted on a prototype robot built according to the simulation results is also discussed below.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- System construction

The Delta robot-based tomato automatic sorting system is shown in Fig. 1. In this system, the visual sensor takes images of tomatoes on a conveyor belt, processes the images and sends detection results to the controller which drives the robot to classify the fruits into “excellent”, “good”, and “middle” categories.

The workspace of the tomato sorting Delta robot includes a section of conveyor belt and tomato collection zone, as shown in Fig. 2. The width of the belt face is 200 mm, and the dimension of the collection zone is 400 mm×150 mm. The bottom diameter of the cylindrical workspace must be larger than 420 mm and the height more than 60 mm to meet the relevant workspace requirements. The Delta robot has a “disc” which gathers and sorts tomatoes. Tomatoes of course are soft and relatively easily damaged – too fast suction or placing speed would harm the product. The sorting speed of the Delta robot can be safely set to 30 m/min.

![Fig. 1 - Components of automatic tomato grading system](image)


![Fig. 2 - Workspace indication of robot](image)

Simulation analysis of the workspace

Inverse kinematics

The structure of the tomato sorting Delta robot can be simplified by neglecting the elastic deformation of the connecting rods, as shown in Fig. 3. Random arm 3 is composed of two parallel connecting rods. The two ends of the rods are connected by master arm 2 and fixed platform 4 through spherical hinges. The random arm can be simplified as a connecting rod for the purposes of kinematic analysis. The connecting rod moves towards the centre. The movable platform is regarded as a point P. After simplification, the radius of the fixed platform is \( e = R - r \); \( r \) is the radius of the movable platform.

The coordinate system \( O-XYZ \) of the tomato sorting Delta robot was established with central point \( O \) of the fixed platform as the origin of the reference system (Fig. 4). The \( Z \) axis is perpendicular to the fixed platform and the direction is upward. Beginning from origin \( O \), the direction points to the connecting line between the master arm rod of the branch chain while the linking point of the fixed point is the positive direction of the \( Y \) axis.

\[
F_i \cos \theta_i + E_i \sin \theta_i + G_i = 0, i = 1, 2, 3
\]

where, \( F_i = 2l_1e - 2l_1x \cos \beta_i - 2l_1y \sin \beta_i \), \( E_i = 2l_1z \), \( G_i = (x - e \cos \beta_i)^2 + (y - e \sin \beta_i)^2 + z^2 + l_1^2 - l_2^2 \).

The angle \( \theta_i (i = 1, 2, 3) \) between \( A_iB_i \) and the face of the fixed platform is the rotation angle of the master arm. \( u_i \) and \( w_i \) represent the unit vector of the master arm rod and random arm rod respectively.

\[
\theta_i = 2 \arctan \frac{E_i - G_i}{F_i}, i = 1, 2, 3
\]
Forward kinematics

As shown in Fig. 4, points $B_1$, $B_2$ and $B_3$ are on a sphere with point $P$ as the centre and the length of random rod $l_2$ as the radius. The coordinates of $B_i$ are:

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
x_{B_i} \\
y_{B_i} \\
z_{B_i}
\end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix}
\cos \beta_i + l_i \cos \theta_i \\
\sin \beta_i + l_i \sin \theta_i \\
-l_i \sin \theta_i
\end{bmatrix}, i = 1,2,3
$$

(3)

and the relationship between $B_i$ and point $P \begin{bmatrix} x_p \\ y_p \\ z_p \end{bmatrix}$ is:

$$
x_p^2 + (y_p - y_{B_i})^2 + (z_p - z_{B_i})^2 = l_2^2
$$

(4)

$$
(x_p - x_{B_i})^2 + (y_p - y_{B_i})^2 + (z_p - z_{B_i})^2 = l_2^2
$$

(5)

$$
(x_p - x_{B_i})^2 + (y_p - y_{B_i})^2 + (z_p - z_{B_i})^2 = l_2^2
$$

(6)

The forward kinematics of the tomato sorting Delta robot can be obtained after simplification as follows:

$$
x_p = M_1 z_p + N_1
$$

$$
y_p = M_1 z_p + N_2
$$

$$
z_p = -b - \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac} \over 2a
$$

(7)

where, $M_1 = \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_1} - x_{B_2} \\ y_{B_1} - y_{B_2} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_2} - x_{B_3} \\ y_{B_2} - y_{B_3} \end{bmatrix}$, $M_2 = \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_3} - x_{B_1} \\ y_{B_3} - y_{B_1} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_1} - x_{B_2} \\ y_{B_1} - y_{B_2} \end{bmatrix}$, $N_1 = 0.5 \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_1} - x_{B_2} \\ y_{B_1} - y_{B_2} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_2} - x_{B_3} \\ y_{B_2} - y_{B_3} \end{bmatrix}$, $N_2 = 0.5 \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_1} - x_{B_2} \\ y_{B_1} - y_{B_2} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{B_2} - x_{B_3} \\ y_{B_2} - y_{B_3} \end{bmatrix}$, $O_1 = x_{B_1} + y_{B_1} + z_{B_1} - y_{B_2} - z_{B_2}$, $O_2 = x_{B_2} + y_{B_2} + z_{B_2} - y_{B_1} - z_{B_1}$, $a = 1 + M_1^2 + M_2^2$, $b = 2(M_1 N_1 + M_2 N_2 - M_2 y_{B_2} - z_{B_2})$, $c = N_1^2 + (N_2 - y_{B_2})^2 - z_{B_2}^2 - l_2^2$.

RESULTS

- Simulation verification of robot workspace

The simulation results of the tomato sorting Delta robot workspace are dependent on the correctness of the forward and inverse kinematics. A spiral curve can be constructed for this purpose as follows:

$$
\begin{cases}
x = 300 \cos (\pi t) \\
y = 300 \sin (\pi t) \\
z = -650 - 10t
\end{cases}
$$

(8)

Isometric sampling of the trajectory of point $P$ was conducted in MATLAB software with a sampling distance of 200 mm. The space coordinates of the sampling points were plugged into Equation (2), then the inverse kinematics of the tomato sorting Delta robot was solved to obtain the corresponding master arm angle $\theta_i$ of all sampling points. $\theta_i$ was substituted into forward Equation (7) to obtain the trajectory generation point of the end-effector, as shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5 - Comparison graph of involves and structure curve
The trajectory generation points of the end-effector basically overlap the spiral curve, which validates the forward kinematic analysis and inverse kinematic analysis of the Delta robot’s end-effector.

With parameters of IRB360-1/800 type Delta robot as the reference, the master arm rod of the Delta robot was primarily set to $l_1=240$ mm, that of the random arm rod to $l_2=800$ mm, the radius of the fixed platform to $R=200$ mm, and the radius of the movable platform to $r=50$ mm. According to the forward kinematics of the Delta robot, the joint angle of the master arm was set to $\theta_i=[-45^\circ, 45^\circ]$. The simulation analysis of the tomato sorting Delta robot is as shown in Fig. 6(a); Fig. 6(b) is a side view of the workspace. As discussed in Section 2, while grading, the Delta robot needs a cylindrical workspace with bottom diameter of 420 mm and height of 60 mm. As shown in Fig. 6(b), the real workspace of the Delta robot is a cylindrical zone with bottom diameter of 600 mm and height of 100 mm, which satisfies the requirements for tomato grading.

- **Motion trajectory planning and simulation**
  The end-effector of the Delta robot usually adopts gate type trajectory and arc trajectory motion (Zheng and Zhang, 2016; Su et al., 2018; Yang, 2017; Peng et al., 2017; Xie et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2014), as shown in Fig. 7. ABCDEFG represents the gate type trajectory, which is formed by straight line and arc trajectory. ADG is the arc trajectory, which is formed by a single arc. The end-effector of the tomato sorting Delta only moves between the conveyor belt and collection zone; thus both the arc trajectory and the gate type trajectory satisfy the relevant requirements. The total length of the arc trajectory is smaller than that of the gate type trajectory, so under the same motion law, the moving period of the arc trajectory is shorter. The arc trajectory was selected as the trajectory of the Delta robot end-effector in this study.

\[ (x - \frac{x_A + x_G}{2})^2 + (y - \frac{y_A + y_G}{2})^2 + (z - z_0)^2 = R^2 \]  

where, $z_0 = \frac{4h^2 + 8z_A h - (x_a - x_G)^2 - (y_a - y_G)^2}{8h}$, $R = \frac{4h^2 + (x_a - x_G)^2 + (y_a - y_G)^2}{8h}$. 

\[ \text{Fig. 7 - Tracking end of mechanism} \]
Rapid acceleration of the motor causes impact force on the robot which vibrates it. To eliminate the impact force, the motor is equipped with a sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve \((Huang et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017)\). The displacement curve is expressed as follows:

\[
s(t) = \begin{cases} 
K \left(27m \left[\cos\left(\frac{8\pi t}{T}\right) - 1\right] - n \left[\cos\left(\frac{24\pi t}{T}\right) - 1\right]\right) + \frac{a_m t^2}{4} & (0 \leq t < \frac{T}{8}) \\
\frac{a_m^2 (t - \frac{T}{2} + \frac{T^2}{16})}{2} - 2K(27m+n) & (\frac{T}{8} \leq t < \frac{3T}{8}) \\
\frac{a_m^2 (t - \frac{T}{2} + \frac{T^2}{16})}{2} + \frac{a_m 5T}{16} - \frac{17T}{256} & (\frac{3T}{8} \leq t < \frac{5T}{8}) \\
\frac{a_m^2 (t - \frac{T}{2} + \frac{T^2}{16})}{2} - \frac{187T^2}{256} & (\frac{5T}{8} \leq t < T)
\end{cases}
\]

where, \(T\) - the moving period; \(a_m\) - the maximum acceleration of the end-effector; \(K = \frac{a_m T^2}{55296 \pi^2}\), \(P_1 = 8 \cos \left[4\pi (t - \frac{3T}{8})\right] - 6\), \(P_2 = 8 \cos \left[\frac{12\pi (t - 3T/8)}{T}\right] - 6\), \(P_3 = \cos \left[\frac{4\pi (t - 7T/8)}{T}\right] + 13\), \(P_4 = \cos \left[\frac{24\pi (t - 7T/8)}{T}\right] + 13\), and \(3m + n = 48\) \((m > 0, n > 0)\).

After one sorting process, the total travel of the end-effector is \(L\). The relationship between \(L\) and \(T\) and \(a_m\) is:

\[
T = \sqrt{\frac{L}{a_m \left[\frac{2}{192\pi} + \frac{23}{128}\right]}}
\]

The minimum period \(T = \sqrt{\frac{5.287 T}{a_m \min}}\) can be obtained through Equation (11). The change curve of the displacements, speed \(v\), acceleration \(a\), and jerk \(j\) of the end-effector of the robot with time can be obtained through said motion law as shown in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8 - Curve of end-effector motion pattern

As shown in Fig. 8, after adopting the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve, the speed and acceleration curves of the end-effector are continuous and smooth. There is no mutation at the beginning or end of the jerk curve, which satisfies the high speed of the tomato sorting Delta robot.
**Trajectory simulation**

The smoothness of the end-effector trajectory is connected with the kinematic characteristics of robot joints. Kinematic characteristics include joint angle curve, angular velocity curve, and angular acceleration curve. MATLAB software was adopted in this study, as discussed above, for simulation analysis of the kinematic characteristics of the Delta robot and to verify the rationality of the end-effector's arc trajectory.

Assume the coordinate of point A is (-100, 0, -800), that of point G is (100, 0, -800), and $h = 25$ mm; the arc trajectory can be defined according to Equation (9). Determine the gate type trajectory based on same starting point and end point and set the excessive arc radius to 15 mm. Simulations were run here by adopting the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law with a maximum acceleration of $a_{m} = 20 \text{ m/s}^2$. The motion trajectory of the end-effector with sample points on the motion trajectory of the end-effector at sampling time of 0.001 s are shown in Fig. 9(a). After substituting coordinates of sampling points into the inverse kinematics of the Delta robot, the angle trajectory curves of the three joints were obtained as shown in Fig. 9(b). After derivation of the joint angle trajectory curve, the angular velocity curves of the three joints were obtained as shown in Fig. 9(c). After derivation of the angular velocity curve, the angular acceleration curves of the three joints were obtained as shown in Fig. 9(d). The kinematic characteristics curves of the joints obtained after analyzing the arc trajectory are theta1, theta2, and theta3. The kinematic characteristics curves of the joints obtained after analyzing the gate type trajectory are theta01, theta02, and theta03.

As shown in Fig. 9(b), the angular trajectory of the joints is smoother when adopting the arc trajectory rather than the gate type trajectory. As shown in Fig. 9(c), the change trends of the angular velocity curves obtained under the two trajectories are basically the same. However, the starting angular velocity of the three joints is smaller and the starting is more stable under the arc trajectory. Figure 9(d) also shows that while adopting arc trajectory, the change range of the angular velocity is smaller, the angular velocity change is smoother, and the running process is more stable than under the gate type trajectory. One period of the tomato sorting Delta robot takes 0.2842 s under the arc trajectory but takes 0.2985 s under the gate type trajectory. Under the same motion law, the motion period of the arc trajectory is also shorter.

![Fig 9 - Motion trajectory simulation curve](image-url)
In order to verify the effectiveness of the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law by comparison with isometric interpolation, the angular velocity curves of the three joints were obtained as shown in Fig. 10. While adopting the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law, the acceleration curves obtained are \( \theta_1 \), \( \theta_2 \), and \( \theta_3 \); while adopting isometric interpolation, the angular velocity curves obtained are \( \theta_01 \), \( \theta_02 \), and \( \theta_03 \).

As shown in Fig. 10, while adopting isometric interpolation, the beginning angular velocities of \( \theta_1 \) and \( \theta_2 \) as well as the ending angular velocities of \( \theta_2 \) and \( \theta_3 \) are larger compared to the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law. The impact of the end-effector velocity is large and the motion is unstable under isometric interpolation, while the opposite is true under the sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law. The results shown in Fig. 9 and Fig. 10 together indicate that adopting an arc trajectory and sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve motion law yields a smooth motion trajectory of the end-effector, stable system operation, and a short running period which satisfy the tomato sorting Delta robot's performance requirements.

- **Trial production of prototype**

A prototype of the tomato sorting Delta robot was constructed as shown in Fig. 11 based on the simulation results presented above. The main controller of the prototype is a STM32f407 and the motor is a 57HSE112-D25 type servo stepping motor. The tomato sorting Delta robot showed high speed and stable running throughout the experiment. It completed 31 tomato sorting tasks each minute on average, which satisfies the practical requirements for automatic tomato sorting.
CONCLUSIONS

The dimensions of a tomato sorting Delta robot were determined in this study based on real-world workspace requirements. A trajectory planning simulation of the robot was then conducted according to the motion requirements for tomato sorting. A sine modified trapezoidal acceleration curve was selected as the motion law, and the condition of the end-effector was placed under arc trajectory conditions for simulation in MATLAB software. Under the simulated conditions, the system started smoothly, did not undergo excessive changes in angular velocity during operation, and showed a relatively short running period. In a tomato sorting experiment, a prototype Delta robot fabricated based on the simulation results ran rapidly and smoothly and completed 31 sorting tasks in one minute. In effect, the proposed tomato sorting Delta robot has strong kinematic performance and satisfies the relevant requirements for automatic, lossless tomato sorting including rapid speed, high precision, and smooth operation.

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