Trajectory tracking optimization and control of a three link robotic manipulator for application in casting

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Received: 21-July-2021; Revised: 17-October-2021; Accepted: 19-October-2021
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Abstract
In this study, forward kinematics, inverse kinematics, dynamic simulation and control of a three-link robotic manipulator for the pouring of molten metal using a small crucible are described. A 3D Computer Added Design (CAD) model of the robotic manipulator is designed in SolidWorks software. Simulation and control of this robotic manipulator were conducted in MATLAB 2016 b. The robotic manipulator SolidWorks CAD file is first converted into an Extensible Markup Language (XML) file after and then imported into MATLAB/Sim-Mechanics environment. A study on forward and inverse dynamics with a sinusoidal wave and cycloid trajectory as input signal was conducted and the joint actuator is controlled by Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) controller having a derivative filter. Trajectory tracking is optimized by Integral of Time multiplied by Absolute Error (ITAE) criteria using a pattern search algorithm. Variation in joint torque with a vertical load on the end-effector is described. It was found that the optimized controller reduced the ITAE error by 93.05%, 94.44%, and 97.6% in joint1, joint2, and joint3 respectively.

Keywords
Forward kinematics, Inverse kinematics, Robotic manipulator, PID, Trajectory tracking optimization.

1.Introduction
When it comes to working for repetitive tasks, in hazardous environments, continuous working for 24x7 hours, which is challenging for humans, where robots or robotic manipulators came in a picture to do similar tasks. In order to enhance the efficacy of the robots and robotic manipulators, robust exploration and advanced research are necessary these days [1]. Since motion control of a robotic manipulator has been a difficult task because of the non-linear dynamic model. Robotic manipulator is controlled by different control algorithms such as Proportional Integral Derivative (PID) control [2], Computed Torque Control (CTC) [3], Sliding Mode Control (SMC) [4], fuzzy logic [5], artificial neural network (ANN) [6]. A true linear model is difficult to obtain so different optimization methods are used to tune the controller parameters.

A dynamic model of a robotic manipulator can be obtained by using analytic methods such as Lagrangian Mechanics and Newton-Euler formulation. But with an increase in the number of degrees of freedom, the dynamic equation becomes complicated and difficult to calculate on pen and paper. So, the MATLAB SIM-mechanics toolbox is used for modeling the complicated dynamic equation of the robotic manipulator in recent years reported in [7–9]. Robotic manipulators are used in many areas, but in this study, the main focus has been done on robotic manipulators which can be used in casting applications. A study on the reuse of a robotic manipulator applied in die casting [10].

The main objective of this study is to minimize the trajectory tracking error during the pouring of liquid metal in casting to make the product accurate, efficient and increase in production rate. To achieve this goal, the main objectives of this study are as below-1. To design a three-link robotic manipulator in solid works software according to Denavit–Hartenberg (D-H) parameters.
2. To simulate and control this designed robotic manipulator in MATLAB/Sim-mechanics.

3. To optimize the trajectory tracking of this robotic manipulator during liquid metal pouring in casting by a pattern search algorithm using Integral of Time multiplied by Absolute Error (ITAE) criteria.

To achieve the above objectives, a three-link robotic manipulator is first designed in SolidWorks software with D-H parameters, then Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Standard Tessellation Language (STL) files are generated using SIM-mechanics Computer Added Design (CAD) translator add-ons. Then, an XML file is imported into the MATLAB software for dynamics control, simulation, and motion analysis of the robotic manipulator.

This article is organized as follows; section 2 discussed the literature review. Section 3 elaborates the methodology covering the modeling of a three-link robotic manipulator, dynamic modeling of the three-link robotic manipulator discussion, detailing of the dynamic simulations, and control of robotic manipulators in MATLAB SIM-mechanics and trajectory tracking optimization using the ITAE criterion. Results are given in section 4 along with the study limitations. In section 5 research work impacts have been discussed, and in the last, the research work is concluded in section 6.

2. Literature review

Different optimization techniques have been used by the researchers to tune the various control parameters. Computing technology, mostly used nowadays for the optimization and simulation of a robotic manipulator. Here are some literatures focusing mainly on the field of robotic manipulator controller parameters and trajectory optimization.

A Modified Neural Network Algorithm (MNNA) is defined by [11] and use as a novel adaptive tuning algorithm for optimization of controller parameters of two degrees of freedom robotic arm. In this study, a comparative study was conducted between Genetic Algorithm (GA)-PID and Cuckoo Search Algorithm (CSA)-PID. A cubic polynomial trajectory was used for analysis in MATLAB. It was found that MNNA is superior to other optimization techniques.

One another study on event-driven sliding mode control trajectory tracking for a nonlinear system with disturbance is found in [12]. In this study, the nonlinear system shows a better response for a given reference trajectory in terms of reduced control updates. The control updates for the presence of constant found 44% and time-varying disturbance 61%.

An adaptive sliding mode tracking control for a six-degree of freedom industrial robot is found in [13]. This controller is a combination of sliding mode control, adaptive and robust controls. The unknown parameters were updated online based on discontinuous projection adaptation law. It was found that the proposed controller gives better dynamic trajectory tracking compare to the conventional PID controllers. A novel sliding mode controller was proposed by [14] applying on two degrees of freedom robotic manipulator and trajectory was optimized by the Extended Grey Wolf Optimizer (EGWO) that was obtained by adding emphasis coefficients in the Grey Wolf Optimizer (GWO). The optimized parameters were compared with two other optimization techniques Proportional Derivative Sliding Mode Control (PDSMC) and SMC. It was found that the effectiveness of EGWO is more compared to other PDSMC and SMC.

One another comparative study on the optimization of PID controller parameters on two degrees of freedom robotic manipulator is found in [15]. In this study, three optimization techniques simulated annealing (SA), particle swarm optimization (PSO), and genetic algorithm (GA) was studied. It was concluded that PSO shows more effectiveness in trajectory tracking as compared to SA and GA.

Recently a comparative study of SMC and PID on two links robotic manipulators using MSC Adams and MATLAB/Response optimization toolbox found in [16]. The parameters of SMC were optimized by Gradient Descent (GD), Pattern Search (PS), and Simplex Search (SS). SMC shows 36 %, 35%, and 15% more improvement in ITAE, IAE, and ISE respectively as compare to PID. SS gives better results in trajectory tracking as compare to others.

Optimization of PID controller parameters using a combination of GA and PSO called Genetic-Swarm Optimization (GSO) is found in [17]. In this article, the author also uses GSO for the solution of the inverse kinematics of a multi-joint serial robotic manipulator. The author concludes that GSO has a lower average error at each joint. GSO shows- Joint 4 average error of 19.33% and 22.7% less compares to PSO and GA respectively.
One article found on optimization of PID controller parameters for a nonlinear system using nature-inspired metaheuristic algorithms. Social Spider Algorithm (SSA) was used for tuning of PID parameters of two degrees of freedom non-linear system and compare with other optimization techniques GA and PSO. The author concludes that SSA shows minimum error as compared to other techniques [18]. In conclusion, after studying literature regarding this topic most of the literature found on two and six degrees of freedom robotic manipulator, but there is the very lack of research found on trajectory tracking of articulated three degrees of freedom robotic manipulator. Most of the articles reported on optimization of controller parameters for two-link robotic manipulators with very lack of real applications. There is a very confined study found on trajectory tracking optimization using ITAE criteria by the pattern search algorithm.

3. Methods
In this section methods that are applied for achieving the objectives are discussed.

Figure 1 (a) A schematic designed 3D CAD model of a 3-DOF Robotic Manipulator (b) Spherical coordinates of this robotic manipulator

Figure 2 Frame assignment of the robotic manipulator each joint
Inverse kinematics

Inverse kinematics are used for finding the joint angles for giving the end effector transformation matrix as 1258.
3.3 Dynamic simulation and control of robot in MATLAB Sim-Mechanics

The robotic manipulator model is designed in SolidWorks software as shown in Figure 3(a), length is selected according to D-H parameters (Table 1), mass and inertia are obtained (Table 2) according to material property that is selected in SolidWorks. This SolidWorks CAD file is exported into an XML and STL file using SIM-mechanics 1st generation add-ons. This XML file is imported in MATLAB software using command mech_import with the 1st generation Simulink model as shown in Figure 3 (b) (physical model). Mass and inertia tensor property was obtained in SIM-mechanics for each link block as shown in Table 2. After running the simulation, a CAD model animation is obtained in SIM-mechanic as shown in Figure 3(b) showing the Centre of gravity (CG) of each link.

A solid works CAD model of the three-link robotic manipulator attached with stepper motor at each joint is shown in Figure 4. The casting process of grasping of small crucible filled with liquid metal is in Figure 4 (a) to the pouring of liquid metal in casting mould by turning the crucible is in Figure 4 (b). The working procedure for achieving of all objectives in section 1 are described as a flow chart in Figure 5.

![Figure 3](a) 3D CAD model of the robotic manipulator with end-effector gripper grasping small crucible (b) CAD model view in MATLAB/Sim-mechanics showing CG of each link

| Link | Mass (Kg) | Mass moment of inertia tensor(Kg-m²) | Name     |
|------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 0    | 3.41047   | 0 0.00353824 0 0.00353824 0 0.00280315 | Base     |
| 1    | 2.03413   | 0 0.00297078 -1.39932e-10 2.64538e-10 0 0.00264882 0.000877107 0.00147878 | Link 1   |
| 2    | 2.76911   | 0 0.00148764 0.000550148 0.000110764 0 0.03401440 -1.83105e-05 0.039577 | Link 2   |
| 3    | 1.09587   | 0 0.00313499 -2.50076e-09 -0.000215134 0 0.00449940 -7.33306e-09 0.00459017 | Link 3   |
| 4    | 0.724496  | 0 0.000477451 0.537058e-06 5.37058e-06 0 0.0000559974 0 0.00054326 | End-effector |

Table 2. After running the simulation, a CAD model animation is obtained in SIM-mechanic as shown in Figure 3(b) showing the Centre of gravity (CG) of each link.

![Figure 3](a) 3D CAD model of the robotic manipulator with end-effector gripper grasping small crucible (b) CAD model view in MATLAB/Sim-mechanics showing CG of each link
Figure 4 (a) End-effector grasping the crucible (b) End-effector pouring the liquid metal by turning the crucible

Figure 5 Working procedure

Design of three link robotic manipulator in Solid Works software with D-H Parameters. (Figure 4)

XML file

Sim-mechanics model in MATLAB (figure 6)

PID controller with derivative filter (Figure 7)

PID controller parameters $K_p$, $K_i$, $K_d$

Controller parameters calculated

Controller parameters optimization using pattern search algorithm by minimizing ITAE of each joint

Comparison of both parameters on PID controller using sine wave as reference trajectory to each joint (Figure 8 and 9)

Using this optimized controller parameters

Torque analysis by applying load on end effector using cycloid trajectory to each joint. (Figure 5, 12 and 13)

Trajectory tracking during pouring of liquid metal. (Figure 10)
3.4 Trajectory tracking optimizations

A MATLAB Simulink model of forward dynamics simulation of a three-link robotic manipulator is shown in Figure 6. In this robotic manipulator each joint is controlled by a PID controller with derivative filter. The Laplace transfer equation of this PID controller is given by Equation 14-18. A modulus of sinusoidal reference trajectory (Equation 19) was given to each joint actuator for performance evaluation of the controller parameters. The slider gains are used at each joint to control the joint torque range. The Control parameters of the PID controller are tuned according to ITAE criteria Equation 15. ITAE is minimized according to a pattern search algorithm with ITAE criteria [23–24]. The optimization of controller parameter by a pattern search algorithm is completed in 24 iterations. Calculated parameters of the characteristic equation and optimized parameters are given in Table 3. Studied related to optimization of PID controller parameters are founds in [25–28].

\[ C_{PID}(s) = K_p + K_i \frac{1}{s} + K_d \frac{N}{1 + N^2 s^2} \]  

(14)

Where: \( K_p \) = Proportional gain, \( K_i \) = Integral gain, \( K_d \) = Derivative gain, \( N \) = Filter coefficient

\[ ITAE = \int_0^t t|e(t)| \, dt \]  

(15)

Where: \( ITAE \) = Integral of Time multiplied by Absolute Error, \( t \) = time, \( e(t) \) = error

\[ \theta_i(t) = \theta_i(0) + \frac{\theta_i(T) - \theta_i(0)}{T} \left[ t - \frac{T}{2\pi} \sin \left( \frac{2\pi}{T} t \right) \right] \]  

(16)

\[ \dot{\theta}_i(t) = \frac{\theta_i(T) - \theta_i(0)}{T} \left[ 1 - \cos \left( \frac{2\pi}{T} t \right) \right] \]  

(17)

\[ \ddot{\theta}_i(t) = \frac{\theta_i(T) - \theta_i(0)}{T} \left[ \frac{2\pi}{T} \sin \left( \frac{2\pi}{T} t \right) \right] \]  

(18)

For, inverse dynamic simulation of the robotic manipulator, SIM-mechanics 1st generation Simulink model of the robotic manipulator is shown in Figure 7. In sub-system (Figure 8) joint actuators and joint sensors are connected to each joint of the robotic manipulator. A cycloid trajectory (Equation 16) is applied to each joint (Figure 7), velocity (Equation 17) and acceleration (Equation 18) are obtained by the derivative of the Equation 16.

Figure 6 Forward dynamics Simulink model of the robotic manipulator controlled by PID controller
**Figure 7** Inverse dynamic of a three-link robotic manipulator sim-mechanics model with cycloid input trajectory at each joint

**Figure 8** Sub-system of the RRR manipulator as shown in Figure 7
4. Results
Reference trajectory was given to each joint after putting calculated and optimized controller parameters in PID controller from Table 3. Trajectory tracking obtained by calculated parameters is shown in Figure 9 and by optimized parameters in Figure 10. The results obtain from above studies are described here.

![Figure 9](image1.png)

**Figure 9** Trajectory tracking error of the robotic manipulator joint 1 with calculated controller parameters (Red line- desired trajectory and Black line- response trajectory)

![Figure 10](image2.png)

**Figure 10** Trajectory tracking error of the robotic manipulator joint 1 with optimization controller parameters (Red line- desired trajectory and Black line- response trajectory)

| Joint No. | Calculated Controller parameters | Optimized Controller parameters |
|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|           | $K_p$  | $K_i$  | $K_d$  | ITAE   | $K_p$  | $K_i$  | $K_d$  | ITAE   |
| 1         | 47.3   | 1123.46| 20.3   | 0.023461| 63.8   | 1378.69| 12.9   | 0.0016313|
| 2         | 38.7   | 1454.33| 44.67  | 0.045660| 43.25  | 1945.44| 32.33  | 0.0016257|
| 3         | 43.56  | 979.23 | 38.78  | 0.067844| 56.78  | 1156.43| 31.44  | 0.0016266|

Reference trajectory $\theta_{\text{desired}}(t) = 10|\sin(\omega t)|$ (19)
Response trajectory $\theta_{\text{responded}}(t) = \theta_{\text{desired}}(t) - e(t)$ (20)
Error $e(t) = \theta_{\text{desired}} - \theta_{\text{responded}}$ (21)

- Output difference in desired and response trajectory tracking by calculated parameters is shown in Figure 9.
- ITAE error $e(t) = \theta_{\text{desired}} - \theta_{\text{responded}}$ from calculated parameters obtained as 0.023461, 0.045660 and 0.067844 from joint 1, joint 2 and joint 3 respectively.
• Output difference in desired and response trajectory tracking by optimized parameters is shown in Figure 10.
• ITAE error $e(t) = \theta_{\text{desired}} - \theta_{\text{responded}}$ from optimized parameters obtained as 0.0016313, 0.0016257 and 0.0016266 from joint 1, joint 2 and joint 3 respectively.

A casting application for the pouring of liquid metal from the small crucible by the gripper can be seen in Figure 4. First a small crucible is grasped (Figure 4.a) after that liquid metal is poured into the pouring basin by turning the crucible (Figure 4.b). Now, during this task a 3D curve trajectory and scatter point to point trajectory of the robotic manipulator end-effector for simulation running time of 10 seconds are obtained as shown in Figure 11(a) and Figure 11(b). This trajectory is obtained with the optimizing PID controller parameters by attaching a body sensor as shown in Figure 8 that gives point to point [X, Y, Z] position of end-effector.

A study on end-effector trajectory with simulation running time 200 seconds are shown in Figure 12. This trajectory is generated by giving cycloid trajectory angle, velocity, acceleration Equation 14 to 15 to each joint as shown in Figure 7. Further a study of variation in joint torque with adding of some value of load or force on end-effector in (-Z) direction are shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14.

Figure 11 (a) 3D curve trajectory of robotic manipulator end-effector from start point [X Y Z] = [327.9 -59.26 111.6] mm to end point [X Y Z] = [7.533 75.2 124.9] mm (b) 3D Scatter point to point trajectory of robotic manipulator end-effector from start point [X Y Z] = [328 -59.26 111.5] mm to end point [X Y Z] = [7.533 75.2 124.9] mm for simulation running time 10 Sec

Figure 12 End-effector 3D scatter trajectory for simulation running time of 200 seconds

Figure 13 Torque variation of each joint with 0 N force in (-Z) direction on the end-effector for simulation running time of 10 seconds
Torque variation of each joint with 10 N force in (-Z) direction on the end-effector for simulation running time of 10 sec

Torque equation of all three joints is described in Equation 13 and Appendix II, corresponding cycloid trajectory angle, angular velocity and angular acceleration Equations 14, 15 and 16 respectively were given to each joint (Figure 7).

- Variation of torque with time (Figure 13) for a simulation running period of 10 seconds were obtained according to the input cycloid trajectory by putting optimized controller parameters (Table 3) in PID controller with no load on end effector in (-Z) direction.
- When load of 10 N applied on end effector (-Z) direction, torque increases on each joint that variation according to the input cycloid trajectory is shown in Figure 14.

4.1 Limitations
Limitations of this study are as below-

- Friction and other environmental effects are not considered during simulation so small variation in results is possible during the actual experiment.
- Same number of iterations in different interval of time give different controller parameters of PID controller with small variations.

5. Discussion
When a trajectory of \( \theta_{\text{desired}}(t) = 10|\sin(\omega t)| \) is given to each joint (Figure 6) the output results are obtained according to calculated controller parameters (Figure 9) and optimized controller parameters (Figure 10). We can see optimized controller parameters give good trajectory tracking as compare to calculated by observing the difference in red line curve (desired trajectory) and Blackline curve (respond trajectory). The optimized controller reduced the ITAE error by 93.05%, 94.44%, and 97.6% in joint1, joint2, and joint3 respectively. This technology, using SIM-mechanics and pattern search algorithm gives better trajectory tracking as comparable to other methods as SMC in [16] gives high ITAE and the IAE error in two degrees of freedom robot. This can be also compared for the inverse kinematics solution analysis reported in [17] using a GSO hybrid of GA and PSO. Joint torque variation with load (Figure 14) and without load (Figure 13) varies according to the cycloid joint trajectory using inverse dynamics when load increases on the end-effector this curve gives more amplitude of torque on each joint.

A complete list of abbreviations is shown in Appendix II.

6. Conclusion and future work
The aim of this study is to optimize the controller parameters of the three-link robotic manipulator during the pouring of liquid metal in the casting. Simulation and control of the robotic manipulator were conducted in MATLAB. Parameters of PID controller with derivative filter are optimized according to a pattern search algorithm by minimizing ITAE. Optimized controller parameters show good tracking as compare to calculated controller parameters by comparison of ITAE. A study of torque variation based on inverse dynamics was successfully carried out. In the future, other optimization techniques on the different controllers can be used for multi-degree of freedom robots.

Acknowledgment
The authors are grateful for the research support by NDF/ADF AICTE NEW DELHI.

Conflicts of interest
The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Appendix I

\[ H_{31} = \left[ \frac{1}{2}m_3L_2L_3 \sin \theta_3 \right] \left( \dot{\theta}_2 \right)^2 + \left[ \frac{1}{2}m_3(L_3)^2 \sin 2(\theta_2 + \theta_3) + \frac{1}{2}m_3L_2L_3 \cos \theta_2 \sin(\theta_2 + \theta_3) \right] \left( \dot{\theta}_3 \right)^2 \]

\[ G_{21} = \frac{1}{2}m_2gL_2 \cos \theta_2 + \frac{1}{2}m_3gL_3 \cos(\theta_2 + \theta_3) + m_3gL_2 \cos \theta_2 \]

\[ G_{31} = \frac{1}{2}m_3gL_3 \cos(\theta_2 + \theta_3) \]

Appendix II

| S. No. | Abbreviation | Description |
|--------|--------------|-------------|
| 1      | ANN          | Artificial Neural Network |
| 2      | CAD          | Computer Aided Design |
| 3      | CG           | Centre of Gravity |
| 4      | CSA          | Cuckoo Search Algorithm |
| 5      | CTC          | Computed Torque Control |
| 6      | D-H          | Denavit–Hartenberg parameters |
| 7      | EGWO         | Extended Grey Wolf Optimizer |
| 8      | GA           | Genetic Algorithm |
| 9      | GD           | Gradient Descent |
| 10     | GSO          | Genetic-Swarm Optimization |
| 11     | GWO          | Grey Wolf Optimizer |
| 12     | IAIE         | Integral of Absolute Error |
| 13     | ISE          | Integral of Square Error |
| 14     | ITAE         | Integral of Time multiplied by Absolute Error |
| 15     | MNNA         | Modified Neural Network Algorithm |
| 16     | MSC - ADAMS  | Macneal Schwendler Corporation - Automated Dynamic Analysis of Mechanical Systems |
| 17     | PDSCMC        | Proportional Derivative Sliding Mode Control |
| 18     | PID          | Proportional-Integral-Derivative |
| 19     | PS           | Pattern Search |
| 20     | PSO          | Particle Swarm Optimization |
| 21     | SA           | Simulated Annealing |
| 22     | SMC          | Sliding Mode Control |
| 23     | SS           | Simplex Search |
| 24     | SSA          | Social Spider Algorithm |
| 25     | STL          | Standard Tessellation Language |
| 26     | XML          | Extensible Markup Language |
| 27     | \( a_i \)    | Link length |
| 28     | \( a_i \)    | Link twist |
| 29     | \( d_i \)    | Joint offset/distance |
| 30     | \( \theta_i \) | Joint angle |
| 31     | \( Ca_i \)   | Cos \( \theta_i \) |
| 32     | \( Sa_i \)   | Sin \( \theta_i \) |
| 33     | \( m_i \)    | Mass of the \( i^{th} \) link |
| 34     | \( L_i \)    | Length of the \( i^{th} \) link |
| 35     | \( L \)      | Lagrange function |
| 36     | \( \tau_i \) | Torque of the \( i^{th} \) joint |