ACTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM FOR AN INDUSTRIAL ROBOT BASED ON ARTIFICIAL VISION AND FUZZY LOGIC PRINCIPLES

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Keywords: Active security, application, artificial vision, fuzzy logic, real-time, robot control.

Abstract: An active security system assures that interacting robots don't collide or that a robot operating independently doesn't hit any obstacle that is encountered in the robots workspace. In this paper, an active security system for a FANUC industrial robot is introduced. The active security problem where one robot needs to avoid a moving obstacle in its workspace is considered. An obstacle detection and localization mechanism based on stereoscopic vision methods was successfully developed. To connect the vision system, an operator's pc and the robot environment a real-time communication is set up over Ethernet using socket messaging. We used fuzzy logic for intelligent trajectory planning. A multitask oriented robot application in the KAREL programming language of FANUC Robotics was implemented and tested.

1 INTRODUCTION

In industrial settings, robots often work on valuable products and with expensive tools. When more robots are working together on one assignment, a collision free interaction of the robot arms needs to be guaranteed at all time. Systems that establish collision free robot interaction are identified as Active Security Systems (ASSYS). ASSYSs can also be situated in the domain of interaction between industrial manipulators and human operators, where the physical safety of the operator, rather than an economical concern, constitutes the necessity for the design of an appropriate security system.

The key principle of ASSYSs is the vigilance of the work area of cooperating robots and the streaming of information about events that are unexpected for each robot. This contrasts with a strategy where every robot is seperately programmed to execute its task and where interaction signals are sent between robots over rigid communication media.

Safe robot motion is typically guaranteed by the use of a sensor system. A camera network based human-robot coexistence system was already proposed in (A.J. Baerveldt, 1992) and a safety system also using a network of cameras and with path replanning in an on-line manner was presented in (D. Ebert et al., 2005). In this paper, we present the setup of a basic vision system to detect and positionally reconstruct obstacles in the robot's workspace. The stereoscopic vision techniques applied in the design of the vision system will be presented in section 2.

In literature, some researchers focus on the direct kinematics of robot manipulators. Using the differences between actual and goal angular configuration of every axis, output actions for every axis's motor are produced taking into account an obstacle's configuration in the two or three dimensional space. In this paper, we will present a security system that controls the motional actions of an industrial FANUC Robot Arc Mate 100*i*B with six degrees of freedom and a circular range of 1800 millimeters. Instead of giving commands to every axis's motor, positional and rotational configuration of the robot arm will be calculated along the nodes of an alternative path around one detected obstacle. Intelligent path planning is done by using a fuzzy logic control system. A rule base composed of linguistic if-then implications is used to simulate human reasoning in decision taking. The fuzzy system produces a set of alternative positions and rotational configurations that assure collision free motion continuation towards a final location. Fuzzy logic is popular due to its simplicity and hands-on, intuitive design of the control strategy and was successfully applied by preceding authors, e. g. in (Bischoff, 1999), to build active safety systems for robots. In this paper, a three dimensional obstacle avoidance strategy will be introduced that is founded on the idea of repelling and attracting forces (P. Zavlangas et al., 2000). The design of a fuzzy logic controller will be highlighted in section 3.

Although specialised solutions exist for each component of the proposed ASSYS, the goal in this paper was to build such a system using only basic components communicating over an Ethernet network. No multiple robot interaction was assumed and due to the early stage of the investigation, the vision system was only designed to make the robot avoid collision with a single, however dynamically moving, obstacle. Attention was also given to the time performance of the vision system.

To make the industrial FANUC robot move along an alternative path in an on-line manner, a robot application needed to be programmed in the proper programming language KAREL of FANUC Robotics. A multitask oriented design in the KAREL language assures that alternative positions can be read in by the robot's system and subsequently moved to by the robot arm. The architecture of the robot application, as well as details on the real-time communication system established over Ethernet, will be commented in section 4. In section 5 results and drawbacks of the designed ASSYS are commented.

2 ARTIFICIAL VISION

2.1 3D Object Reconstruction

Stereoscopic vision applications intent to reconstruct the 3D location of characteristic object points. From (Torre Ferrero, 2002) an analytical method was taken that allows for a unique 3D reconstruction of an object point P, knowing the pixel sets (u_1, v_1) and (u_2, v_2) of P's projection into two different image planes I_1 and I_2. The camera's projection matrices, that are composed of the camera's extrinsic and intrinsic parameters (Gonzaléz Jiménez, 1999), are also needed for reconstruction. These parameters were obtained for every camera by applying a camera calibration method based on (J. Heikkilä et al., 1997). For more details on camera projection principles and reconstruction methods, please consult (Gonzaléz Jiménez, 1999) and (Torre Ferrero, 2002).

2.2 Camera Setup of the Vision System

A triplet of network cameras was installed to watch the robot's workspace. Camera images can be obtained by sending an image request signal to their IP address over a Local Area Network (LAN). For every camera, a video stream of images using ActiveX components is activated. Images are taken out of the video stream and saved as image matrices of dimension 480x640x3 in the Red Green Blue (RGB) image space. A pc is used to perform image processing operations. The cameras were collocated in a triangular pattern and mounted on the ceiling above the robot's workspace.

2.3 Object Detection and Reconstruction Methods

In industrial settings, image processing times need to be small. Preliminary knowledge about the object's color and shape is therefore often used to detect obstacles in the robot's workspace as quickly as possible. For the experimental setup of our vision system, we worked with a foam obstacle of parallelepiped structure. The motion of the obstacle is achieved by simply dragging the foam into the robot's workspace with a rope. Because it is not within the scope of this paper, no attention was given to the detection of the robot's arm, nor to the detection of humans or objects of other form than a parallelepiped. In the next sections, we will introduce the vision techniques that were used for the detection of a moving obstacle and for the reconstruction of its 3D position. The reconstruction method is based on the technique of epipolar lines, which form a useful geometric restriction in vision applications.

2.3.1 Obstacle Observation

The obstacle of parallelepiped form is detected in an image by converting this image to binary form and subsequently check for the presence of contours of squared form, using a simple criterion that relates a square's perimeter to its area. The presence of the obstacle is checked by drawing the image of one camera out of the activated video stream every 50 milliseconds and by applying the square detection criterion.

When a moving obstacle is detected for the first time in the workspace, the ASSYS halts all robot motion. Only if the obstacle stops moving within a certain number of time frames after it had first been detected, the robot will resume its motion, now moving around the obstacle. By taking subsequent images out of the video stream of the same camera and resting

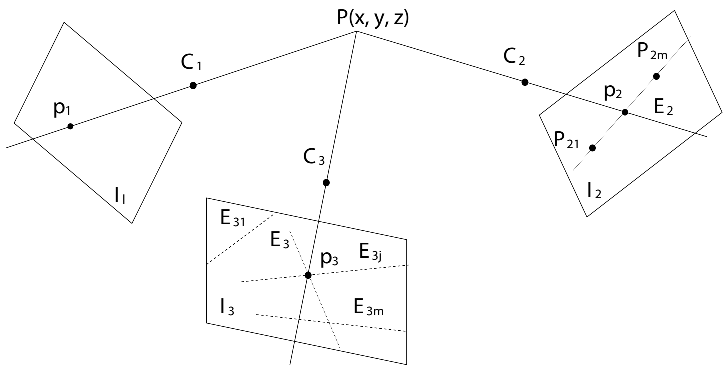

Figure 1: Pixel correspondence algorithm.

two subsequent image matrices, the system checks if the object has stopped moving. As soon as this condition holds, images are drawn out of the video stream of the two other cameras and the 3D reconstruction of the obstacle is initiated. We typically reconstruct the 3D location of the obstacle's four upper corners. These characteristic object points are determined by applying a *Canny* edge detector (Gonzaléz Jiménez, 1999) and a corner detection operator on the three images.

Once characteristic points -true and also false object corners due to image noise or nearby objects- are detected, an algorithm is applied to determine corresponding corners. This problem boils down to finding for every upper corner of the obstacle in a first image, the location of the same corner in the second and third image.

2.3.2 Calculation of Pixel Correspondences

The applied algorithm is based on the geometric restriction of the epipolar line: an image point P that is projected onto a pixel in a first image can only be projected onto one line of pixels in a second image. We aim to find three pairs of pixel coordinates of one point in space that is projected into three images I_1, I_2 and I_3. This problem is identified as the search for pixel correspondences. The algorithm can briefly be explained as follows, according to the notations of figure 1. The image point p_2 in the second image I_2 that corresponds to the point p_1 in the first image I_1 has to be situated on the epipolar line E_2 associated to p_2. Characteristic pixels of I_2 that are located sufficiently close to this epipolar line are selected as correspondence candidates P_{2i} in I_2. When the epipolar lines E_{3j} associated to all correspondence candidates P_{2i} are constructed in a third image I_3, this results in a number of intersections p_{3k} in I_3 between the epipolar lines associated to the set P_{2i} and the epipolar line E_3 associated to p_1. The intersection that coincides or is located sufficiently close to one of the characteristic points in I_3, results in the unique corresponding pixel triplet $\{p_1, p_2, p_3\}$. Epipolar line pixel equations from (Torre Ferrero, 2002) were used to construct epipolar lines.

As soon as the corresponding corner pixels are found in the three camera images, the pixel correspondences are used to calculate the obstacle's 3D location in space, as described in section 2.1. False pixel correspondences, that originated from detected corners not belonging to the object, can be discarded because the resulting 3D positions don't fall within the range in which the obstacle is expected to be encountered. The obstacle's 3D location in space is used as an input of the fuzzy logic controller that calculates an alternative trajectory.

3 FUZZY LOGIC CONTROL

3.1 Introduction

A Fuzzy Logic Controller (FLC) is a useful tool to transform linguistic control strategies based on expertise into an automatic control strategy (O. Cordon et al., 2001). The basic idea is to assign linguistic labels to physical properties. The process that converts a numerical value into a linguistic description is the fuzzification process. Using a rule base that simulates human reasoning in decision taking, a number of linguistic control actions is computed and subsequently defuzzified or converted to numerical control actions. For more information and a detailed description on FLCs, please consult (O. Cordon et al., 2001).

A pneumatically controlled tool was mounted on the robot arm. The term End Effector is used to indicate this tool, that is depicted in figure 2 for different configurations. In robot terminology, the central point of the End Effector is called the Tool Center Point (TCP). The dots between the ends of the End Effector in figure 2 represent this TCP.

3.2 Fuzzy Avoidance Strategy

A fuzzy rule containing two types of actuating forces was designed. An attracting force proportional to the 1D distance differences between actual TCP coordinates and final location coordinates causes the FLC to output distance increments towards the final location. A repelling force describing the distance to the obstacle's sides deactivates the attracting force and invokes specific avoidance actions that have to be undertaken by the robot's End Effector to avoid collision with the obstacle.

Further on, it will be explained how safety zones are constructed around the obstacle, based on the distance differences between the TCP and the obstacle's sides. When the robot's TCP enters one of these safety zones around the obstacle, two types of avoidance actions are undertaken. Rotational actions guarantee the End Effector's orthogonal position to the obstacle's sides and translational actions assure an accurate avoidance in position. This idea is depicted in figure 2.

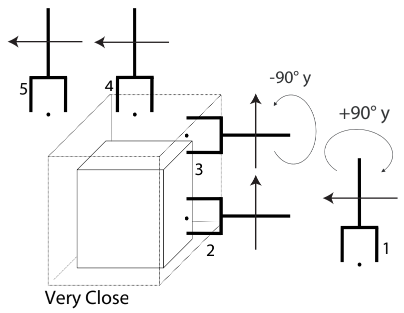

Figure 2: Fuzzy avoidance strategy.

3.3 Inputs to the Fuzzy Logic Controller

The inputs of the FLC consist of two types. A first type describes 1D distance differences between actual TCP coordinates and final location coordinates, while the second input indicates if the TCP is near to one of the obstacle's sides. The first input is related to the attracting influence and the second one to the repelling influence. It will now be explained how both types of inputs to the FLC are composed.

The distance between final location and TCP can be described in linguistic terms as e.g. *Close* or *Far*.

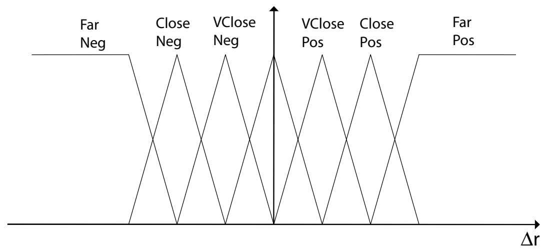

Figure 3: MFs for fuzzy sets of attracting influence.

For a given numeric value of distance to the final location, each of the linguistic labels will be true with a certain value in the range [0, 1]. This value will be determined by the Membership Function (MF) of the specified linguistic distance label. Figure 3 illustrates the MFs of the labels that describe the distance difference Δr in x, y and z direction between the coordinates of the Tool Center Point and the final location coordinates. MFs of triangular and open trapezoidal form were chosen because they are easy to implement in programming applications and require small evaluation times. The central triangular represents the MF for *Contact* with the obstacle. Table 1 indicates the 1D distance descriptions in coordinates $r = x$, y and z towards the final desired configuration.

Table 1: Labels for attracting influence.

Linguistic label	Short notation
Goal Far Negative	GFar Neg r
Goal Close Negative	GCl Neg r
Goal Very Close Negative	GVCl Neg r
Goal Reached	Goal r
Goal Very Close Positive	GVCl Pos r
Goal Close Positive	GCl Pos r
Goal Far Positive	GFar Pos r

The second FLC input is related to the repelling force. To understand how these FLC inputs originate, we make the following consideration. If the robot's TCP is *Very Close* to the positive x side of the obstacle, this means it is close to the positive x bound of the obstacle *AND*: within the y and z range *OR* within the y range and very close to the positive z bound *OR* ... . Figure 4 illustrates this idea for the construction of the label *Very Close Positive x*.

The distance differences Δs ($s = x$, y and z-dimension) represent the distances of the TCP to the closest obstacle bound in the considered coordinate. For the example of figure 4, the considered label needs to be evaluated using *AND* and *OR* logical operators. Table 2 represents distance difference descriptions towards the sides of the obstacle.

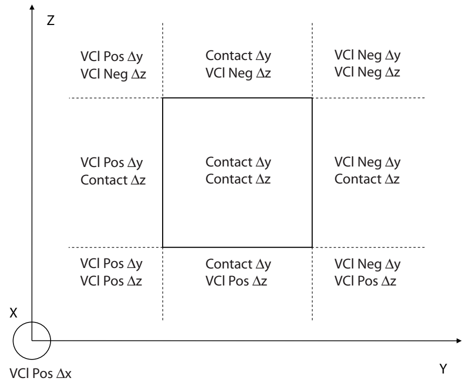

Figure 4: Construction of label *Very Close Positive x*.

Table 2: Labels for repelling influence.

Linguistic label	Short notation
Far Negative	Far Neg Δs
Not Close Negative	NCl Neg Δs
Close Negative	Cl Neg Δs
Very Close Negative	VCl Neg Δs
Contact	Contact Δs
Very Close Positive	VCl Pos Δs
Close Positive	Cl Pos Δs
Not Close Positive	NCl Pos Δs
Far Positive	Far Pos Δs

Note that, according to the idea of figure 4, the labels of table 2 have three-variable MFs, because they are all composed of one dimensional MFs for coordinate differences Δr ($r = x$, y and z) towards the obstacle's boundary coordinates. These 1D MFs are similar to the ones for the attracting forces depicted in figure 3. Next step is to construct safety zones around the obstacle, as shown in figure 2 for the label *Very Close*. Analogously, zones *Close* and *Not Close*, and an outer region *Far*, complementary to the inner zones, are constructed.

To fuzzify the entrances of the Fuzzy Inference System, we used a singleton fuzzificator (J. R. Llata García et al., 2003).

3.4 Design of a Rule Base

The basic principle of the rule base is the deactivation of the attracting influence -determined by the distance to the final location- when the repelling influence is triggered. Taking this into account, logical rules for closing up to the final location can be constructed.

For the rules related to the repelling influence, we can state that the designer of the rule base is free to choose the direction and sense of the avoidance actions. We decided to undertake an avoidance action in positive z direction when the TCP closes up to the (*Very*) *Close* x or y, *Negative* or *Positive* side of the obstacle.

The avoidance action for the (*Very*) *Close* z, *Positive* or *Negative* side, is decided upon by a criterion that checks the distance difference in x and y coordinate of the TCP's current position and the final location coordinates. If the distance difference is bigger in the x direction, then an avoidance action in x is undertaken, otherwise in y direction.

As soon as the TCP enters the safety zone *Not Close*, a rotation of -90° or +90° around the appropriate axis of a fixed coordinate system needs to be undertaken, to prevent the End Effector from hitting the obstacle (see figure 2).

To resolve the fuzzy intersection operator used for the composition of rule premises and for the implication on rule consequents, we used a *T-norm* of the product type. In the aggregation of rule consequents an *S-norm* for the fuzzy union operator was chosen. We implemented a *maximum* operator as this *S-norm* to save in processing time.

Given an initial and final position and an obstacle's location supplied by the vision system, the FLC outputs a set of positional and rotational configurations that guarantee collision free motion towards the final location.

3.5 Outputs of the FLC

Fuzzy outputs of the *Sugeno* singleton type (J. R. Llata García et al., 2003) were used for defuzzification. Depending on the output of a rule, a specific value can be assigned to the considered system output. The designer of the FLC is free to determine the size of the output actions.

Upon detection of an obstacle and halting of robot motion, the TCP's current position is sent by the robot's operational system over a socket connection to the artificial intelligence system as a start point for the calculation of an alternative path. Alternative positions and rotational configurations are then sent back over the socket in data packages that contain the desired coordinates of the TCP and the desired rotational configuration of the End Effector with respect to the fixed coordinate system.

4 EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

4.1 Real-time Communication

Robotic control applications often have cycle times of typically hundreds of microseconds. When operational data needs to be exchanged between a robot and an operator's pc, the fastness and the guarantee of data transmission is of utmost importance. For many years, Ethernet was banned as a communication medium from the industrial work floor, for data packages that are sent over the Ethernet by devices connected to a same Local Area Network can collide and be lost, due to the network's media access control protocol CSMA/CD (Van Moergestel, 2007). Nowadays, Fast Ethernet switches can be used to isolate network devices into their own collision domain, hereby totally eliminating the chance for collision and loss of data packages. Ethernet switches together with the development of Fast Ethernet (100Mbps) and Gigabit Ethernet (1Gbps) have made Ethernet popular as a real-time communication medium in industrial settings (Decotignie, 2005).

To establish the Ethernet communications in the ASSYS, we used so called Ethernet *sockets*. Sockets are software entities that are assigned to a combination of communication port and IP address, so that they can be used by a client and a server device to communicate over a LAN. In our setup, this LAN was created by a Fast Ethernet switch. The exchange of all data packages between the industrial FANUC Robot Arc Mate 100*i*B and a pc running the vision and fuzzy logic applications is performed by socket messaging.

4.2 Multitask Robot Application

A multitask oriented active security application was developed and tested in KAREL, the programming language of FANUC Robotics for advanced user applications. A motion task executes a normal operation trajectory until a condition handler is triggered by the detection signal that was received through an Ethernet socket by a concurrently running communication task. When this condition handler is triggered, robot motion is halted within a time that is acceptably small and the TCP's current position is sent by the communication task to the operator's pc, where the FLC calculates the first alternative positions and sends them back over the opened socket connection to the communication task. An interrupt routine for motion along the alternative path is then invoked in the motion task. The robot axes's motors start accelerating immediately. Meanwhile, the communication task completes the reading in of subsequent alternative positions and rotational configurations. Motion continues until the original final location is reached. The KAREL application is written in a non-cyclic way. Upon reaching the final position, program execution is aborted. Coordination between the motion task and the communication task was realised by the use of semaphores. The artificial vision system, the FLC and the robot control application in KAREL were tested in an integrated way.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obstacle is dragged into the robot's workspace when the robot arm is close to the leftmost or rightmost point of its regular trajectory. Absence of the robot's arm in the central zone of the workspace is necessary for correct obstacle detection because the robot arm would deform the binary image of the obstacle's squared contour. Further development of the vision system is therefore needed to distinguish the robot arm from the obstacle in order to be able to signal obstacle presence in all operational situations. In an advanced stadium, detection criteria for human operators can also be elaborated.

However, if the robot arm is occulting one of the obstacle's upper corners in one of the three images, performing an accurate reconstruction of the obstacle's 3D location is still possible, since a free view on three of the four upper corners in all images is sufficient for the reconstruction. The parallelepiped in figure 5 depicts the result of the vision system and fuzzy logic path planning.

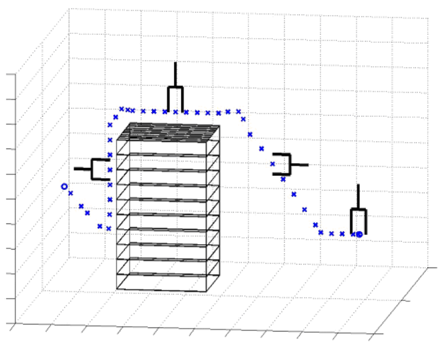

Figure 5: Alternative trajectory around reconstructed obstacle.

With distance increments of 50 millimeter in the FLC we typically obtained a number of 40 alternative positions. The designer of the FLC is free to choose the size of the translational increments larger or smaller and in a rather intuitive way. However, a thorough study can be performed making a trade-off between small increments and thus larger calculation times and larger robot processing times or large distance increments and thus smaller calculation times and robot processing times. This last option implicates however that the safety zones around the obstacle need to be bigger and that longer trajectories have to be completed by the robot tool before it reaches the final location. For industrial settings, where small robot motion execution times are of utmost importance, this trade-off study is an interesting topic for future research. More specifically, a time efficient and distance optimal path construction algorithm can be designed.

The FLC only takes the TCP's position as an input. Collision of the robot's arm is prevented by rotating the End Effector +90° or -90° when it enters the first safety zone *Not Close*. For the majority of practically executable robot trajectories, this preventive action has proven to be sufficient. In future research however, the distance to the obstacle of extra points on the robot's arm will have to be monitored to guarantee safer motion.

In this design, a parameter to take into account is the processing time needed by the robot's system to handle new motion instructions. The robot system is able to continue program execution after launching a motion instruction. Moreover, a continuous transition between two separate motion instructions is possible using the appropriate clauses in the motion commands. Nevertheless, we chose to keep the number of motion commands as limited as possible and decided to only send every fourth alternative position as an effective motion instruction to the robot. Given the fact that alternative positions are situated close to each other (see figure 5), this strategy still results in accurate obstacle avoidance and in a smooth, continuous robot motion.

The time needed to draw images out of the video stream and save them as pixel matrices for further image processing could be restricted to 15 milliseconds. The computational time to identify pixel correspondences and make a 3D reconstruction is also very small. Regarding processing time, the bottleneck of the vision system, and thus of the entire ASSYS, has proven to be the identification of characteristic object pixels, in our case corner pixels of the parallelepiped. Improvements have to be made. Remark that during 3D reconstruction of the obstacle the robot is motionless, thus no unsafe situation is created due to the high processing times of the vision system.

6 CONCLUSIONS

An active security system for an industrial FANUC robot was designed. With special attention for real-time performance of the constituting subsystems, satisfying experimental results were obtained. The setup of the Ethernet communication through sockets, the fuzzy obstacle avoidance mechanism and the vision system open wide perspectives for future investigation on active security. More attention can be given to distinguishing the robot arm from foreign objects, to optimizing image processing times, to searching cost optimized alternative paths and to automating the robot application in a cyclic way.

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