EN40 Dynamics and Vibrations
Design Project
“Non-Trivial Pursuit”

Synopsis

You will devise algorithms to control an autonomous particle, with a view to both steering the particle to intercept a target object, as well as to escape a pursuer, and implement your algorithms as MATLAB code. Your programs will be tested in a competition against those designed by other teams.

1. Introduction

Pursuit problems are ubiquitous in engineering, mathematics, and computer science. The ‘Homicidal Chauffeur Problem’ is a famous example. For a more humane example from biology, you could watch this famous movie of a white blood-cell chasing a bacterium. In the classic pursuit problem, a fast, but poorly maneuverable hunter chases a slower, but highly maneuverable prey. The hunter and prey both seek optimal strategies to catch, or to escape, their competitor.

In this design project you will work on a computerized version of a pursuit problem that represents, approximately, one of DARPA’s nano-robots in pursuit of a smaller. Both predator and prey propel themselves through a viscous medium. They experience (i) a force from their propulsion system (they can adjust the direction of this force freely, and can vary its magnitude within set limits); (ii) a viscous drag force; and (iii) a random fluctuating force representing thermal excitation, or wind gusts. The predator must choose the magnitude and direction of its propulsive force to try to catch the prey; while the prey must try to escape.

The goal of the design project is to write MATLAB scripts that determine the forces that must act on the predator and the prey to achieve their objectives. Your design team must write codes for both predator and prey. Your codes will then be tested against those of a competing group. The winning team will be chosen based on a combination of how long your prey can escape the competing predator, together with how quickly your predator can catch the prey designed by the competing team.

The main challenge involved in the design will be to use your physical intuition, and knowledge of particle dynamics, to devise a strategy for computing the direction (and magnitude) of the propulsive force acting on the predator and prey, given the position and velocity vectors of the two objects. The problem is completely open-ended, has no ‘right’ answer, and many possible strategies.

Based on our past experience in student projects, you will be able to think of pursuit and escape strategies that are cleverer than anything we can think of, but if you are stuck, here are some suggestions to get you started. For the predator, you could start with the simple approach described in HW3, 2012, problem 3 (the solutions are online so you can copy the code), in which the force is directed towards the prey, with a
velocity correction to stabilize the calculation. You could try to optimize the coefficient $c$ in the model described in that HW to give the best performance. For the prey, you could try just making the force on the prey push it directly away from the predator (i.e. parallel to the unit vector from prey to predator), or base the force direction on the relative velocity between the two particles in some way. You could also try moving the prey along some prescribed path that might be hard for the predator to follow, like a tight circle, a wavy sinusoid, etc. Don’t try to create a random path by using the random number generator to determine your propulsive force – this makes the ODE solver crash)

2. Project Deliverables:

Your design group must provide:

1. A written group report (not to exceed 10 pages in length, plus one page self-evaluation per team member), which describes your solution, and summarizes the process that led to your choice. A format for the report is suggested in the Appendix. Each group member must also provide a statement (not to exceed one page) describing their individual role in the design process. Other team-members will be asked to grade (anonymously) these statements as a form of peer evaluation. Graded self-evaluations will not be returned, to enable graders to respond freely.

2. An oral presentation (including appropriate visual aids in the form of powerpoint slides, movies, or other creative media) to faculty, TAs and the competing team describing their design solution and its merits

3. A matlab script that will be tested in competition. Matlab code must be submitted on Canvas by Noon on Thurs March 13. The code must pass the test described in Appendix 2 before it is submitted.

Your design team must submit a MATLAB function with the following form (The function arguments must appear exactly as shown, and the file you submit should contain nothing other than this function)

```matlab
function F = compute_f_groupname(t,Frmax,Fymax,amiapredator,pr,vr,py,vy,Er,Ey)
% Test time and place Enter the time and room for your test here
% Group members: list the names of your group members here
% t: Time
% Frmax: Max force that can act on the predator
% Fymax: Max force that can act on the prey
% amiapredator: Logical variable - if amiapredator is true,
% the function must compute forces acting on a predator.
% If false, code must compute forces acting on a prey.
% pr - 2D vector with current position of predator eg pr = [x_r,y_r]
% vr - 2D vector with current velocity of predator eg vr= [vx_r,vy_r]
% py - 2D vector with current position of prey py = [x_prey,y_prey]
% vy - 2D vector with current velocity of prey py = [vx_prey,vy_prey]
% F - 2D vector specifying the force to be applied to the object
% that you wish to control F = [Fx,Fy]
% The direction of the force is arbitrary, but if the
% magnitude you specify exceeds the maximum allowable
% value its magnitude will be reduced to this value
% (without changing direction)
% Er: Total energy remaining for predator
% Ey: Total energy remaining for prey

if (amiapredator)
    % Code to compute the force to be applied to the predator
else
    % Code to compute the force to be applied to the prey
end
end
```

The `groupname` in your function must be the name you choose for your group (which must be unique)
3. Design Constraints:

- Predator and prey can only move in the x-y plane
- At time $t=0$ the predator and prey have position vectors $\mathbf{r}_p = 50\mathbf{i} \quad \mathbf{r}_y = 0\mathbf{m}$
- Simulations will run for a time period $0 < t < 250$ sec.
- Both predator and prey will be subjected to three forces: (a) The propulsive force; (b) a viscous drag force; and (c) a random time-varying force.
  1. The propulsive forces will be determined by functions provided by the two competing groups
  2. The viscous drag force will be computed as $\mathbf{F}_d = -c \mathbf{v}$, where the viscous drag coefficient $c = 10^{-3} \text{Ns/m}$, and $\mathbf{v}$ is the velocity vector of the object.
  3. Different random forces will act on the two objects. The two components of forces are independent pseudo-random numbers that vary between $\pm 5 \times 10^{-3} \text{N}$. The forces will be computed using the script provided in the Appendix.
- The predator has mass $m_p = 18 \text{ grams}$ (NB – not kg!) and can exert a propulsive force with magnitude in the range $0 < F_p < 15 \times 10^{-3} \text{N}$
- The prey has mass $m_y = 10.0 \text{ grams}$ and can exert a propulsive force with magnitude in the range $0 < F_y < 10 \times 10^{-3} \text{N}$
- Both predator and prey have total energy of 10J at the start of the contest. If this energy is all consumed they lose all propulsion.
- Energy is assumed to be consumed at a rate
  
  $$\frac{dE_p}{dt} = -\mathbf{F}_p \cdot \mathbf{v}_p = -(F_{px}v_{px} + F_{py}v_{py}) \quad \frac{dE_y}{dt} = -\mathbf{F}_y \cdot \mathbf{v}_y = -(F_{yx}v_{xy} + F_{yy}v_{yy})$$

  where $(F_{px}, F_{py})$, $(F_{yx}, F_{yy})$ are the propulsive forces (i.e. those you control) applied to the predator and the prey, respectively.
- The predator is assumed to catch the prey if the distance between predator and prey drops below 1m.
- You may not use the rand() function in computing your predator/prey forces – the only random forces should be those generated by the script provided. (EOM with random forces are impossible for the ODE solver to integrate, and it ends up in an infinite loop).

For the competition, we will provide the MATLAB code that will compute and animate the trajectories of the competitors, and will determine the winner of each contest. The test code will be working in SI units.

4. Scoring:

- Each team will play the role of ‘predator’ and ‘prey’ three times, with ‘blind’ code (i.e. without knowing what strategy the opposing team has chosen).
- Teams will then be given 5 minutes to make any modification to either their pursuit or escape algorithms (both teams must modify the same algorithm, and the loser of the first round gets to choose which to modify). The six tests will be repeated with the modified code.
- The overall score for each group will be determined as follows
  
  $$S = \sum_{i=1}^{6} T_p(i) - \sum_{i=1}^{6} T_c(i)$$

  where $T_p(i)$ is the time that the prey survives during the $i$th test, and $T_c(i)$ is the time taken for the predator to catch the competing prey during the $i$th test. Negative scores will be rounded up to zero. If

1 It is unfortunate that predator and prey both start with a ‘p.’ Subscripts on variables denote the last letter of the quantity they characterize, i.e. predator $p$, and prey $y$.
neither team is able to catch the prey from the opposition, the winning team will be the one whose 
predator is able to come closest to the prey from the opposing team.

- Solutions which attempt to win or force a draw by devious means (putting MATLAB into an infinite 
loop, hacking the MATLAB ODE solver, etc) will be disqualified at the discretion of the judges.

5. Calculations and computations

You should test and optimize your MATLAB functions as far as possible. Depending on the size of your 
group, one strategy might be to divide your group into teams that compete (internally) against one 
another, and then submit the winning designs to the final competition. Another would be to try some 
basic ideas for predator/prey forces – then if the predator wins, try to change the prey algorithm until it 
escapes – then go back and fix the prey to catch the improved predator, and so on.

To test your ideas, you will need to

1. Derive the equations of motion for the system consisting of the predator and prey together (if you 
   are not sure how to approach this the appendix has some suggestions);
2. Write a MATLAB script that will compute (and, if you like, animate) the motion of the system. 
   You should add an ‘event’ function that will terminate the calculation if the predator comes 
   within 1m of the prey;
3. Test this MATLAB script with some very simple propulsive forces applied to the prey and 
   predator. For example, you could simply apply a constant force to the prey, and use the approach 
   described in HW3 to compute the propulsive force on the predator;
4. Try to think of other strategies to determine the propulsive forces. Run your MATLAB script
   using your candidate functions, and experiment with your designs to optimize them.

Bear in mind that it is better to start by putting together a working code that is 10 lines long than to 
attempt (and fail) to implement a 5000 line long fuzzy logic control system with adaptive machine 
learning… Once you have something basic working, then you can safely try the machine learning code. 
You have probably heard of the KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) principle in design.

Appendix 1: Testing your function before submitting it

Before submitting your code:

1. Write your function, compute_f_mygroupname.m (where mygroupname is the name of your 
group) 
2. Download the encrypted MATLAB file called function_tester.p from the web site, and store the 
file in the same directory as your compute_f_mygroupname.m function. You will not be able to 
open or read the file, but MATLAB will run it. 
3. To test your code, use MATLAB to navigate to the directory containing your function and the 
function_tester code, then type 

   function_tester('mygroupname')

   in the MATLAB command window.
4. If MATLAB produces any errors or takes an infinite time to run it will not work in competition 
and must be corrected or modified before it is submitted.
Appendix 2: Deriving equations of motion and layout for a basic MATLAB script

Steps to deriving the equations of motion and writing MATLAB code
1. Write down the velocity and acceleration vectors for the white predator and prey in terms of time derivatives of their position vectors.
2. Draw free body diagrams for predator and prey, and write down the resultant force vector. The components of the propulsive forces can be specified in terms of variables, which will be computed by your function.
3. Use Newton’s laws to write down the equations of motion for the predator and prey.
4. Rearrange the equations in a form that can be solved by MATLAB. Your equations should have the following general form

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
    x_r \\
    y_r \\
    x_p \\
    y_p \\
    v_x \\
    v_y \\
    v_x \\
    v_y \\
    E_r \\
    E_y
\end{bmatrix}
\frac{d}{dt}
\begin{bmatrix}
    v_{xr} \\
    v_{yr} \\
    v_{xp} \\
    v_{yp} \\
    F_{xr}^{total} / m_r \\
    F_{yr}^{total} / m_r \\
    F_{xp}^{total} / m_y \\
    F_{yp}^{total} / m_y \\
    -(F_{xr} v_{xr} + F_{yr} v_{yr}) \\
    -(F_{xp} v_{xp} + F_{yp} v_{yp})
\end{bmatrix}
\]

Where \((x_r, y_r), (x_p, y_p)\) are the positions of the predator and prey, \((v_{xr}, v_{yr}), (v_{xp}, v_{yp})\) are the velocities of predator and prey, and \((F_{xr}^{total}, F_{yr}^{total}), (F_{xp}^{total}, F_{yp}^{total})\) are the resultant forces acting on the predator and prey, while \((F_{xr}, F_{yr}), (F_{xp}, F_{yp})\) are the propulsive forces.

To get you started, here is a template for a basic MATLAB script

```matlab
function predator_prey
    close all
    mr = 18e-03;     % Mass of predator, in kg
    my = 10.e-03;       % Mass of prey, in kg
    Frmax = 15e-03;  % Max force on predator, in Newtons
    Fymax = 10.e-03;   % Max force on prey, in Newtons
    c = 1.e-03;      % Viscous drag coefficient, in N s/m
    Er0 = 10;      % Initial energy of predator, in J
    Ey0 = 10;      % Initial energy of prey, in J
    initial_w = [50,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,Er0,Ey0];   % Initial position/velocity
    force_table_predator = rand(251,2)-0.5;
    force_table_prey     = rand(251,2)-0.5;
    options = odeset('Events',@event,'RelTol',0.0001);
    [time_vals,sol_vals] = ode45(@eom,[0:1:250],initial_w,options);
    animate_projectiles(time_vals,sol_vals);

    function dwdt = eom(t,w)
```

% Extract the position and velocity variables from the vector w
% Note that this assumes the variables are stored in a particular order in w.
pr=w(1:2); vr=w(5:6); py=w(3:4); vy=w(7:8); Er=w(9); Ey=w(10)
% Compute all the forces on the predator
amiapredator = true;
Fr = compute_f_groupname(t,Frmax,Fymax,amiapredator,pr,vr,py,vy,Er,Ey);
Frand = compute_random_force(t,force_table_predator);
Frvisc = -vr*c;
Ftotal = Fr+Frand+Frvisc;
% Write similar code below to call your compute_f_groupname function to
% compute the force on the prey, determine the random forces on the prey,
% and determine the viscous forces on the prey

dwdt = ... enter the appropriate code here to compute dwdt ;

function [ev,s,dir] = event(t,w)
% Event function to stop calculation when predator catches prey
% Write your code here... For the event variable, use the distance between
% predator and prey

d
end

function F = compute_f_groupname(t,Frmax,Fymax,amiapredator,pr,vr,py,vy,Er,Ey)
% Write your code to compute the forces below. This will be the function
% that you must submit to the competition. You don’t need to submit the rest
% of the code – that’s just for test purposes

d
end

% Add the random force script and animation scripts from Appendix here

Appendix 3: Random force script

The fluctuating (pseudo-random) forces acting on both the white predator and the prey will be computed
using the following script. You can use this function to test the performance of your design.

function F = compute_random_force(t,force_table)
% Computes value of fluctuating random force at time t, where 0<t<250.
% The variable force_table is a 251x2 matrix of pseudo-random
% numbers between -0.5 and 0.5, computed using
% force_table = rand(251,2)-0.5;
% The force is in Newtons – if you use another system of units you
% must convert.

F = [interp1(force_table(:,1),t+1);interp1(force_table(:,2),t+1)]/100;
end

Note that a different force_table variable will be used for the prey and predator, and each successive test
will use new force_table variables (so no two simulations will ever be the same)
Appendix 4: A basic animation script

You can use the script below to animate the motion of a predator and prey. The script assumes that the variable t and sols are the output from the ODE solver, and that the variables in the matrix sols are stored in the order specified in Appendix 1.

```matlab
function animate_projectiles(t,sols)
    figure
    xmax = max(max(sols(:,3)),max(sols(:,1)));
    xmin = min(min(sols(:,3)),min(sols(:,1)));
    ymax = max(max(sols(:,4)),max(sols(:,2)));
    ymin = min(min(sols(:,4)),min(sols(:,2)));
    dx = 0.1*(xmax-xmin)+0.5;
    dy = 0.1*(ymax-ymin)+0.5;

    for i = 1:length(t)
        clf
        plot(sols(1:i,3),sols(1:i,4),'LineWidth',2,'LineStyle',':','Color',[0 0 1]);
        ylim([ymin-dy ymax+dy]);
        xlim([xmin-dx xmax+dx]);
        hold on
        plot(sols(1:i,1),sols(1:i,2),'LineWidth',2,'LineStyle',':','Color',[1 0 0]);
        plot(sols(i,1),sols(i,2),'ro','MarkerSize',11,'MarkerFaceColor','r');
        plot(sols(i,3),sols(i,4),'ro','MarkerSize',5,'MarkerFaceColor','g');
        pause(0.1);
    end
end
```

Appendix 5: Report Instructions

Your report for this project should contain the following sections:

1. **Abstract**: a few lines explaining the purpose of the report and summarizing the main conclusions.
2. **Introduction**: Background information, motivation, and a brief description of the contents of the report.
3. **Pursuit strategy**: Summarize the formulas or procedures you decided to use to catch your opponent. Enough detail should be provided so that someone could duplicate your code.
4. **Escape strategy**: Summarize the formulas or procedures you decided to use to catch your opponent. Enough detail should be provided so that someone could duplicate your code.
5. **Design, and testing procedures**: Summarize candidate designs that were tested, how you made the decisions leading to your final choice, and how you tested the performance of your design.
6. **Appendix**: list any supplemental information that is useful to the reader, but not critically important to understanding how your design works. The detailed MATLAB code could go in the Appendix, for example.
Appendix 6: Grading Rubric

1. Design Solution: 15 points.
   - Completing a basic code + 7 points
   - Success in at least one competition + 3 points
   - Unusually creative solution + 5 points

2. Design Procedure: 10 points
   - Design process did not yield a working code 3 points
   - Design process produced a working code, but only a few candidate solutions were tested, and no systematic procedure was used to test potential solutions 6 points
   - Team identified several candidate solutions, used a systematic process to test and rank them, and design procedure was documented. 10 points

3. Report: 10 points
   - Basic report, adequately describes design procedure, but difficult to read, would not be comprehensible to a reader who did not read the project instructions first, did not follow required format, poor figures, etc 3 points
   - Report prepared according to instructions, generally well organized, but writing style is confusing, and minor errors (units missing off graphs, etc) 6 points
   - Publication quality report prepared according to instructions – typed, professionally formatted, perfect grammar/writing style, easily readable 10 points.

4. Oral Presentation: 10 points
   - No presentation aids, presentation not planned 6 points
   - Presentation planned, all group members contributed, appropriate and well organized visual aids/demonstrations 8 points
   - Presentation planned, all group members contributed, appropriate and well organized visual aids/demonstrations, and unusually creative way of communicating content 10 points

5. Peer Evaluation: 5 points