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Discrete-Time Fractional-Order Controllers

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Abstract – In the last decade the progress in the areas of chaos and fractals revealed subtle relationships with the fractional calculus, leading to an increasing interest in this theory. In the field of automatic control preliminary work has already been carried out but the proposed algorithms are restricted to the frequency domain. The paper discusses the design of fractional-order discrete-time controllers. The algorithms studied adopt the time domain, which makes them suited for z-transform analysis and discrete-time implementation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fractional calculus is a natural extension of the classical mathematics. In fact, since the beginning of the theory of differential and integral calculus, mathematicians such as Euler and Liouville investigated their ideas on the calculation of non-integer order derivatives and integrals. Nevertheless, in spite of the work that has been done in the area, the application of fractional derivatives and integrals (*FDI*s) has been scarce until recently. In the last years, the advances in the theory of chaos revealed profound relations with *FDI*s, motivating a renewed interest in this field.

The fundamental aspects of the fractional calculus theory can be addressed in references [1-3]. In what concerns the application of *FDI*s, several scientific areas are currently paying attention to the new concepts. We can refer the adoption of *FDI*s in viscoelasticity/damping [4-7], chaos/fractals [8-9], biology [10], electronics [11], signal processing [12-13], system identification [14], diffusion and wave propagation [15], percolation [16], modeling and identification [17], chemistry [18] and irreversibility [19].

Inspired by the fractional calculus several researchers on automatic control proposed algorithms based on the frequency [20] and the discrete-time [21] domains. This work is still giving its first steps and, consequently, many aspects remain to be investigated. This paper analyses several approaches to implement *FDI*s in discrete-time control systems and, in this line of thought, the paper is organized as follows. Section two studies several algorithms for the real-time calculation of *FDI*s. Based on the proposed *FDI* approximations, section three investigates the performance of control systems from a stability and robustness point of view. Finally, section four draws the main conclusions.

II. FRACTIONAL-ORDER DISCRETE-TIME CONTROL ALGORITHMS

The Laplace definition for a derivative of order $\alpha \in C$ is a 'direct' generalization of the classical integer-order scheme:

$$L\{D_{0+}^{\alpha}x(t)\} = s^{\alpha}L\{x(t)\},\ Re(\alpha)\geq 0 \qquad (1)$$

In what concerns automatic control theory this means that frequency-based analysis methods have a straightforward adaptation to *FDI*s.

Consider the elemental control system represented in Fig. 1 (with $1 < \alpha < 2$) with transfer function $G(s) = Ks^{-\alpha}$ in the forward path. The open-loop Bode diagrams (Fig. 2) of amplitude and phase have a slope of -20α *dB/dec* and a constant phase of $-\alpha\pi/2$ *rad*, respectively. Therefore, the closed-loop system has a constant phase margin of $\pi(1 - \alpha/2)$ *rad*, that is independent of the system gain K.

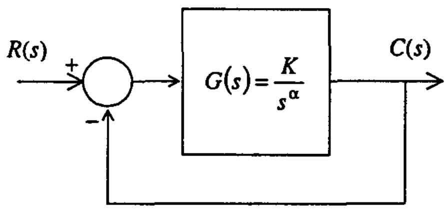

Fig. 1: Block diagram for an elemental feedback control system of fractional order α.

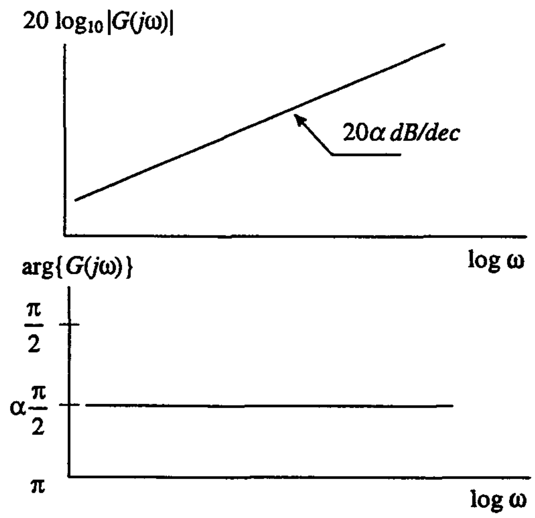

Fig. 2: Open-loop Bode diagrams of amplitude and phase for a system of fractional order $1 < \alpha < 2$.

The implementation of *FDI*s based on the Laplace/Fourier definition adopts the frequency domain and requires an infinite number of poles and zeros obeying a recursive relationship [20]. Nevertheless, this approach has several drawbacks. In a real approximation the finite number of poles and zeros yields a ripple in the frequency response and a limited bandwidth. Moreover, the digital conversion of the scheme requires further steps and additional approximations making difficult to analyze the final algorithm. The method is restricted to cases where a frequency response is well known and, in other circumstances, problems occur for its implementation.

Based on the concept of fractional differential of order α, the Grünwald-Letnikov definition of a derivative of fractional order α of the signal $x(t)$, yields:

$$D^{\alpha}x(t)=\lim_{h\to 0}\left[\frac{1}{h^{\alpha}}\sum_{k=0}^{\infty}(-1)^{k}\frac{\Gamma(\alpha+1)}{\Gamma(k+1)\Gamma(\alpha-k+1)}x(t-kh)\right] \quad (2)$$

where Γ is the gamma function and h is the time increment. This formulation [21] inspired a discrete-time *FDI* calculation algorithm, based on the approximation of the time increment h through the sampling period T, yielding the equation in the z domain:

$$D^{\alpha}\left(z^{-1}\right)\approx\frac{1}{T^{\alpha}}\sum_{k=0}^{\infty}\frac{(-1)^{k}\Gamma(\alpha+1)}{k!\,\Gamma(\alpha-k+1)}z^{-k}=\left(\frac{1-z^{-1}}{T}\right)^{\alpha} \quad (3)$$

A real implementation of (3) corresponds to a n-term truncated series given by:

$$D^{\alpha}\left(z^{-1}\right)\approx\frac{1}{T^{\alpha}}\sum_{k=0}^{n}\frac{(-1)^{k}\Gamma(\alpha+1)}{k!\,\Gamma(\alpha-k+1)}z^{-k} \quad (4)$$

Nevertheless, the properties of this and other approaches must be further studied and, bearing these facts in mind, in the sequel we analyze several discrete-time approximations to *FDI*s.

We start by considering the well-known $s\to z$ conversion schemes (called analog to digital open-loop design methods) of Grünwald-Letnikov (also Euler or first backward difference), Tustin (or bilinear) and Simpson. In our study we shall adopt for D^{α} expressions that are the generalization to non-integer exponents of these conversion methods as represented in Table I. The fractional-order conversion schemes lead to non-rational z-formulae. Therefore, in order to get rational expressions we expand them into Taylor series and the final algorithm corresponds to a n-term truncated series.

These three approximations and the corresponding Taylor truncated series have distinct properties that must be analyzed before a control system implementation. For example, when approximating the $\alpha = 1/2$ derivative, the Taylor series for the Grünwald-Letnikov, Tustin and Simpson schemes lead to the expressions:

$$D^{1/2}\left(z^{-1}\right)\approx\sqrt{\frac{1}{T}}\left(1-\frac{1}{2}z^{-1}-\frac{1}{8}z^{-2}-\frac{1}{16}z^{-3}-\cdots\right) \quad (5.a)$$

$$D^{1/2}\left(z^{-1}\right)\approx\sqrt{\frac{2}{T}}\left(1-z^{-1}\right)\left[1+\frac{1}{2}z^{-1}+\frac{3}{8}z^{-2}+\cdots\right] \quad (5.b)$$

$$D^{1/2}\left(z^{-1}\right)\approx\sqrt{\frac{3}{T}}\left(1-2z^{-1}+5z^{-2}-16z^{-3}+\cdots\right) \quad (5.c)$$

Analyzing the results we conclude that:

TABLE I
DISCRETE-TIME CONVERSION SCHEMES

Grünwald-Letnikov
$s^{\alpha}\approx\left[\frac{1}{T}\left(1-z^{-1}\right)\right]^{\alpha}=\left(\frac{1}{T}\right)^{\alpha}\left[1-\alpha z^{-1}+\frac{\alpha(\alpha-1)}{2!}z^{-2}\ldots\right]$
Tustin
$s^{\alpha}\approx\left(\frac{2}{T}\frac{1-z^{-1}}{1+z^{-1}}\right)^{\alpha}=\left(\frac{2}{T}\right)^{\alpha}\left[1-2\alpha z^{-1}+2\alpha^{2}z^{-2}\ldots\right]$
Simpson
$s^{\alpha}\approx\left[\frac{3}{T}\frac{\left(1+z^{-1}\right)\left(1-z^{-1}\right)}{1+4z^{-1}+z^{-2}}\right]^{\alpha}=\left(\frac{3}{T}\right)^{\alpha}\left[1-4\alpha z^{-1}+2\alpha(4\alpha+3)z^{-2}\ldots\right]$

- While an integer-order derivative implies simply a finite series, the fractional-order derivative requires an infinite number of terms. This means that integer derivatives are 'local' operators in opposition with fractional derivatives that have, implicitly, a 'memory' of all past events.
- The 'memory' property of the fractional derivatives is highlighted when we compare the coefficients of a geometric series having the three initial terms similar to those of the Tustin series. The term coefficients of the geometric series decay rapidly while those of the Tustin approximation for the fractional-order derivative have a constant diminishing. Therefore, *FDI*s have a kind of logarithmic-time memory that gives a higher importance to past events.
- The Tustin and Simpson approximations $D^{1/2}$ seem problematic. In the first case, the coefficients decay with the term order but they appear in pairs of similar magnitude. Therefore, a series truncation of even or odd order will reveal distinct characteristics and, consequently, poor convergence properties. The Simpson approach requires a series with increasing coefficients showing, clearly, convergence problems.

III. PERFORMANCE OF *FDI* APPROXIMATIONS IN CONTROL SYSTEMS

A mass with a time delay may be considered as a simple prototype system. Therefore, in order to study the performance of the *FDI* approximations in control algorithms we adopt a system with transfer function (where T_D is the time delay):

$$G(s)=\frac{e^{-sT_D}}{s^{2}} \quad (6)$$

An important property to be tested in the *FDI* approximations for control consists in the stability of the resulting closed-loop system. Fig. 3 shows the root-locus, in the z domain, for the three *FDI* schemes when implementing a $D^{1/2}$ controller, without any series truncation, for the case of $T_D = 0$ in (6). For an infinite series the Grünwald-Letnikov algorithm seems inferior while the Simpson method looks preferable. However, for a *5th* order series truncation we get the results of Fig. 4.

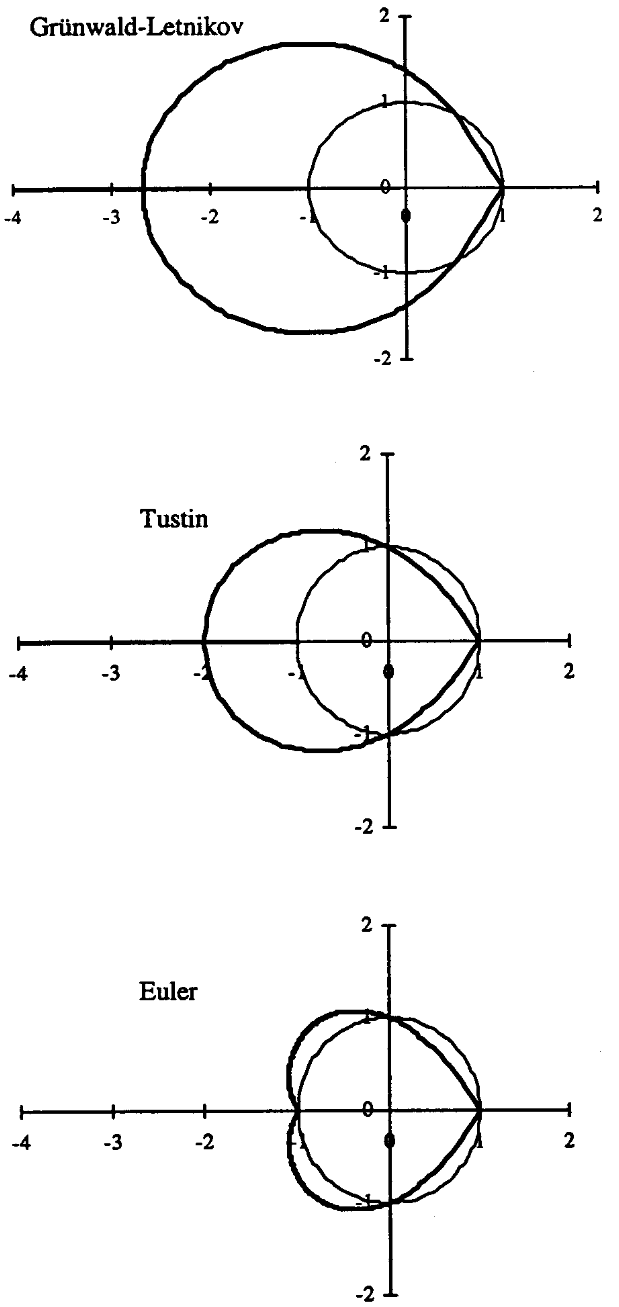

Fig. 3: Root-locus for system (5) with $T_D = 0$ under the control of a infinite series $D^{1/2}$ algorithm based on the approach of: Grünwald-Letnikov, Tustin and Simpson.

As pointed out in the previous section, the Grünwald-Letnikov algorithm is 'robust' in what concerns the series truncation while the root-locus reveals increasing stability problems when passing to the Tustin and Simpson schemes. In fact, this conclusion can be confirmed tacking other values of α in the control algorithm and analyzing both the root-locus and the time responses.

A second aspect to be tested from the control viewpoint is the controller performance when confronted with system parameter deviations. Therefore, in Fig. 5 we compare the system time response with a Grünwald-Letnikov based $D^{1/2}$ control algorithm for time delays of $T_D = 0$ *sec* and $T_D = 0.1$ *sec*. The sampling period is $T = 0.1$ *sec* and the controller gain is $K = 10(2/T)^{1/2}$.

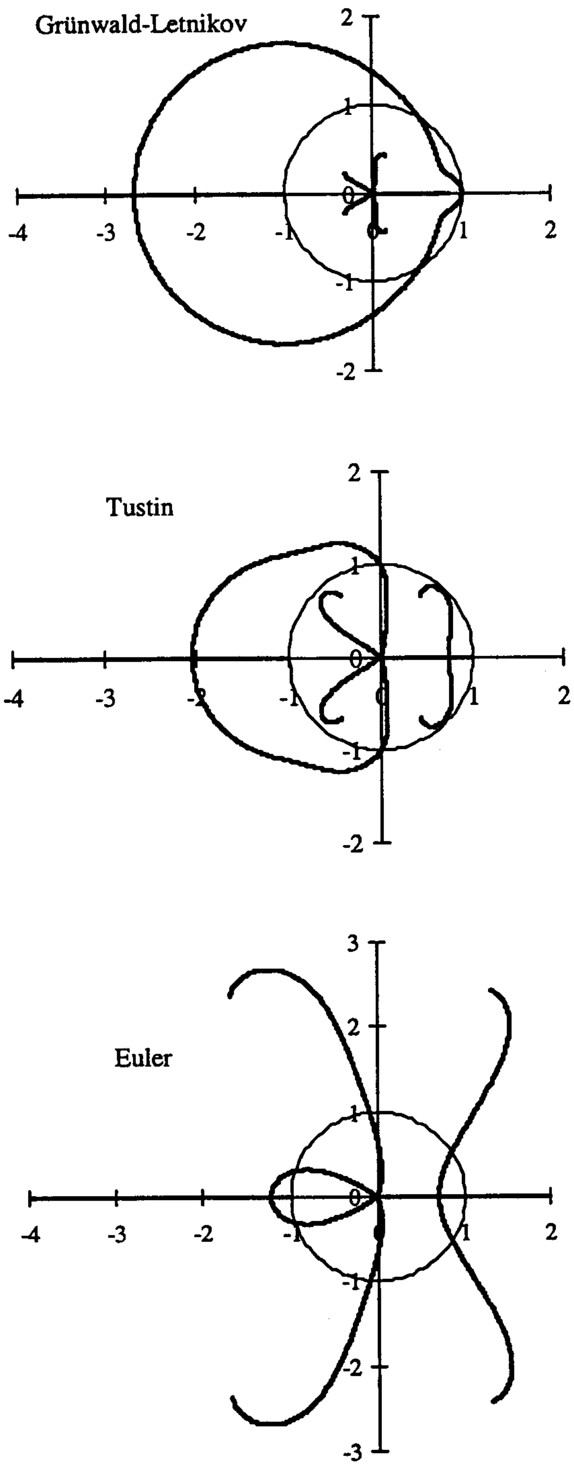

Fig. 4: Root-locus for system (5) with $T_D = 0$ under the control of a 5*th*-order series approximation of $D^{1/2}$ algorithm based on the approach of: Grünwald-Letnikov, Tustin and Simpson.

In order to analyze the response for distinct series truncation orders, Fig. 5 depicts the system response for $n = 3, 4$ and 5. Clearly, the higher the order of the series truncation the better the system performance and the closer the system response with and without time delay in the loop. It should be pointed out that the adoption of a $D^{1/2}$ controller is just for comparison purposes and, in fact, the development of systematic design procedures for *FDI*-based algorithms is currently under investigation.

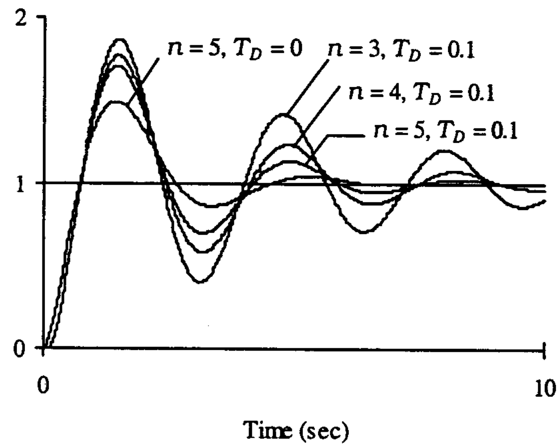

Fig. 5: Time response for system (5) with $T_D = 0$ and $T_D = 0.1$, under the control of a Grünwald-Letnikov based approximation of $D^{1/2}$ with truncation orders of $n = 3$, 4 and 5. The sampling period is $T = 0.1$ *sec* and the controller gain is $K = 10(2/T)^{1/2}$.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The recent progress in the area of chaos reveals promising aspects for future developments and application of the theory of fractional calculus. In the area of automatic control some preliminary work has been proposed but the algorithms are restricted to the frequency domain. In this paper several methods for the discrete-time *FDI* approximation were presented and compared. The new algorithms adopt the time domain, making them well adapted for z-transform analysis and computer calculation. The properties of the Grünwald-Letnikov, Tustin and Simpson schemes are studied in terms of robustness and system stability, revealing that the first approach is preferable. For a simple prototype system the control algorithms based on the fractional-order concepts are simple to implement and reveal good robustness.

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