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IFAC-PapersOnLine 8

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Q

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Previous vol/issue

Next vol/issue >

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Contents

Pages i-viii





A Digital Twin Framework for Mechanical System Health State Estimation

Maxwell Toothman, Birgit Braun, Scott J. Bury, Michael Dessauer, ... Kira Barton Pages 1-7



Research article • Full text access

Weighted expectation-maximisation algorithm for parameter estimation of misspecified dynamical models: application to vehicle dynamics

Jules Matz, Abderazik Birouche, Benjamin Mourllion, Fethi Bouziani, Michel Basset Pages 8-13



Research article • Full text access

Iterative Learning Control Strategy for a Furuta Pendulum System with Variable-Order Linearization



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Research article • Full text access

Realization of Excavator Loading Operation by Nonlinear Model Predictive Control with Bucket Load Estimation

Shinji Ishihara, Akira Kanazawa, Ryu Narikawa Pages 20-25

🚺 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Fast Allan Variance (FAVAR) and Dynamic Fast Allan Variance (D-FAVAR) Algorithms for both Regularly and Irregularly Sampled Data

Satya Prasad Maddipatla, Hossein Haeri, Kshitij Jerath, Sean Brennan Pages 26-31

🧏 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Modelling vortex-induced loads using Recurrent Neural Networks

Joshua A. Foster, Tim De Troyer, Mark C. Runacres, Jan Decuyper Pages 32-37



Research article • Full text access

Long Short-term Memory Neural Network-based System Identification and Augmented Predictive Control of Piezoelectric Actuators for Precise Trajectory Tracking



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Research article • Full text access

Learning-based Robust Model Predictive Control for Sector-bounded Lur'e Systems

Katrine Seel, Mark Haring, Esten I. Grøtli, Kristin Y. Pettersen, Jan T. Gravdahl Pages 46-52



Research article • Full text access

Fault Cause Assignment with Physics Informed Transfer Learning

Furkan Guc, YangQuan Chen Pages 53-58

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Cautious Nonlinear Covariance Steering using Variational Gaussian Process Predictive Models

Alexandros Tsolovikos, Efstathios Bakolas Pages 59-64

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

A Gaussian Process Based Approach to Estimate Wind Speed Using SCADA Measurements from a Wind Turbine

Eduardo B.R.F. Paiva, Hoai-Nam Nguyen, Olivier Lepreux, Delphine Bresch-Pietri Pages 65-71

View PDF Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Extended Capture Point and Optimization-based Control for Quadrupedal Robot Walking on Dynamic Rigid Surfaces

Amir Iqbal, Yan Gu Pages 72-77

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Mixed Use of Analytical Derivatives and Algorithmic Differentiation for NMPC of Robot Manipulators

Alejandro Astudillo, Justin Carpentier, Joris Gillis, Goele Pipeleers, Jan Swevers Pages 78-83



Research article • Full text access

Disturbance Attenuation Through Real-Time Optimization of PD Gains for a Two-Link Robot

Alexander Bertino, Hashem Ashrafiuon, Peiman Naseradinmousavi Pages 84-89

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Robust Deep Reinforcement Learning for Quadcopter Control

Aditya M. Deshpande, Ali A. Minai, Manish Kumar Pages 90-95





Burrowing Locomotion via Crack Propagation of a Bio-inspired Soft Robot

John P. Lathrop, Derek A. Paley Pages 128-133

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Robust control of rotation-floating space robots with flexible appendages for on-orbit servicing

Sofiane Kraïem, Mathieu Rognant, Jean-Marc Biannic, Yves Brière Pages 134-140



Research article

Full text access

A Twisted String Actuator-Driven Soft Robotic Manipulator

David Bombara, Ryan Coulter, Revanth Konda, Jun Zhang Pages 141-146



Research article • Full text access

Real-Time Adaptive Threshold Adjustment for Lane Detection Application under Different Lighting Conditions using Model-Free Control

Yujing Zhou, Zejiang Wang, Junmin Wang Pages 147-152



Research article • Full text access

Safety-Guaranteed Driving Control of Automated Vehicles via Integrated CLFs and CDBFs

Yiwen Huang, Yan Chen Pages 153-159

🔀 🛛 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

A Three-Phase Framework for Global Path Planning for Nonholonomic Autonomous Vehicles on 3D Terrains

Congkai Shen, Siyuan Yu, Tulga Ersal Pages 160-165

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Adaptive and Reference Shaping Control for Steer-By-Wire Vehicles in High-Speed Maneuvers

Srivatsan Srinivasan, Matthias J. Schmid, Venkat Krovi Pages 166-171

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

A Safety Guaranteed Control Framework to Integrate Actuator Dynamics via Control-Dependent Barrier Functions

Yiwen Huang, Yan Chen Pages 172-178

[View PDF 🔹 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

A Novel IDS-based Control Design for Tire Blowout

Ao Li, Yan Chen, Wen-Chiao Lin, Xinyu Du Pages 179-184

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Electromagnetic energy harvesting from train induced railway bridge vibrations

Jia Mi, Mingyi Liu, Qiaofeng Li, Xiaofan Li, Lei Zuo Pages 185-190

View PDF Article preview 🗸

On the Problem of On–Board Early Detection of Hunting on Rail Vehicles: an exploratory study

Kiriakos Kritikakos, Spilios D. Fassois, John S. Sakellariou, Ilias Chronopoulos, ... Georgios Vlachospyros Pages 191-197

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Control Co-design and Characterization of a Power Takeoff for Wave Energy Conversion based on Active Mechanical Motion Rectification

Lisheng Yang, Jianuo Huang, Nob Congpuong, Shuo Chen, ... Lei Zuo Pages 198-203



Research article • Full text access

Closed-form solutions of bending-torsion coupled forced vibrations of a piezoelectric energy harvester under a fluid vortex

X. Zhao, W.D. Zhu, Y.H. Li Pages 204-211 View PDF Article preview V

Research article • Full text access

Multi-resonance Phenomena in Stochastic Resonance Energy Harvesting: Influence of Periodic Signal Magnitude and Noise Intensity to the Dynamics

Hongjip Kim, Lei Zuo Pages 212-217

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Intelligent Autonomous Navigation of Car-Like Unmanned Ground Vehicle via Deep Reinforcement Learning

Shathushan Sivashangaran, Minghui Zheng Pages 218-225 💫 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Improved Motor Imagery Classification Using Regularized Common Spatial Pattern with Majority Voting Strategy

Md Ferdous Wahid, Reza Tafreshi Pages 226-231

🚺 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Control-Theoretic Modeling and Prediction of Blood Clot Viscoelasticity in Trauma Patients

Damon E. Ghetmiri, Miguel E. Perez Blanco, Mitchell J. Cohen, Amor A. Menezes Pages 232-237

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Design and Control of an Autonomous Robot for Mobility-Impaired Patients

Aarya Deb, Zachery Wypych, Jess Lonner, Hashem Ashrafiuon Pages 238-243

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Electromyographic Classification to Control the SPAR Glove

John E. Britt, Marcia K. O'Malley, Chad G. Rose Pages 244-250

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Estimation of the Basic Reproduction Number for the COVID-19 Pandemic in Minnesota

H. Movahedi, A. Zemouche, R. Rajamani Pages 251-257 🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Physical Human-UAV Interaction with Commercial Drones using Admittance Control

Christopher Banks, Antonio Bono, Samuel Coogan Pages 258-264

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Parameter Optimization for Variable Admittance Control of Haptic Systems

Antonio Moualeu, Jun Ueda Pages 265-270

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Safe Human-Robot Coetaneousness Through Model Predictive Control Barrier Functions and Motion Distributions

Mohammadreza Davoodi, Joseph M. Cloud, Asif Iqbal, William J. Beksi, Nicholas R. Gans Pages 271-277

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Control of a Bipedal Walker Under Foot Slipping Condition Using Whole-Body Operational Space Framework

Marko Mihalec, Jingang Yi Pages 278-283

🔼 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Human Gesture Robot Control Using a Camera/Accelerometer-in-Palm Sensor

Jared Floersch, Perry Y. Li Pages 284-289 💫 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Invariant Extended Kalman Filtering for Hybrid Models of Bipedal Robot Walking

Yuan Gao, Chengzhi Yuan, Yan Gu Pages 290-297

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Noninvasive Systemic Vascular Resistance Estimation using a Photoplethysmogram and a Piezoelectric Sensor

Zixiao Zhang, Sardar Ansari, Lu Wang, Keith D. Aaronson, ... Kenn R. Oldham Pages 298-303



Research article • Full text access

Control-oriented Nonlinear Modeling of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Gel Actuators

Mohammed Al-Rubaiai, Xinda Qi, Zachary Frank, Ryohei Tsuruta, ... Xiaobo Tan Pages 304-309

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Observer Design and Analysis for Non-Invasive Hemorrhage Detection

Xin Jin, Yekanth Ram Chalumuri, Ali Tivay, Jin-Oh Hahn Pages 310-315

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

AI Guided Measurement of Live Cells Using AFM

Jaydeep Rade, Juntao Zhang, Soumik Sarkar, Adarsh Krishnamurthy, ... Anwesha Sarkar Pages 316-321

🏃 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Analysis of epidemic spread dynamics using a PDE model and COVID-19 data from Hamilton County OH USA

Faray Majid, Aditya M. Deshpande, Subramanian Ramakrishnan, Shelley Ehrlich, Manish Kumar Pages 322-327

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Actin Cytoskeleton Morphology Modeling Using Graph Embedding and Classification in Machine Learning

Yi Liu, Juntao Zhang, Charuku Bharat, Juan Ren Pages 328-333

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Robust State Estimations in Controlled ARMA Processes with the Non-Gaussian Noises: Applications to the Delayed Dynamics

Vadim Azhmyakov, Jose Perea Arango, Moises Bonilla, Raymundo Juarez del Toro, Stefan Pickl Pages 334-339

🔼 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Model Segmentation in Single Particle Tracking

Boris I. Godoy, Nicholas A. Vickers, Sean B. Andersson Pages 340-345

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

System Identification for Safe Controllers using Inverse Optimization

Jaskaran Grover, Changliu Liu, Katia Sycara Pages 346-353

💫 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸



A control oriented comprehensive degradation model for battery energy storage system life prediction

Yaqi Zhu, Tazdik Plateau, Brody Riemann, Robert Landers, Jonghyun Park Pages 374-380

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Clustering-based Sensor Placement for Thermal Fault Diagnostics in Large-Format Batteries

Sara Sattarzadeh, Tanushree Roy, Satadru Dey Pages 381-386

[™] View PDF Article preview ∨

Airflow and Power-Split Control Strategy for a Fuel Cell Hybrid Powered Robot

Miriam Figueroa-Santos, Valentin Sulzer, Youngki Kim, Jason Siegel, ... Denise M. Rizzo Pages 387-392

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Online energy management for intermittent operation of hybrid electric vehicles at low temperatures

Florian Meier, Luigi del Re Pages 393-398

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Lithium-Sulfur Battery Discharge Optimization using a Thermally-Coupled Equivalent Circuit Model

Chu Xu, Mahsa Doosthosseini, Hosam K. Fathy Pages 399-405

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Input-output Data-driven Modeling and MIMO Predictive Control of an RCCI Engine Combustion

Behrouz Khoshbakht Irdmousa, Jeffrey Donald Naber, Javad Mohammadpour Velni, Hoseinali Borhan, Mahdi Shahbakhti Pages 406-411

💫 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Nonlinear Model Predictive Planning and Control for High-Speed Autonomous Vehicles on 3D Terrains

Siyuan Yu, Congkai Shen, Tulga Ersal Pages 412-417 🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Optimization of Charging Schedule for Battery Electric Vehicles Using DC Fast Charging Stations

Kuo Yang, Pingen Chen Pages 418-423

🚺 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Automatic Extrinsic Rotational Calibration of LiDAR Sensors and Vehicle Orientation Estimation

Stephanie W. Meyer, Howard Chen, David M. Bevly Pages 424-429

🔼 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

RSS Model Calibration and Evaluation for AV Driving Safety based on Naturalistic Driving Data

Yiwen Huang, Maria Soledad Elli, Jack Weast, Yingyan Lou, ... Yan Chen Pages 430-436



Research article • Full text access

Collaborative Manipulation of Spherical-Shape Objects with a Deformable Sheet Held by a Mobile Robotic Team

Kyle Hunte, Jingang Yi Pages 437-442

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Learning Energy Efficient Jumping Strategies for Flexible-Legged Systems

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Pages 443-448

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Research article • Full text access

Utilizing Hidden Markov Models to Classify Maneuvers and Improve Estimates of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

Amy K. Strong, Scott M. Martin, David M. Bevly Pages 449-454

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Developing Equations of Motion for a Planar Biped Walker with Nonuniform Foot Shape

Claire H. Rodman, Anne E. Martin Pages 455-462

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Modeling and Control of a Tethered Tilt-Rotor Quadcopter with Atmospheric Wind Model

Rumit Kumar, Shubham R. Agarwal, Manish Kumar Pages 463-468

View PDF

Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

PLDI-Based Convexification for Roll-to-Roll Dry Transfer Control

C. Martin, Q. Zhao, S. Bakshi, D. Chen, W. Li Pages 469-474

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

A High-Fidelity Modeling Framework for Near-Field Electrohydrodynamic Jet Printing



Intelligent Scan Sequence Optimization for Uniform Temperature Distribution in Laser Powder Bed Fusion using a Control Theoretic Approach

Keval S. Ramani, Chinedum E. Okwudire Pages 503-508

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Modeling of Lithium-ion Batteries via Tensor-Network-Based Volterra Model



[🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Modeling Li-ion Battery First Venting Events Before Thermal Runaway

Ting Cai, Vivian Tran, Anna G. Stefanopoulou, Jason B. Siegel Pages 528-533

🔼 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Impact of Data Sampling Methods on the Performance of Data-driven Parameter Identification for Lithium ion Batteries

Gyouho Cho, Youngki Kim, Jaerock Kwon, Wencong Su, Mengqi Wang Pages 534-539

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Robust Control for a Class of Nonlinearly Coupled Hierarchical Systems with Actuator Faults



Extended Kalman Filter for Index-2 Nonlinear Differential Algebraic Equation Systems

Jalesh L. Purohit Pages 554-559

🔼 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Semistability and Stochastic Semistability for Switched Nonlinear Systems by Means of Fixed Point Theory: Application to Constrained Distributed Consensus over Random Networks

S. Sh. Alaviani, A.G. Kelkar Pages 560-565

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Comparing Linear Systems with Gaussian Mixture Model Additive Uncertainties Using Kullback-Leibler Rate

Aditya Karumanchi, Punit Tulpule Pages 566-572



Research article • Full text access

A data-driven approach to MIMO PID tuning via LMI constraints

Anna Paula V de A Aguiar, George Acioli, Péricles R Barros, Angelo Perkusich Pages 573-578



Research article • Full text access

Non-minimum Phase Zeros of Two-DoF Damped Flexible Systems

Siddharth Rath, Shorya Awtar Pages 579-585

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Efficient Path Planning of Soft Robotic Arms in the Presence of Obstacles

Preston R. Fairchild, Vaibhav Srivastava, Xiaobo Tan Pages 586-591

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Modeling and H_{∞} Position Control of a Spreader in the Gantry Crane

Zeshen Chen, Zheng Chen, Bin Yao Pages 592-597

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Research article • Full text access

Fast Multi-Robot Motion Planning via Imitation Learning of Mixed-Integer Programs

Mohit Srinivasan, Ankush Chakrabarty, Rien Quirynen, Nobuyuki Yoshikawa, ... Stefano Di Cairano Pages 598-604

View PDF

Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Fuzzy Logic Force-Torque Feedback Controller For Multi-Drone Cooperative Transport With Offset CG

Shraddha Barawkar, Manish Kumar Pages 605-610



F 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

Time Optimal Control for a Non-Linear Planar Vehicle Subject to Disturbances

Ayal Taitler, Ilya Ioslovich, Erez Karpas, Per-Olof Gutman Pages 611-616

🔀 View PDF 🛛 Article preview 🗸

Research article • Full text access

A Hybrid Lateral Dynamics Model Combining Data-driven and Physical Models for Vehicle Control Applications

Zhisong Zhou, Yafei Wang, Qinghui Ji, Daniel Wellmann, ... Chengliang Yin Pages 617-623



Research article • Full text access

Robust Control Design for a Single-Wheel Module Operating in an Off-Road Terrain with Uncertain and Stochastic Attributes

Masood Ghasemi, Vladimir V. Vantsevich, David J. Gorsich, Lee Moradi Pages 624-631

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Răzvan Mocanu, Alexandru Onea Pages 632-637

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An Energy Balance Model Parameter Estimation with an Extended Kalman Filter

Auralius Manurung* Lisa Kristiana** Dwi Aryanta**

* Universitas Pertamina, Jakarta, Indonesia (e-mail: auralius.manurung@ieee.org) ** Institut Teknologi Nasional Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia (e-mail: [lisa,dwiaryanta]@itenas.ac.id)

Abstract: This paper presents modeling and parameter estimation of a thermal system, which is often nonlinear, with nonlinearities found in its parameters. As a result, it requires an additional online parameter estimation. In this paper, we implement an Extended Kalman Filter for modeling and parameter identification of such a device. The thermal device that we use is an educational device developed in-house. First, we derive the device's mathematical model using a zero-order energy balance model as the template model. Next, we find the model's best parameters by performing an optimization process. Finally, we implement an Extended Kalman Filter technique to accommodate the possibility that those parameters may change over time. Our experiments show that when we have reliable measurements and a reliable system model, the Kalman filtering technique can perform well as an online parameter estimator and act as a basis to build an adaptive model.

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Keywords: Recursive identification, process modeling and identification, embedded computer control systems and applications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Heat transfer modeling on thermal systems is a essential since it provides engineers better insights into the system processes and allows sophisticated control implementations. However, this modeling task can be challenging since a thermal system's nonlinear behaviors are commonly found in the model parameters. In contrast, the used model itself is linear (see Jonsson and Palsson (1994)). As a result, the model performance may deteriorate if the parameters are assumed to be constant at all times.

In a situation where the nonlinear behaviors are found in the system's parameters or where the parameters are actually changing as functions of time, online parameter estimation can be used as one of the solutions. For this purpose, a Kalman filtering technique can be used, such as found in the works by Song et al. (2017), Kim et al. (2016), Jonsson and Palsson (1994), Mutambara and Al-Haik (1999) and Yanou et al. (2016). In general, a Kalman filtering technique is used for state estimation. However, it can also be used to perform parameter estimation by extending the system's state model with the model parameters that we want to estimate (see Blanchard et al. (2007) and Walker (2006)). As the result, the Kalman filter will estimate both the state variables and the added model parameters.

To model a thermal system, an energy balance model can be used as a template model. An energy balance model is most common in environmental science where it is used to model the climate systems (see Roques et al. (2014)). In this paper, we use a zero-dimensional energy balance model. The term zero-order is used to describe that there is no spatial variable in the model. Such model is the simplest form of an energy balance model. Park et al. (2020) also use a zero-order energy balance model in their work, although they do not include time delay in their energy balance equations. As for the model parameters, we use an optimization process to find their best values.

In order to test the proposed concept, we have developed a thermal device that is originally developed for teaching purpose (see Section II). Recently, educational thermal devices have become more widely used in several engineering courses, such as in Park et al. (2020), Tran et al. (2019), and Barbosa (2020). Besides teaching, the same devices can also be used for research, such as as test devices for control system developments (see Cui et al. (2020)). These educational devices are typically compact in size, low-cost, and easy to build. Since the thermal process is generally slow, it does not require a high-performance control computer and data acquisition system.

This paper takes the references above and investigates the use of a Kalman filtering technique to enhance a thermal system modeled by using an energy balance model with delayed input and an already optimized set of parameters. Our contribution will be the overall investigation process that we introduce in this paper. Here we demonstrate that if noises do not significantly contaminate the state variables, a Kalman filtering technique should perform very satisfactorily as an online parameter estimator. Additionally, we also contribute to the application of a Kalman

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Fig. 1. The developed temperature control device.

filtering technique in heat transfer science. To the best of the authors' knowledge, a Kalman filtering technique is not very common in heat transfer science. Moreover, using a Kalman filtering technique for parameter estimation is not as common as using it for state estimation.

This paper organizes as follows. In Section 2, we describe the hardware design of the thermal test device. In Section 3, we perform system modeling. In Section 4, we implement and test the online parameter estimation procedures. In Section 5, we evaluate the estimation results. Finally, we present our conclusion in Section 6.

2. HARDWARE DESCRIPTION

The thermal device that we use for testing purpose in this paper is shown in Fig. 1. The device is compact in size and stacked on top of an Arduino Uno (Arduino AG, Italy) board. To program the Arduino, we use MATLAB Simulink (MathWorks Inc., USA) software in the control computer. The Arduino Uno acts only as an input-output server. The main control program, written with Simulink, runs in the control computer with a sampling frequency of 10 Hz.

The developed device is equipped with one heater (a 27 $\Omega/5$ W ceramic power resistor) and one small fan. Both the heater's temperature and the fan's speed can be controlled by sending Pulse-Width-Modulation (PWM) signals. An external 12 V / 2 A power supply powers both the heater and the fan. To measure the temperature of the heater, an analog temperature sensor is attached to the heater (LM35).

3. PHYSICAL MODELING AND PARAMETER OPTIMIZATION

To model the temperature test-bench, we deployed an energy balance model with a time delay in its input. In an energy balance model, the amount of heat received by a system equals the amount of heat dissipated by that system added with the amount of heat stored in that system. The dissipated heat occurs through both convective and radiative heat losses.

Taking into account the heat loss due to the running fan, we introduce to the model two convective losses: the normal convective loss and the forced convective loss. As

Table	1.	Parameter	constraints	and	the	opti-
		mized	parameters.			

	Const	raints	Optimized		
	Upper	Lower	Values		
h_1	100	10	41.563		
h_2	200	10	99.955		
ε	1	0.9	0.950		
c_r	2000	1	1599.672		
θ	15	5	10.002		

a result, the governing dynamic equation of the proposed thermal test device can be expressed as follows:

$$\underbrace{\alpha(t-\theta)P_{\max}}_{\text{Generated heat}} = \underbrace{mc_r \frac{dT_r(t)}{dt}}_{\text{Stored heat}} + \underbrace{h_1\left(T_r(t) - T_\infty\right)}_{\text{Normal convective loss}} + \underbrace{\varepsilon\sigma A\left(T_r(t)^4 - T_\infty^4\right)}_{\text{Radiative loss}} + \underbrace{\gamma(t)h_2\left(T_r(t) - T_\infty\right)}_{\text{Forced convective loss}}$$
(1)

The nomenclature for Equation 1 is as follows:

- c_r is the heat capacity of the power resistor (in J/(kg K)).
- h_1 and h_2 are the normal and forced convective heat transfer coefficients, respectively (in W/(m²K)).
- T_r and T_{∞} are the power resistor's temperature and the ambient temperature, respectively (in Kelvin).
- ε is the emissivity (unitless).
- σ is the Stefan-Boltzmann constant (5.67 × 10⁻⁸ W/(m²K⁴)).
- γ is the applied PWM input to the fan (from 0 to 1, unit-less).
- α is the PWM input applied to the heater (from 0 to 1, unit-less).
- θ is the input time delay (in seconds).
- P_{max} is the maximum power that can be delivered to the power resistor ($P_{\text{max}} = 5.3 \text{ W}$).

Additionally, there are several parameters whose values are approximated from measurements by using a ruler and a weight scale. They are the mass (m = 0.005 kg) and the surface area $(A = 0.0008 \text{ m}^2)$ of the ceramic power resistor.

Once we have established the template model, the next step is to find the unknown parameters' values, which are h_1 , h_2 , ε , c_r , and θ , using an optimization technique. To do this, we stimulated the test device with arbitrary PWM signals for both inputs while at the same time we recorded the resulting temperature (the top plot in Figure 2). After that, we then performed an optimization process to find the optimal values of the parameters mentioned above using the collected data (the center plot in Figure 2). Here, we use a MATLAB built-in fmincon command, a nonlinear optimization technique with predefined parameter constraints. Details on this topic can be found in Kristiana and Manurung (2021).

The predefined constraints and the resulting optimized parameters are shown in Table 1. In Figure 2, we compare the output from the optimized model with the actual measurements. The optimized energy balance model fits the actual measurements nicely with a maximum absolute error of 5 degrees centigrade.



Fig. 2. Comparison between the actual temperature and the temperature calculated by the optimized model.

4. EXTENDED KALMAN FILTER DESIGN

An EKF is a type of Kalman filter for a nonlinear system. From Equation 1, we notice that the system's nonlinearity comes from the radiative term. However, the contribution of this radiative term is minimal when compared to the other two convective terms. Thus, the nonlinearity most certainly comes from the model's parameters, not from the model itself.

In this section, we first generate a new state-space model that includes the four parameters we want to estimate, which are T_{∞} , h_1 , h_2 and c_r . After that, we apply the EKF procedure to estimate the values of those parameters.

4.1 The Parametrization

To implement the EKF, we must first formulate the energy balance model model in Equation 1 into its canonical statespace model. First, Equation 1 can be rewritten as follows:

$$\frac{dT_r(t)}{dt} = \frac{1}{mc_r} \left\{ \alpha(t-\theta) P_{\max} + h_1 \left(T_{\infty} - T_r(t) \right) + \gamma(t) h_2 \left(T_{\infty} - T_r(t) \right) + \varepsilon \sigma A \left(T_{\infty}^4 - T_r(t)^4 \right) \right\}$$
(2)

Next, by using a finite difference method, we can discretize Equation 2 as follows:

$$\frac{dT(t)}{dt} = \frac{T_r(t + \Delta t) - T_r(t)}{\Delta t}$$

$$T_r(t + \Delta t) = \frac{dT(t)}{dt} \Delta t + T_r(t)$$
(3)

where Δt is the discretization sampling time. Substituting Equation 2 to Equation 3 will give us:

$$T_r(t + \Delta t) = \frac{\Delta t}{mc_r} \left\{ \alpha(t - \theta) P_{\max} + h_1 \left(T_{\infty} - T_r(t) \right) + \gamma(t) h_2 \left(T_{\infty} - T_r(t) \right) + (4) \\ \varepsilon \sigma A \left(T_{\infty}^4 - T_r(t)^4 \right) \right\} + T_r(t)$$

After that, we selected four model parameters that we want to estimate by using the EKF. They are the ambient temperature (T_{∞}) , the normal convective heat transfer coefficient $(h_1(t))$, the forced convective heat transfer coefficient $(h_2(t))$ and the power resistor heat capacity $(c_r(t))$. From this point, those four parameters are now functions of time. Let us now introduce new state variables $\mathbf{z}(k)$ as follows:

$$\mathbf{z}(k) = [z_1(k) \ z_2(k) \ z_3(k) \ z_4(k) \ z_5(k)]^{\mathrm{T}} = [T_r(k) \ T_{\infty}(k) \ h_1(k) \ h_2(k) \ c_r(k)]^{\mathrm{T}}$$
(5)

where k = 0, 1, 2, ... and $t = k\Delta t$. In total, there are five new variables: one state variable and four parameters.

Let us consider an input vector $\mathbf{u}(k) = [u_1(k) \ u_2(k)]^{\mathrm{T}} = [\alpha(k) \ \gamma(k)]^{\mathrm{T}}$. Thus, we can complete the state-space form as follows:

$$z_{1}(k+1) = \frac{\Delta t}{m z_{5}(k)z_{1}(k)} \Biggl\{ u_{1}\Biggl(k - \frac{\theta}{\Delta t}\Biggr) P_{\max} + z_{3}(k) \Bigl(z_{2}(k) - z_{1}(k)\Bigr) + u_{2}(k)z_{4}(k) \Bigl(z_{2}(k) - z_{1}(k)(t)\Bigr) + \varepsilon \sigma A\Bigl(z_{2}(k)^{4} - z_{1}(k)^{4}\Bigr) \Biggr\} + (6)$$

$$z_{1}(k) + v_{1}(k)$$

$$z_{2}(k+1) = z_{2}(k) + v_{2}(k)$$

$$z_{3}(k+1) = z_{3}(k) + v_{3}(k)$$

$$z_{4}(k+1) = z_{4}(k) + v_{4}(k)$$

$$z_{5}(k+1) = z_{5}(k) + v_{5}(k)$$

where $\mathbf{v}(k) = [v_1(k) \ v_2(k) \ v_3(k) \ v_4(k) \ v_5(k)]^{\mathrm{T}}$ is the additive process noise. Since the only measurable output is $z_1(k)$, the output becomes a scalar and its equation can be written as follows:

$$\mathbf{y}(k) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \end{bmatrix} \mathbf{z}(k) + \mathbf{w}(k) \tag{7}$$

where $\mathbf{y}(k) \in \mathbb{R}$ is the output vector and $\mathbf{w}(k) \in \mathbb{R}$ is the additive measurement noise vector. Both $\mathbf{v}(k)$ and $\mathbf{w}(k)$ are assumed to be zero-mean white Gaussian distribution.

4.2 The Extended Kalman Filter Procedure

First, let us reformulate Equation 6 and Equation 7 into their formal short forms.

$$\mathbf{z}(k) = f(\mathbf{z}(k-1), \mathbf{u}(k-1)) + \mathbf{v}(k-1)$$

$$\mathbf{y}(k) = h(\mathbf{z}(k)) + \mathbf{w}(k)$$
(8)

Next, we will implement the EKF procedure for the two equations above, which consists of two repetitive procedures (see Chui and Chen (2017)): time update and measurement update.

Time Update Let us introduce $\hat{\mathbf{z}}_p(k)$ and $\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k)$ as the prior and posterior estimate of $\mathbf{z}(k)$, respectively. Hence, the

time update procedure of the EKF can then be written as follows:

$$\hat{\mathbf{z}}_{p}(k) = f(\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k-1), \mathbf{u}(k-1)) + \mathbf{v}(k-1)$$

$$\mathbf{P}_{p}(k) = \mathbf{F}(k)\mathbf{P}(k-1)\mathbf{F}^{\mathrm{T}}(k) + \mathbf{Q}$$
(9)

where $\mathbf{P}_p(k) \in \mathbb{R}^{5\times 5}$ and $\mathbf{P}(k) \in \mathbb{R}^{5\times 5}$ are the prior and posterior error covariance matrix, respectively; and $\mathbf{Q} \in \mathbb{R}^{5\times 5}$ is the covariance matrix of $\mathbf{v}(k)$. $\mathbf{F}(k) \in \mathbb{R}^{5\times 5}$ is the Jacobian of $f(\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k))$ and can be calculated as follows:

$$\mathbf{F}(k) = \frac{\partial f(\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k-1), \mathbf{u}(k-1))}{\partial \hat{\mathbf{z}}(k-1)}$$
(10)

Equation 10 is solved numerically by using a finite difference method.

Before the first iteration, we initialize $\hat{\mathbf{z}}(0)$ and $\mathbf{P}(0)$ as follows:

$$\hat{\mathbf{z}}(0) = \begin{bmatrix} 32.7 & 32.7 & 41.563 & 99.955 & 1599.672 \end{bmatrix}^{\mathrm{T}}$$

$$\mathbf{P}(0) = \mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{5 \times 5}$$
(11)

where **I** is an identity matrix. The initial value for $\hat{z}_1(0)$ and $\hat{z}_2(0)$ are set to be close to the current room temperature. While for the remaining, their initial values are the optimal values that we have already found in the previous section (see Table 1).

Measurement Update Let us introduce $\mathbf{K}(k) \in \mathbb{R}$ as the Kalman gain, $\mathbf{R} \in \mathbb{R}$ as the covariance matrix of \mathbf{w} , and $\mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{5 \times 5}$ as an identity matrix. The measurement update is implemented as follows:

$$\mathbf{K}(k) = \mathbf{P}_{p}(k)\mathbf{H}^{T}(k)\left(\mathbf{H}(k)\mathbf{P}_{p}(k)\mathbf{H}^{T}(k) + \mathbf{R}\right)^{-1}$$
$$\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k) = \hat{\mathbf{z}}_{p}(k) + \mathbf{K}(k)\left(\mathbf{z}(k) - \mathbf{H}(k)\hat{\mathbf{z}}_{p}(k)\right)$$
(12)
$$\mathbf{P}(k) = \left(\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{K}(k)\mathbf{H}(k)\right)\mathbf{P}_{p}(k)$$

where $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times 5}$ is the Jacobian of $h(\hat{\mathbf{z}}(k))$ and can be calculated as follows:

$$\mathbf{H}(k) = \frac{\partial h(\hat{\mathbf{z}}_p(k))}{\partial \hat{\mathbf{z}}_p(k)}$$
(13)

Similar to Equation 10, we also solve Equation 13 numerically by using a finite difference method.

4.3 Estimation Results

For a preliminary test, we ran the EKF procedure offline for 1000 seconds, with a sampling time of 0.1 seconds, using the same dataset as in Figure 2. Matrices \mathbf{Q} and \mathbf{R} are heuristically set to be as follows:

$$\mathbf{Q} = 0.4 \times \mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{5 \times 5}$$
$$\mathbf{R} = 10 \tag{14}$$

where **I** is an identity matrix.

The power resistor's estimated temperature is presented in Figure 3, along with the measured temperature. Estimated model parameters: T_{∞} , h_1 , h_2 , and c_r are presented in Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7, respectively. All of these figures show the evolution of the model parameters as functions of time although the changes are relatively very small. The largest changes that can be seen from the figures above is in the ambient temperature.



Fig. 3. Measured temperature (y(k)) compared to the estimated temperature $(\hat{z}_1(k))$.



Fig. 4. Estimated ambient temperature $(z_2(k) \text{ or } T_{\infty}(k))$.



Fig. 5. Estimated normal convective heat transfer coefficient $(z_3(k) \text{ or } h_1(k))$.

However, there is no guarantee that we can ignore such slight variations in the model parameters. We will investigate this issue in the next section. Moreover, due to the nature of the deployed model, we must be aware that the selected initial values may significantly affect the parameter estimation results, although the state estimation may not be affected. Therefore, the preliminary optimization procedure is a crucial part of this EKF procedure.

5. EVALUATION WITH A CONSTANT INPUT EXPERIMENT

In Section 3, the data-set used for the optimization procedure was collected from the device transient phase only. On the contrary, we evaluated the developed model by using a different data-set collected during the device steady-state phase to create a more significant discrepancy between the model and the experiment. Therefore, we collected the data by applying 50% of PWM input to the heater and the



Fig. 6. Estimated forced convective heat transfer coefficient $(z_4(k) \text{ or } h_2(k))$.



Fig. 7. Estimated power resistor's heat capacity $(z_5(k) \text{ or } c_r(k))$.



Fig. 8. Measured temperature (y(k)) compared to the estimated temperature $(\hat{z}_1(k))$ for constant inputs.

fan for a more extended period, which was 3000 seconds. As a result, the power resistor's temperature rose to about 70 degrees of centigrade (see Figure 8), and mostly, it was seated in its steady-state condition. At the same time, the EKF procedure was running, performing estimations to the state and the model parameters.

The EKF was initialized with the optimal parameter values as in Table 1. The estimated state, in this case, the power resistor's temperature, is also shown in Figure 8. While for the estimated model parameters, they are shown in Figure 9, Figure 10, 11, and Figure 12. Similar to the earlier experiments, changes in those model parameters are also relatively very small.

Nonetheless, those small changes may still contribute to performance differences. To test this idea, we implemented a test scenario with two models. One model receives parameter updates from the EKF, while another model



Fig. 9. Estimated ambient temperature $(z_2(k) \text{ or } T_{\infty}(k))$ for constant inputs.



Fig. 10. Estimated normal convective heat transfer coefficient $(z_3(k) \text{ or } h_1k)$ for constant inputs.



Fig. 11. Estimated forced convective heat transfer coefficient $(z_4(k) \text{ or } h_2(k))$ for constant inputs.



Fig. 12. Estimated power resistor's heat capacity $(z_5(k) \text{ or } c_r(k))$ for constant inputs.



Fig. 13. The model with sn online parameter update provides better estimations.

has its parameters set to fixed optimal values from Table 1. For each model, we compare its output to the measured temperature from the actual device. As shown in Figure 13, the model that receives parameter updates from an EKF does provide better estimation to the actual power resistor's temperature (top figure). The model with fixed parameter gives a maximum estimation error of about five degrees centigrade. As for the model with adaptive parameters, the maximum estimation error is smaller, which is about two degrees centigrade (bottom figure).

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper has performed modeling of a thermal system and implemented an EKF to estimate its state and model parameters. Using an EKF for parameter estimation allows us to improve the modeling performance. An accurate model is often necessary for control applications, especially model-based controls. However, this method might only be applicable for a process system with low noise sensor readings and a sufficiently good initial model and parameter guesses. Such limitations are caused by the nature of the model we selected, where the implemented EKF can pick many local optimal values. Finding a more robust function template becomes another topic that needs more in-depth studies.

On the other hand, the model that we deployed can be considered as simple. It is a zero-order energy balance model with two input variables, one state variable, and one output variable. However, there are five model parameters for the implemented EKF to estimate, which causes the solutions to the model parameters to become mathematically non-unique. In a more complex system, such as in a higher-order energy balance model, in which there are more state and output variables, the improvement offered by the implemented EKF to the modeling is expected to be higher since the system has fewer local optimum solutions. Thus, in the future, we plan to implement this method into a more complex system.

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