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Biomechanical Modeling, Simulation, and Comparison of Human Arm Motion to Mitigate Astronaut Task during Extra Vehicular Activity

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Abstract : During manned exploration of space, missions will require astronaut crewmembers to perform Extra Vehicular Activities (EVAs) for a variety of tasks. These EVAs take place after long periods of operations in space, and in and around unique vehicles, space structures and systems. Considering the remoteness and time spans in which these vehicles will operate, EVA system operations should utilize common worksites, tools and procedures as much as possible to increase the efficiency of training and proficiency in operations. All of the preparations need to be carried out based on studies of astronaut motions. Until now, development and training activities associated with the planned EVAs in Russian and U.S. space programs have relied almost exclusively on physical simulators. These experimental tests are expensive and time consuming. During the past few years a strong increase has been observed in the use of computer simulations due to the fast developments in computer hardware and simulation software. Based on this idea, an effort to develop a computational simulation system to model human dynamic motion for EVA is initiated. This study focuses on the simulation of an astronaut moving the orbital replaceable units into the worksites or removing them from the worksites. Our physics-based methodology helps fill the gap in quantitative analysis of astronaut EVA by providing a multisegment human arm model. Simulation work described in the study improves on the realism of previous efforts, incorporating joint stops to account for the physiological limits of range of motion. To demonstrate the utility of this approach human arm model is simulated virtually using ADAMS/LifeMOD® software. Kinematic mechanism for the astronaut's task is studied from joint angles and torques. Simulation results obtained is validated with numerical simulation based on the principles of Newton-Euler method. Torques determined using mathematical model are compared among the subjects to know the grace and consistency of the task performed. We conclude that due to uncertain nature of exploration-class EVA, a virtual model developed using multibody dynamics approach offers significant advantages over traditional human modeling approaches.

Keywords : extra vehicular activity, biomechanics, inverse kinematics, human body modeling
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