To quantitatively assess masticatory efficiency or to analytically characterize food dynamics, the measurements of food breakdowns and mandibular movements must be made continuously during the entire mastication process. While mathematical models based on biomechanics of the masticatory system have been useful in simulating the human chewing process, it is hard for them to be applied to assessing complex masticatory efficiency with numerous variations in food properties, dentitions, and physiological structure of human jaws. This suggests the need to pursue a robotic device by means of which the mastication process can be reproduced in a mechanically controllable way while the masticatory efficiency and/or food dynamics are assessed quantitatively.

To design such a device, a robotic model of the masticatory system must be built and validated through simulations and/or animations. Following a review of the biomechanical findings about jaw structure and muscles of mastication, each of the major muscles (temporalis, masseter and pterygoid) responsible for the masticatory movements is represented in a linear actuator in this article. Muscle origin and insertion are modeled as a spherical joint, by means of which the actuators are placed between the mandible and the skull so that each actuator always acts in the direction of the resultant muscular force. This, consequently, results in a robotic model of platform with the mandible being a moving plate and the skull a ground plate. The physical dimensions and properties of the robotic model are measured from a replica model skull. Simulations for the mandible movements with respect to

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Masticatory performance is associated with the quantitative movement parameters of duration (rhythm), velocity, and displacement of the mandible and the bite force.

Muscles of Mastication

Muscle contraction is the means by which jaw motion and bite forces are generated. Major jaw muscles are temporalis, masseter, and pterygoid, as shown in Figure 1. The temporalis is a broad, radiating muscle, situated at the side of the head;
the masseter is a flat quadrilateral muscle with deep and superficial parts; the pterygoideus internus is a thick, quadrilateral muscle; and the pterygoideus externus is a short, thick muscle, conical in form, which extends almost horizontally between the infratemporal fossa and the condyle of the mandible [8]. The temporalis, masseter, and pterygoideus internus raise the mandible against the maxilla with great force. The pterygoideus externus assists in opening the mouth, but its main action is to draw forward the condyle and articular disk so that the mandible is protruded and the inferior incisors projected in front of the upper; in this action, it is assisted by the pterygoideus internus [17].

The Robotic Model

According to the aforementioned biomechanics, the mandible can be regarded as a rigid body, suspended from the skull through the two TMJs and driven coordinately by the three muscles under the central nervous system. Functionally, the mandible is movable in relation to the skull in the 3-D space, constrained by biological structure of the TMJs and jaw muscles and interactive with foodstuffs via the dentition. While developing a robotic model, it seems technically challenging to mechanically replicate each of these distributed muscles. An approach to solving this problem is the use of a linear cylindrical actuator in place of a group of muscles. An actuator can act bidirectionally and its two ends are attached to the skull and the mandible via spherical joints so that the actuating force is always in the direction of the resultant muscle forces. This results in a robotic model, as shown in Figure 2, where L1 and L2 stand for actuators for the right and left pterygoid exter- nus, respectively; L3 and L4, the right and left temporalis, respectively; L5 and L6, the right and left masseter, respectively; and Gi and Mi (i = 1, 2, …, 6) denote the muscles’ origin and insertion locations on the skull and the mandible, respectively.

Figure 1. Major muscles of mastication [8].

Figure 2. A robotic model in the form of platform mechanism: (a) nomenclature and coordinate systems and (b) the robot covered by the skull in SolidWorks.
The pterygoid externus actuators (L1 and L2) are placed posterior to the TMJs (M1 and M2) for ease of their placement, which is made possible because of the bidirectionally acting actuators. The pterygoid internii are not present in the model because they play only an assisting role in closing and opening the mouth. Their absence helps avoid any redundancy of the actuations, which may be introduced due to the use of the actuators in place of the muscles, and consequently eliminates any overconstraints that prevent the mandible of the robotic model from being movable. In the model, the point M1 and M2 also represent the right and left condylar points, respectively, and each of them will trace a different trajectory when the mandible moves around. This matches both clinical and biomechanical findings that, during the jaw movements, the mandible does not rotate around a fixed condylar axis but around instantaneous axes that continuously change their position in space [8], [15], [18]; and the working and balancing condylar points exhibit different trajectories that vary themselves with the type of foods being chewed [19]. With the moving spherical joints M1 and M2, the forces within them are always normal to the condylar paths if no friction is considered.

**Physical Quantities of the Model**

The robotic model proposed above can be viewed as a variant version of Stewart platform robot that has a moving plate and a fixed plate. It is a 6-DOF robot and consists mainly of the skull (or the ground), the six cylindrical actuators, and the mandible (or the end-effector). The mandible has an irregular shape and is approximated from a replica skull, as shown in Figure 3. The skull, as the immovable member of the model, does not need the physical parameters specified. The locations of both actuators’ insertions on the mandible and origins on the skull are approximated from the same replica skull, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, and their coordinates are given in Tables 1 and 2. The actuators are regarded as a cylindrical joint that allows both translation along and rotation around the axis MiGi (i = 1, 2, ..., 6).

The reference points that can be used for the description of the chewing behaviors are incisal point (IP), right molar point (RMP), left molar point (LMP), right condylar point (RCP), and left condylar point (LCP). They are shown in Figure 4, and their coordinates are given in Table 3. The centre of mass (CM) point is due to the bone density of 900 kg/m$^3$ assigned to the mandible. The two main coordinate systems used in the model are: the skull system ($OXYZ_S$), which is fixed on the skull and to which the mandible movements refer, and the mandible system ($OXYZ_M$), which is fixed on the mandible and whose initial location, when the mouth is closed, differs from $OXYZ_S$ only by a translation of $-9.1$ mm along the $z$-axis.

![Figure 3. The mandible, the actuators’ attaching points, and the reference points: (a) the 3-D model and (b) the bottom view of the wire-frame model.](image-url)
Figure 4 is a photo of the final physical model based on the aforementioned design, where the gap between the two mandibles is for the upper and lower sets of teeth. The model is made entirely of aluminum, and the spring-loaded cylindrical joints maintain the model at its equilibrium. Figure 5 illustrates the robotic model performing clenching and grinding movements. It should be noted that some of the actuators’ attachments were shifted a little bit from the biological locations in order that the physical interference between the actuators can be eliminated. A prototype of the robot has been designed and its building is underway. It should be noted further that the proposed model is not a typical platform robot; the two plates, one for the moving lower jaw and the other for the non-moving frame involving the upper jaw, are connected in a way that the attachment points on either plate do not lie in a single plane, and consequently, a theoretical framework for dynamics needs to be developed.

Simulations and Analysis
With the robotic model developed, two types of simulations can be performed: forward kinematics for generating the masticatory patterns by specified actuations of the actuators and inverse kinematics for finding the muscular actuations required for a desired masticatory pattern. The tool used to simulate and animate the robotic kinematics is COSMOS/Motion embedded within SolidWorks. Extensive simulations have been conducted with respect to the specified actuations of various continuous time functions and the specified masticatory movements of different chewing behaviors. Only two simulation scenarios are given in this article.

Masticatory Patterns by Specified Actuations
This simulation was used to produce a chewing pattern in the 3-D space and to determine the ranges of the reference points on the mandible. The initial state of the robot is defined by the incisor point at \([x \ y \ z]^T = [-12 \ 0 \ -30]^T\) in the skull system \(OXYZ_S\), the pterygoid actuators \(L1\) and \(L2\) displaced of 4.45 mm from the their bottom ends, and the coincident \(x-z\) plane of \(OXYZ_S\) and \(OXYZ_M\).

Being sophisticated and having any time-functions for chewing, the muscular actuations may be approximated by a series of harmonic functions. To show the capability in simulating for masticatory patterns, this study employs the following harmonic time function to drive the six
actuators. However, it should be noted that the set of functions is not associated with any realistic chewing behaviors.

Where \( z \) is the actuator’s displacement around its initial position:

- \( z = 4 \sin(0.5t + \pi/2) \), for pterygoid externus actuators L1 and L2
- \( z = \sin(0.5t) \), for temporalis actuators L3 and L4
- \( z = 4 \sin(0.5t - 0.083\pi) \), for right masseter actuator L5
- \( z = 4.175 \sin(0.5t - 0.1\pi) \), for left masseter actuator L6.

The spatial trajectories of IP, RMP, LMP, RCP, and LCP in frontal, sagittal, and horizontal planes are shown in Figures 6 and 7. It can be found that the lateral, inferior-superior, and anterior-posterior ranges of the incisor are 8, 25, and 20 mm, respectively, and the lateral, inferior-superior, and anterior-posterior ranges of the RCP are 8, 2 and 8 mm, respectively. The incisal point moves within the Posselt envelope [21] while the condylar movements match the clinical and biomechanical findings [14], [16]. The shape of the chewing path looks like one from a left-side chewing subject. However, it should be noted that the periodic actuations were arbitrarily chosen only for simulation purposes, and they do not reflect real human chewing processes, in particular, in terms of the temporal information of chewing.

The biomechanical behaviors of the masticatory system have been modeled mathematically by a number of researchers to test hypotheses concerning masticatory function.

Figure 6. IP, RMP, and LMP trajectories: (a) the frontal plane, (b) the sagittal plane, and (c) the horizontal plane.
Actuations Required for the Specified Masticatory Patterns

The data for this simulation were measured from the record of the masticatory sequence of a subject, provided by INRA, France. The subject chewed on the right side and the test food had hard elastic properties [22]. The only available data were the history of the $y$ and $z$ coordinates of IP in $OXYZ_S$, as plotted in Figures 8 and 9. With these data, however, the mandible movements cannot be fully specified. To have a complete description, the mandible is further constrained as follows: the middle point of the two condyles M1 and M2 moves along a straight line in the $x$–$z$ plane and 25.4 mm distant from the origin of $OXYZ_S$.

Figure 7. RCP and LCP trajectories: (a) the frontal plane, (b) the sagittal plane, and (c) the horizontal plane.

Figure 8. Temporal chewing trajectories of IP from experiments: (a) lateral movement and (b) superior-inferior movement.

Figure 9. Spatial chewing trajectories of IP in the frontal plane.
It can be found from the lateral movements (Figures 8 and 9) that the subject chewed at right side and performed three peaks of the lateral excursion movements. This can be explained as work of the tongue to collect or replace the food bolus in an accurate position. It can also be seen from the superior-inferior movements (Figures 8 and 9) that for the first couple of chewing cycles, the mouth openings are a maximum of 30 mm, for the next few chewing cycles the maximum openings are about 25 mm, and for the rest of chewing process the maximum opening is 20 mm.

The six actuators must be actuated following the time functions given in Figure 10 in order to reproduce the given real human chewing pattern. It can be seen that the maximum strokes of the six actuators are about 18.7, 15.4, 2.4, 4.5, 9.4, and 12.7 mm, respectively. The two pterygoid actuators need to be displaced more than the two temporalis actuators and much more than the two masseter actuators. The maximum pterygoid actuations occur in the first few chewing cycles, but exhibit fairly smaller actuations of approximately less than 4.7 and 6.3 mm, respectively.

From these actuations, an average chewing cycle of 1.9 s has been found, and other time-related chewing parameters could be found if needed.

Conclusion
The robotic model allows performance of two different kinds of simulations. It has been validated by extensive simulations in SolidWorks with COSMOS/Motion. While this work is preliminary, it does provide a viable robotic model to be worked on. As the robotic model is not in a typical parallel platform, the issues to be researched include those such as simulations of dynamic forces using COSMOS/Works, kinematics, dynamics, force-motion control of the robot, and mechatronics design.

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Keywords
Robotic jaw, chewing, foods evaluation, human mastication, platform robot.

References

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Choosing new ways to chew

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