Global Distribution and Variability of Surface Skin and Surface Air Temperatures as Depicted in the AIRS Version-6 Data Set

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Backgroun Information
The AIRS Science Team AIRS/AMSU Version-6 Data Set

AIRS is the advanced IR Sounder on the EOS Aqua, accompanied by AMSU, an advanced microwave sounder. There are 9 AIRS 15 km x 15 km Fields of View (FOVs) in a single AMSU 45 km x 45 km Field of Regard (FOR). AIRS products include land/oceanic surface skin temperature \( T_{ps} \), atmospheric temperature profile \( T(p) \), water vapor profile \( q(p) \), and various gas profiles, cloud profile, cloud cover and cloud top pressure; and Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR). Most level-2 (single retrieval) products are generated on an AMSU FOR, but cloud products and OLR are generated for each AIRS FOV. SUCCESS-2 Quality Controlled AIRS soundings are generated in up to 90% fractional cloud cover. Level-3 products are gridded on an AMSU 45 km x 45 km grid at 60 Min (1 hour) interval on a global 1° x 1° global grid on a daily, eight day, and monthly mean basis.

Improved AIRS Version-6 Surface Skin Parameters

AIRS Version-6 products are significantly improved over those obtained previously, especially with respect to surface skin temperature \( T_{ps} \) and surface air temperature \( T_{a} \). These improvements led to the ability to conduct meaningful studies of the global distribution of the difference between surface skin temperature and surface air temperature, as observed by AIRS both 1:30 PM and 1:30 AM local time. We refer to this surface skin-air temperature difference as \( \Delta T_{s,a} \); it is a very important parameter with regard to the understanding of the sensible heat flux between the Earth’s surface skin and atmosphere.

Data Sets Used in This Study

This study used the AIRS Science Team Version-6 monthly mean level-3 data for surface skin temperature and surface air temperature, each gridded separately for 1:30 AM and 1:30 PM. Values of \( \Delta T_{s,a} \)s are not contained in the Version-6 data set. Data products used extend from September 2002 (the start of the data set) to August 2014. Twelve-year monthly mean climatologies were generated for each 1° x 1° grid box by averaging monthly mean data for all Januarys, Februarys, etc. Similarly, we generated seasonal climatologies for each season. Separate climatologies were generated for both 1:30 PM and 1:30 AM. The monthly anomaly for each grid box is the difference of the value for that month from that month’s climatology, and the seasonal anomaly is the difference of the values for that season from its climatology.

Anomaly time series of surface skin and surface air temperatures are for the most part locally highly correlated (or anti-correlated) with the El Nino Index. ENCs of surface skin temperature are similar to those of surface air temperature, but larger in magnitude. These correlations are the main cause for the patterns of \( \Delta T_{s,a} \) and the anomalies with respect to the El Nino activity. ENCs of surface skin minus surface air temperature are anti-corrrelated with the El Nino activity. ENCs of surface skin minus surface air temperature are in general small, but they exhibit a strong oscillation centered over Indonesia.

Summary

We computed level-3 values of surface skin minus surface air temperature, \( \Delta T_{s,a} \), by subtracting level-3 values of \( T_{ps} \) from level-3 values of \( T_{a} \). Level-3 values of \( \Delta T_{s,a} \) appear to be of high quality with regard to both their climatology and interannual variability. We encourage researchers to study the characteristics of \( \Delta T_{s,a} \) to evaluate if it is currently accurate enough for their research purposes.

Interannual Variability of Surface Skin and Surface Air Temperature

The figure in the panel to the right show the variability of \( \Delta T_{s,a} \) in terms of the behavior of its anomaly time series, as depicted by ARCs and ENCs. The Average Rate of Change (ARC) of a product is the slope of the linear least squares fit to the anomaly time series. The El Niño Correlation (ENC) is the correlation of the anomaly time series with that of the El Niño Index (EI), which is given by the NOAA Niño-4 SST minus its climatology as computed over the same 12 consecutive years. Results shown are for the average of the 1:30 AM/PM observations, as computed over the period September 2002 through August 2014.