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Design of a measurement setup and first experiments on the influence of CO_2-cooling on the thermal displacements on a machine tool

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Abstract

The paper investigates the thermal influences of CO_2- and oil-cooling on the precision of a machine tool. If CO_2 is used for process cooling instead of oil, a different temperature distribution in the machine is observed. Different temperature distributions lead to different tool center point (TCP)-displacements. To measure TCP-displacements under real process conditions with CO_2 and oil, a special measurement setup is designed, built and applied. A representative process for the machine is chosen to compare the different process coolings. The results show that the choice of coolant has a crucial influence on the TCP-displacements. It is shown that the thermally induced displacements can be reduced by 15 µm in y-direction, but increase about 4 µm in x-direction, when the coolant is changed from oil to CO_2.

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1. Introduction

For many manufacturing processes, oil cooling is the commonly used technique to prevent thermally induced damage of the tool and the workpiece. This is often done by flood cooling, which leads to high amounts of oil required for that process. Furthermore, oil has a lot of negative environmental impacts, due to additives for achieving higher performance and more areas of application. This is the reason, why there is a lot of research to reduce the amount of oil for several processes. One alternative is the cooling with CO_2 instead of oil or minimum quantity lubrication cooling with a small amount of oil only.

There are several publications that compare the influence of CO_2 instead of oil on the machining process. But the change of the cooling medium not only causes a different behavior of the process, it furthermore has an effect on the whole temperature distribution in the machine. This paper shows that a change of the cooling medium from oil to CO_2 results in a change of the precision of the investigated machine tool.

To analyze the effect of CO_2 a special measurement setup is designed, built and applied. This measurement setup can measure TCP-displacements under real process conditions, what means under oil or CO_2. To compare the two cooling media, a representative process on a machine tool is chosen and the heating up phase of the machine was measured after every two manufacturing steps.

In order to simplify the assignment of causes to their effects no workpieces is produced and only the movements of the axes and the rotation of the spindle is analyzed. This leads to the special case that this paper is able to present the effect of changing the cooling medium on the thermally induced TCP-displacements due to the movement of the axes and spindle only.

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2. State of the art

2.1. Measurement of thermal caused errors in machine tools

Thermally caused errors are estimated to contribute an amount between 40% and 80% of all geometric errors induced on TCP-displacements [1-5]. As Mayr et al. comment, thermal errors are either caused by the environment or by internal heat sources [6]. Internal heat sources can be for example drives, pumps or the cooling medium, when it has a higher temperature than the environment.

A common measurement device to compare thermally induced errors on machine tools is the R-Test, as applied by Mayr, Ibaraki and Hong or Gebhardt [7-9]. In these publications the setup is used with the machine's cooling medium turned off. Furthermore the investigated machine has not been analyzed under real process conditions yet. More precisely either the spindle was turned on or one axis moved over a longer period of time. These special test conditions lead to a special heat input, which does not occur under real process conditions because the heat input was just caused by the movement of one component.

2.2. Measurement of displacements under process conditions

2.2.1. Double Ballbar

The standard ISO 230-4 [11] describes the measurement of circular paths on machine tools. The double ballbar is usually used within a three dimensional hemisphere with predefined test paths at moderate speed. The double ballbar consists of two precision spheres that are connected with a length variable bar with an integrated measurement system. The moderate speed makes sure that dynamic effects do not affect the measurement results. This measurement setup is a good possibility to measure in 3D, but its disadvantages are its sensitivity to environmental contamination and that it cannot be used in a stand-alone automated manner.

2.2.2. Grid plate

By using a grid plate a two dimensional measurement of position accuracy and repeatability in one working plane can be performed, just as described in the standard ISO 230-2 [12]. Therefore straight-lined or freeform test paths can be used to measure position errors across and along the moving direction. The grid plate is mostly used to detect dynamic effects on machine tools. The main advantage is the contact free measurement eliminating friction which could influence the measurement results. The disadvantage is that it is an optical system and therefore not usable under oily conditions.

2.2.3. R-Test

The R-Test is a measurement setup presented by Weikert in 2004 [10]. For this setup three incremental measurement sensors and a precision ball made out of ceramics or hard metal are used. The setup enables to measure simultaneously 3D displacements within a range of ± 3 mm. The standard measurement setup with probes having IP50 protection class cannot be used under flushing conditions, due to the sensors that would need a special protection and a higher protection class.

2.2.4. Laser interferometer

The Laser interferometer is a further possibility to measure the positioning accuracy of machine tools following ISO 230-6 [13]. This measurement system can detect combined displacements of one or more machine axis depending on its configuration. Due to the issue with its exposed optical measurement principle as with the grid plate, it is also very sensitive for environmental contamination and therefore not well-suited under process conditions.

3. Measurement setup

3.1. Requirements

To use a measurement setup under real process conditions, the following requirements have to be fulfilled:

- non-sensitive against oil and CO_2
- enable measurement of translational displacements in x-, y- and z-direction
- modular build-up for re-use
- quick installation and removal of the system

To fulfill the stated requirements the measurement principle of the R-Test was adapted and a setup with sensors that persists under real process conditions was designed.

3.2. Sensors under use

Sensors are specified by their degree of protection. For the use under oil- or CO_2-cooling, sensors with a protection class of IP67 or even better like IP68 (permanent submersible) are necessary. Furthermore the sensors should have a measurement range of at least $\pm 1\ mm$. To capture the displacements of the machine tool, a sensor resolution of at least 0.25 µm combined with a high linearity is required.

The sensor used is the LVDT (linear variable differential transformer) sensor, T301F from the Peter Hirt GmbH, Nänikon. It has a protection class of IP67, a measurement range of 2 mm and a measurement resolution of 0.06 µm. The linearity over the measurement range is 8 µm and the repeatability is stated to be 0.01 µm. The sensors are readout with a recording and interpolation system from IBR Messtechnik GmbH & Co. KG, Haunetal.

3.3. Measurement concept

To use the measurement concept of the R-Test three LVDT sensors with flat probing tips, placed orthogonally towards each other, measure the displacement of a precision sphere. The R-Test concept is adapted to fit the machine tool under investigation, as shown in Fig. 1. The precision sphere is made of ceramics. To reduce thermal errors due to the measurement setup the bar is made out of Invar® steel.