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Thermomechanical analysis induced by interrupted cutting of Ti6Al4V under several cooling strategies

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ABSTRACT

Cryogenic machining has mainly investigated in continuous cutting. Therefore, there is a lack of knowledge on the application of this technology to interrupted cutting, such as in milling. This study aims to investigate the thermomechanical phenomena in interrupted cutting of Ti6Al4V alloy under cryogenic, flood cooling and dry conditions. Due to the complexity of the thermomechanical analysis in milling, a special designed experimental setup has been developed through interrupted turning tests. This work highlights the influence of cryogenic flow rate and cutting time/non-cutting ratio on tool temperature. The obtained results can be extrapolated to milling operation.

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1. Introduction

Machining refractory alloys generate high localized temperatures due to their poor thermal conductivity, high friction coefficient and high sensitivity to strain and strain-rate. As a consequence, rapid tool wear and poor surface integrity is observed when machining such alloys [1–3]. Several coolant strategies and/or machining assistances, including cryogenic assisted machining and tool vibration, can be applied to reduce these problems [4,5]. Indeed, cryogenic assisted machining, where liquid nitrogen (LN_2) is projected to the cutting zone, can be an effective solution to reduce the temperature in machining such alloys [6].

Challenges of cryogenic assisted machining are numerous and the cutting process of refractory alloys should be improved [7,8]. However, this poor controlled technology of liquid nitrogen deliverer to the cutting zone does not permit to compare all scientific works on cryogenic assisted machining, due to the scatter in the applied cooling conditions. In general, scientific publications agree on the benefit of LN_2 cooling in tool wear reduction, but show a scatter in terms of thermal phenomena and workpiece's surface integrity [9,10].

Several strategies to supply LN_2 to the cutting zone can be found in the literature. It seems that the most efficient way is to deliver LN_2 on the tool rake and flank faces, simultaneously [7]. Moreover, the efficiency of the cooling process depends on all LN_2 projection parameters, such as: flow rate, liquid/gas phase ratio, jet orientation and divergence, distance between the nozzle and the cutting zone. The convective heat transfer coefficient is a good indicator of this efficiency. Different convective heat transfer coefficients can be found in the literature without specifying all the LN_2 projection parameters [11,12]. The understanding of the physical phenomena during LN_2 projection is important to improve the efficiency of cryogenic assisted machining. LN_2 routing from the ranger to the nozzle has to be improved as well, in order to maximize the liquid/gas phase ratio at nozzle exit and to minimize the LN_2 loses [13].

Most of works on cryogenic assisted machining found in the literature are related with continuous cutting and very few of them deal with interrupted cutting [14]. In this case, many unknowns exist, including: the proper LN_2 routing system, the optimal LN_2 projection strategy and parameters, and their consequences in the cutting forces, tool wear and surface integrity.

The objective of the present work is to analyse the influence of LN_2 cooling on the tool temperatures and cutting forces in interrupted cutting of Ti6Al4V alloy, and compare it with dry and flood coolant conditions. In the case of milling, it's difficult to deliver the LN_2 through spindles and rotating tools, which requires particular precautions. Therefore, it seems to be easier to propose a thermomechanical analysis of interrupted cutting under cryogenic cooling conditions, using a fixed cutting tool and a workpiece shape. For such reason, interrupted turning tests are used to reproduce the milling operation.

2. Experimental set-up and parameters

Fig. 1 shows the experimental setup used in turning tests of Ti6Al4V alloy, using CNMG 120408 type uncoated cemented carbide cutting inserts. In order to deliver LN_2 at the cutting zone, a phase separator was used between the ranger and the tool holder. This phase separator is controlled using information from delivering temperature (at the phase separator exit) and LN_2 level

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measurements. To ensure steady-state flow conditions, the LN_2 system (from the ranger to the nozzle) was cooled down before performing any test.

LN_2 is projected into both tool flank and rake faces using nozzles of different diameters. Variable nozzle diameters (1–3 mm) are used to spray LN_2 into the tool rake face, while a fixed nozzle diameter of 1.2 mm is used at tool flank face. The pressure was fixed at 2 bars. The average flow rate is determined by measuring the mass difference in the LN_2 ranger during the machining tests. These average flow rates are equal to 1.2, 1.9 and 2.5 l/min, corresponding to the nozzle diameters of 1, 2 and 3 mm, respectively.

Tool holder's internal channels for LN_2 delivering are previously optimized (by minimizing the angles through the flow), as well as the projection parameters (pressure, nozzle diameter, jet orientation and distance between the nozzle and the cutting zone), in order to maximize the convective heat transfer coefficient. In this case, LN_2 jet is oriented at $\alpha = 15^\circ$ and $\beta = 10^\circ$ in relation to the tool rake and flank faces, respectively (Fig. 1). The projection distance (d) is equal to 12 mm (Fig. 1).

A piezoelectric dynamometric (Kistler, model 9121) is used to measure the forces, while embedded thermocouples (TC_i) in the tool were used to measure the tool temperatures. Three thermocouples are placed in a hole having 0.5 mm of diameter and located at 1 mm beneath the tool rake face. The thermocouples (TC_1, TC_2 and TC_3 in Fig. 1) are placed in strategic positions in the tool, in order to compare the cooling influence on the tool temperature distribution.

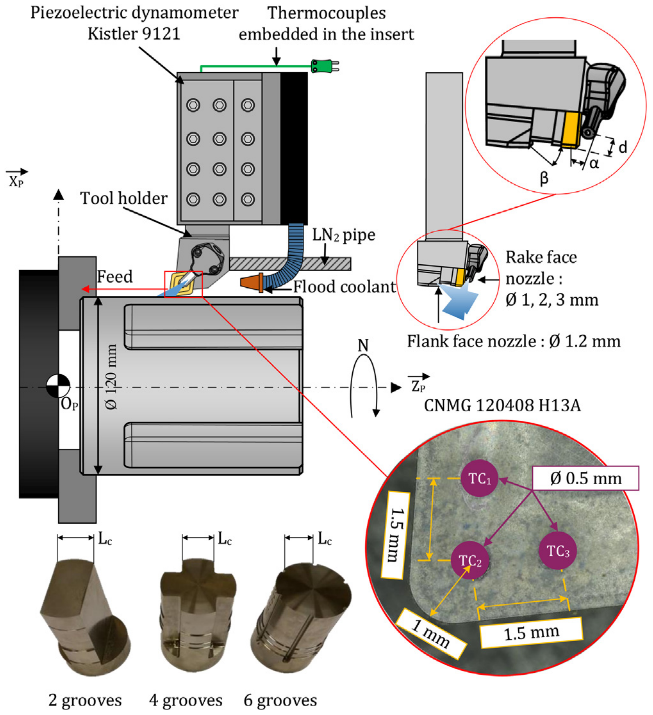

Fig. 1. Experimental set-up for interrupted turning tests of Ti6Al4V alloy.

Two kinds of experimental tests were carried out: (1) longitudinal turning tests over cylindrical workpieces, and (2) interrupted turning tests were performed on grooved workpieces (Fig. 1), to emulate a milling operation with a 40 mm milling cutter diameter (D). All of the samples have the same tool-workpiece engagement length (L_c) value of 31.4 mm, which is calculated by Eq. (1).

$$L_c = \frac{D}{2} \times arccos\left(1 - 2 \times \frac{a_e}{D}\right) \quad (1)$$

a_e is the radial depth of cut which is considered to be 0.5.D. Three workpieces of 120 mm diameter having 2, 4 or 6 grooves are designed, which are representative of the different frequencies of tool-workpiece engagement in milling operation (i.e. 5.3 H_z at v_c = 30 m/min and 9.7 Hz at v_c = 55 m/min with a 4 grooves workpiece). Cutting and non-cutting length ratio are 16%, 33% and 50% for 2, 4 and 6 grooves, respectively.

3. Results

3.1. Longitudinal turning tests

Priory to establish the design of experiments (DoE) for the interrupted turning tests, the determination of the restricted range of cutting conditions (v_c, f and a_p) for turning Ti6Al4V titanium alloy is mandatory. The minimum values of the cutting conditions can be determined by applying the methodology of minimal specific cutting forces (K_c) variation in function of the cutting conditions, according to the AFNOR standard NF E66-520-4-97. As an example, Fig. 2 shows the variation of K_c in function of f, keeping constant v_c and a_p. Applying the above-mentioned methodology, the minimum f to be used in the interrupted turning tests should be 0.125 mm.

Fig. 2 also provides information about the influence of the cooling strategy on K_c. Firstly, depending on the lubrication strategy, three sets of K_c curves can be identified, being flood coolant the current industrial reference for Ti6Al4V alloy machining. Secondly, for low LN_2 flow rates (1.2 l/min), which corresponds to near dry machining, the corresponding K_c curves (set 1) are below the flood one. However, K_c increases with the LN_2 flow rate (from 1.2 l/min, corresponding to set 1, to 1.9 l/min, corresponding to set 2). K_c will increase even more when LN_2 is projected on both tool rake and flank faces, simultaneously (set 3). Therefore, the projection of LN_2 on tool flank face has a non-negligible effect on K_c. In total, K_c increases 1.5 times from set 1 to set 3. This is due to the variation of the Ti6Al4V mechanical behavior and tribological conditions induced by the cooling strategies [7]. In particular, a possible increase of work material hardening while machining using high LN_2 flow rate.

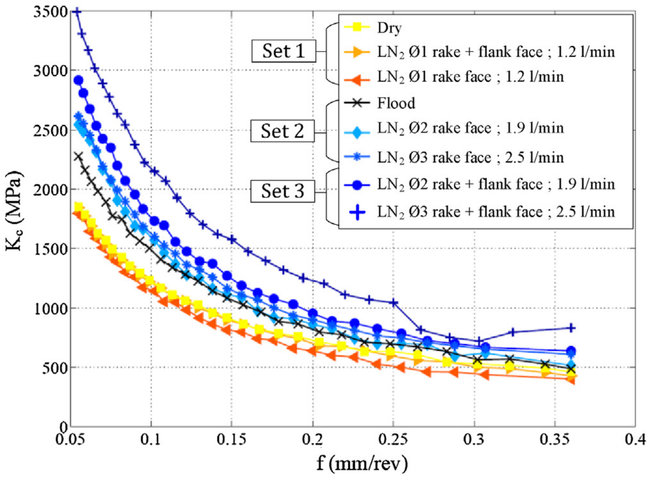

Fig. 2. Specific cutting forces (K_c) vs. feed (f) (v_c = 55 m/min, a_p = 1 mm).

3.2. Interrupted turning tests

Based on previous machining tests results, the following DoE for the interrupted turning is proposed. Four mains factors with two levels are chosen and presented in Table 1.

The LN_2 was projected simultaneously on both tool rake and flank faces. The measured parameters are the tool temperatures recorded by thermocouples (T_{TC1}, T_{TC2} and T_{TC3}) and the cutting (F_c), feed (F_f) and penetration (F_p) forces.

Fig. 3 shows the results for a workpiece with 4 grooves. This figure points out an increase of the maximal cutting forces (Fig. 3a)

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