

HAN Master Major Project

Plan of approach

Using Fanuc FANUC R-2000iC (6-axis robot) for improved efficiency in FRC parts formation

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Contents

1	Background	1
2	Problem Definition	2
3	Project Objectives	3
4	Requirement Analysis	4
5	Activities and Products	5
6	Master Level	6
7	Restrictions	7
8	Timeplan	9
	Appendices	10
A	Appendix 1	11

1. Background

Fiber-reinforced composite materials are seeing a widespread use in a large number of applications ranging from aerospace systems over renewable energy production to automotive parts [5] [2]. These composite materials generally provide high specific strength and improved stiffness compared to other materials [3]. Through the combination of different materials, desirable mechanical properties like low weight with high stiffness can be achieved that would be hard or near impossible to recreate with single compound materials [7]. An FRC can generally be described as the combination of three components [6]:

- The matrix, made of a polymer. This polymer can either be applied as a resin and hardens irreversible or a thermoplastic is used, that needs to be heated for application.
- The reinforcement component which consists of fibres with high strength and modulus. These days preferred materials are glass, carbon or polyethylene fibres.
- The fine interphase region. It's the interface between the matrix and the reinforcement that transfers the load between these.

FRC's can look back to a long history since the beginning of the 19th century with phenolic sheet Bakelite being the first fibre-reinforced plastic. Bakelite, a thermoset being the matrix was combined with different fibre materials like paper, cotton fabrics, or synthetic fabrics to create parts that can meet diverse mechanical, electrical and thermal requirements. [4]

In this project, a thermoplastic matrix will be used together with carbon or glass fibres. The mixed reinforced thermoplastic being supplied as pellets in various sizes for different properties is dried and then melted in an extruder through a continuous process. The material is then portioned into pieces by a guillotine into pieces and combined and stacked into assemblies by a delta robot. These assemblies are then brought to temperature again before being loaded into a hydraulic press with a mould by an industrial robot arm. [1]

2. Problem Definition

Assemblies of hot, formable Thermoplastic are delivered on a conveyor belt in varying positions after being reheated in an oven. The assemblies then need to be picked up with a FANUC R-2000iC/210F 6-axis Industrial robot arm from the conveyor belt through a small window in a heat shield that keeps the assemblies warm. The Industrial robot then swings over to the press when it is open and the mould is free. The assemblies are then placed inside the mould at desired spots while making sure, the robot arm does not collide with any part of the press. After all parts are placed, and the robot arm has pulled back in a safe position, the press is activated and forms the parts with heat and pressure. When the forming process is finished, the press opens, the product is picked by the robot arm and placed on another conveyor belt for further processing. As the press is free, the cycle can repeat. [1] The overall goal of the Smart Production Cell is to drive down cycle time for these composite parts from ca. three minutes to one minute. Also the robot needs to cooperate with different parts of the process like the oven and the press and it plays a major role in synchronization between the subprocesses.

3. Project Objectives

A control strategy with efficient movements guided by placement position data from the delta robot, velocity signals from the conveyor belts and flags from the press needs to be implemented in software on the accompanying FANUC R-30iB controller and the affiliated Siemens SIMATIC S7-1500 PLC .

4. Requirement Analysis

Certain conditions need to be fulfilled to make the project a full success. These can be split up into external and internal factors.

External requirements:

Power Supply In order to supply the whole production line with enough energy, 400A fuses need to be installed in the 400V 3-Phase building connection.

Surrounding Subprocesses All subprocesses (extruder with supply hopper, conveyors, delta robot with gripper, press with mould, robot gripper, oven with heat-shield) need to be in place and running on their own.

Test Material Some kind of test material needs to be supplied to demonstrate all abilities of the robot arm.

Internal requirements:

Fieldbus An Ethernet network needs to be set up to host the communication via Profinet between the subprocesses.

Software For simulation Roboguide along with Visual Components and for control Roboguide as well as TIA Portal need to be made available, installed and configured.

Robot Placement The final placement of the robot is not yet determined and the robot needs to be bolted to the ground in its final position before it can be used.

5. Activities and Products

6. Master Level

7. Restrictions

Bibliography

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8. Timeplan

Appendices

A. Appendix 1