

## Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0141-6359(17)30203-9

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.precisioneng.2017.08.016>

Reference: PRE 6645

To appear in: *Precision Engineering*

Received date: 6-4-2017

Revised date: 13-7-2017

Accepted date: 18-8-2017

Please cite this article as: Dib MHM, Duduch JG, Jasinevicius R.G. Minimum Chip Thickness Determination by means of Cutting Force Signal in Micro Endmilling. *Precision Engineering* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.precisioneng.2017.08.016>

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# Minimum Chip Thickness Determination by means of Cutting Force Signal in Micro Endmilling

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## Highlights

1. Determination of minimum chip thickness by means of cutting forces from dynamometer;
2. Determination of efficient sampling frequency in micromilling process;
3. Describe micromilling process dynamics on the periodicity of the cutting forces signal;
4. Characterization of the effect of cutting edge radius upon cutting forces during chip formation and;
5. Modelling of ploughing process by means of cutting force signal.

## Abstract

Issues related to ploughing affecting the performance of the micromilling process have recently been reported in literature. It is well known that there is a minimum chip thickness ( $h_{\min}$ ) below which ploughing is the main material removal mechanism and no shear occurs. This leads to a non-effective material removal, resulting in a poor surface quality. In order to solve this problem, the minimum chip thickness has been predicted by measuring the cutting forces. However, the determination of  $h_{\min}$  by means of the cutting force signal, at the instant the chip is being formed, has not been approached. In this article, a method of determining  $h_{\min}$ , based upon the signal variation of the cutting forces and the effect of tool radial runout during chip formation is proposed. Carbide micro-endmills without coating were used to cut an aluminium alloy (RSA 6061-T6) sample and the cutting forces were measured using a micro-dynamometer. The microtopography of a microchannel wall was assessed using an optical profiler in order to establish the approximate position where the chip starts to form ( $h_{\min}$ ). As the cut progresses, the force component normal to the feed ( $F_{fN}$ ) reverses when the undeformed chip thickness is equal to the cutting edge radius ( $r_e$ ). Simultaneously, the thrust force increases rapidly, and continues to grow but at a lower rate as  $F_{fN}$  increase. The main cutting force and the active force present significant differences to each other. The minimum chip thickness was estimated as  $0.3r_e$  by means of the behavior of the active force. A small quantity of material left on the wall of the microchannel could be observed in align with the cutting movement together with a deterioration of the surface finish attributed to the increase of  $r_e$ . Results show that the size of the material left is 2 to 4 times greater than  $h_{\min}$ . Conversely, the quality of the microchannel floor improves as  $r_e$  increase. This shows that there is a balance between  $h_{\min}$  and  $r_e$  and the effect upon the finish of the channel wall and floor. That should be important for microchannel fabrication in terms of performance of micro-

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