



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE ROBOT GRIPPER FOR
OBJECT WEIGHT MEASUREMENT***

AHMED M. M. ALMASSRI

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**DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE ROBOT GRIPPER FOR
OBJECT WEIGHT MEASUREMENT**

By

AHMED M. M. ALMASSRI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

December, 2014



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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, my creator, for giving me the intellectual capacity to learn about His creation. Without His gift and grace to me, I could do nothing. I dedicate my thesis work to my loving parents, **ROWAIDA** and **BADEE**, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. In addition, a special feeling of gratitude to my loving brothers, Ashraf, Hassan, Hani for supporting entire my life, as long as I was a child. I also dedicate this grateful work to my loving brother's sons, Ali and Badee, whose motivate me to complete my research efficiently I would like to express my utmost appreciation to my sister, **Isrra** without her encouragement I would never have started and without her support I never would have finished. Last but not least, I would like to thank my loving wife, **Asmaa**, for always being encouraging and supporting.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

**DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE ROBOT GRIPPER FOR
OBJECT WEIGHT MEASUREMENT**

By

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December 2014

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Robotic gripper is a mechatronic machine that is made to complete tasks whenever it is required, especially for repetitive and dangerous tasks as well as specific applications, such as military robots, automotive industries and medical operations. Such mentioned tasks, require a lot of labor force for the assembly line and material handling. Therefore, there is a significant need to have a dedicated machine, which is suitable for this application as a safety concern. This is difficult to be obtained without equipping the robotic gripper with some types of sensors. A few technologies have been used different types of sensors in order to measure the forces between the claw of robotic gripper and an object. A good example is a pressure sensor, which is commonly used in the robotic gripper operations, especially to grasp any object. However, the existing robotic gripper has never been introduced the weight measurement method while grasping object based on piezoresistive pressure sensor. In this research, many works are focused to overcome the weaknesses in the current design applications such as the pressure distribution for active area of robotic gripper, sensor type and specific pressure range of sensor. Therefore, this study has proposed a robotic gripper prototype with a new configuration of pressure sensor distribution, based on development of grasping algorithm for object's weight measurement. The new configuration of pressure sensors will be based on the proposed modified Wheatstone Bridge Circuit WBC as it has a high sensitivity as well as capability for grasping mechanism and weight measurement. The proposed work also includes the development of new algorithm for data extraction and signal conditioning analysis that will be loaded into the microcontroller system. Three circuits are designed and implemented in this research to investigate the pressure distribution and sensitivity output, including Traditional Pressure Sensor Circuit (TPSC), WBC type 1, and modified WBC type 2. In addition, a robotic gripper prototype has been developed for the experimental purposes of this study for the interface between pressure sensors and microcontroller system. As a result, a new approach of pressure sensor distribution on the robotic gripper prototype has been developed with proposed modified WBC and grasping algorithm with 0.982 sensitivity and 98.4% efficiency. Along with the new features of this prototype system, the combination of grasping and weight measurement is significantly improved when it is compared with the existing one.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**MEREKABENTUK DAN MEMBANGUN PROTOTAIP ROBOT
PENGGENGGAM UNTUK PENGUKURAN BERAT OBJEK**

Oleh

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Penggennggam robotik adalah mesin mekatronik yang dicipta untuk menyelesaikan tugas-tugas setiap kali ia diperlukan, terutama untuk tugas-tugas yang berulang-ulang dan berbahaya serta aplikasi khas seperti robot untuk kegunaan ketenteraan, industri automotif dan juga perubatan. Tugas-tugas tersebut memerlukan tenaga buruh yang banyak untuk barisan pemasangan dan pengendalian material. Oleh kerana itu, bagi mengutamakan faktor keselamatan, sesebuah mesin hendaklah dikhususkan mengikut kesesuaian penggunaannya. Ini adalah sukar untuk diperolehi tanpa melengkapkan penggennggam robotik dengan beberapa jenis penderia. Terdapat beberapa teknologi yang telah digunakan untuk mengukur daya pada penyepit penggennggam robotik dan sesebuah objek dengan menggunakan pelbagai jenis penderia. Antara contoh yang baik adalah dengan menggunakan penderia tekanan, ianya biasa digunakan untuk memegang apa-apa objek pada robot penggennggam. Walaubagaimanapun penggennggam robotik yang sedia ada tidak pernah lagi diperkenalkan dengan kaedah pengukuran berat sambil menggennggam sesebuah objek berdasarkan penderia tekanan *piezoresistive*. Dalam kajian ini, pelbagai usaha telah dijalankan dengan memberi tumpuan untuk mengatasi kelemahan-kelemahan dalam rekaan sedia ada seperti taburan tekanan untuk kawasan aktif pada penggennggam robotik, jenis penderia dan juga julat tekanan khusus untuk penderia tersebut. Oleh itu, kajian ini telah mencadangkan sebuah prototaip penggennggam robotik dengan tatarajah pengagihan penderia tekanan baharu, berdasarkan pembangunan algoritma penggennggan dengan mengukur berat objek tersebut. Konfigurasi baharu mengenai penderia tekanan ini akan berdasarkan kepada cadangan *Wheatstone Bridge Circuit* WBC yang telah diubahsuai, ini kerana ianya mempunyai sensitiviti yang tinggi dan juga keupayaan untuk menggennggam dan mengukur berat pada sesuatu objek. Kajian ini juga merangkumi pembangunan algoritma baharu untuk mengekstrak data dan

juga menganalisis isyarat yang akan dimuat naik ke dalam system mikropengawal. Tiga litar elektronik telah direka bentuk dan digunakan dalam kajian ini bagi menyiasat taburan tekanan dan kepekaan keluaran, iaitu *Traditional Pressure Sensor Circuit* (TPSC), WBC jenis 1, and WBC jenis 2 yang telah diubah suai. Di samping itu, sebuah prototaip robot penggenggam telah dibangunkan untuk menjalankan uji kaji dalam kajian ini dengan menjadi pengantara muka diantara penderia tekanan dengan system mikropengawal. Hasilnya, prototaip robot penggenggam telah dibangunkan menggunakan WBC yang telah diubahsuai seperti yang telah dicadangkan dan juga algoritma genggam yang menggunakan pendekatan pengagihan penderia tekanan yang baharu dengan kepekaan 0.982 dan kecekapan 98.%. Kesimpulannya, ciri-ciri baharu penggabungan mekanisma genggam dengan pengukuran berat objek pada sistem prototaip ini menampakkan penambahbaikan dengan sangat baik jika dibandingkan dengan yang telah sedia ada.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 December 2014 to conduct the final examination of Ahmed M. M. Almassri on his thesis entitled “Design and Development of Prototype Robot Gripper for Object Weight Measurement” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WBC	Wheatstone Bridge Circuit
TPSC	Traditional Pressure Sensor Circuit
PPM	Part Per Million
IC	Integrated Circuit
DDC	Direct Digital Converter
MEMS	Microelectromechanical Systems
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
PPS	Pressure Profile Systems
SCARA	Self-Compliance Automatic Robot
PID	Proportional Integral Derivative
GMC	Generic Model Control
MCU	Microcontroller
PIC	Programmable Interface Controller
JAL	Just Another Language
IR	Infrared Sensor
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
DC	Direct current
RC	Radio Control
DOF	Degree Of Freedom
PWM	Pulse Width Modulation
UART	Universal Asynchronous Receiver and Transmitter
TTL	Transistor-Transistor Logic
ICSP	In Circuit Serial Programming
FSR	Force Sensing Resistor
CPU	Central Processing Unit
PCB	Printed Circuit Board
ABS	Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene
3D	Three Dimension
USB	Universal Serial Bus
avg	Average
sum	Summation
Max	Maximum

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Human beings have long recognized the significant importance of robots, especially the robotic manipulators such as robotic hand or robotic gripper. Day by day, the robotic gripper becomes more important, according to the fact that robots involve with the environment, grasping objects, performing tasks or even emulating the human hand. Some types of robotic hands and grippers have been implemented for various purposes such as dexterous manipulation [1, 2], artificial limbs[3], grasping the objects [4, 5], and pick and place application [6]. The function of grasping mechanism based on robotic gripper system has been the purpose of many researchers [7, 8]. They have dedicated their concern to a physical touch and interface between the robotic gripper and objects, during the handling process [9, 10]. In addition, they have developed miscellaneous types of grippers equipped with pressure sensors that can perform special tasks or even unfamiliar grasping objects [11-15]. Accordingly, there are many types of pressure sensors that have been utilized for grasping objects based on different principles, such as resistive, capacitive, optical, ultrasonic, magnetic, piezoresistive, and piezoelectric sensors. Tactile piezoresistive pressure sensor is considered as one of the appropriate pressure sensors, used to grab, hold and handle objects with accurate feedback information about the objects.

However, the performance of robotic gripper system based on pressure sensors during the grasping process still has some weaknesses in determining the pressure distribution and defining the pressure range as well as the sensitivity output of signal conditioning. Moreover, the existing robotic gripper has never addressed the weight measurement method while holding the unknown object. Hence, many techniques and apparatuses have been sophisticated based on pressure sensors to overcome these deficiencies, but none of them used the piezoresistive pressure sensor based on proposed modified Wheatstone Bridge Circuit WBC.

In this research, the proposed robotic gripper prototype with a new configuration of pressure sensors distribution based on the modified WBC type 1 has been designed and developed for grasping an object and measuring its weight. This circuit has been used to enhance the pressure measurement and increase the sensitivity output of the pressure sensor. Along with the configuration of pressure sensors on the claw of the robotic gripper prototype, a modified WBC type 2 is also utilized to increase the detection surface area to provide more measurement. Besides, a grasping algorithm system is applied based on programmable interface controller (PIC) for secure grasp, object's weight measurement as well as extraction and analysing the signal output. This research definitely has the potential of producing a new robotic gripper prototype system, which incorporates specific pressure force and robust system and complies with an object's weight.

1.2 Problem Statement

The control system of robot gripper has been developed and investigated for different applications. It has been reported that the robot gripper executes a particular task of grasping the object. Nevertheless, the weight measurement method while grasping object has not found yet in the current robotic gripper applications. In addition, some problems have been appeared in this research, including pressure distribution for active area of robotic gripper, sensor type and specific pressure range of sensor [16, 17]. Other disputes such as hysteresis and drift that may cause erroneous reading have emerged [18]. Furthermore, the robot gripper faces some problems in having proper contact points to hold the specific object and this may distort the required posture while the robot gripper is holding the object [19].

Besides the above mentioned weaknesses of the existing robot gripper system for grasping the objects, there is no piezoresistive pressure sensor assembled on the claw of robotic gripper. Therefore, this will be a motive to design and develop a new approach of pressure sensor distribution on the robotic gripper prototype based on proposed algorithm for object's weight measurement. The new features of a prototype robotic gripper system can improve the combination of grasping and weight measurement compared to the existing one. In addition, it can calibrate and evaluate the data that needs to be processed. One recently related work is a robotic grasping device with multi-force sensing at base of fingers is still not used the force sensors on the claw of the robot [20]. In this study, piezoresistive pressure sensor type has been investigated according to a proposed modified Wheatstone Bridge Circuit (WBC) in order to implement the research works, because the outcome of this research is supposed to have a high sensitivity. In addition, it needs to be suitable for robot's grasping mechanism. This new configuration of pressure sensors, which has been based on the modified WBC, will improve the measurement output with increasing the sensitivity output as well as the detection surface area to provide more measurement. This process is useful for achieving a successful operation and compact grasping action and extract accurate data for the signal outputs.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to design and perform a new approach of pressure sensor distribution on the robotic gripper prototype based on a proposed modified Wheatstone Bridge Circuit (WBC) as well as a proposed algorithm while covering the weaknesses in the previous works. The main objectives of this research are:

- i. To develop a prototype robot gripper system for grasping solid object with extra features of weight measurement based on pressure forces.
- ii. To assemble a new configuration of multiple pressure sensors based on modified Wheatstone Bridge Circuit (WBC) for obtaining high sensitivity and efficient pressure distribution.

- iii. To apply a new grasping algorithm flow to enhance the data extraction and signal conditioning of the outputs of multiple sensors.

1.4 Research Scope

This research focuses on the design of the robotic gripper prototype as well as development of grasping algorithm for measuring the weight of objects. In addition, the robotic gripper prototype has small dimensions (170mm x 150mm x 160mm). It has one claw with 86.5mm x 2.5mm x 45mm dimensions, which is also designed to be able to hold a small object. Furthermore, the robotic gripper prototype can open with 50mm maximum width and the claw can move in x-axis only. The maximum object's weight that the robotic gripper will be able to hold is 600g. Besides, it has one joint with one mini servo motor. The flexibility and simplicity are the key features of this robotic gripper prototype.

In this project, the researcher also focuses on a hard object with rectangular shape as a sample to be grasped. This selected object is also flat and the dimensions are larger than the entire claw of the robotic gripper prototype to ensure that all pressure sensors touch the object. In addition, four pressure sensors are used and assembled on the claw of the robotic gripper prototype. The type of selected sensor is a piezoresistive FlexiForce sensor. It has three ranges of force, but according to the current design, the selected force is 0-25 lbs, which is used to measure the pressure between the robotic gripper and the selected object. The sensing area of pressure sensor is 9.35mm in diameter and the sensor is ultra-thin with 0.208mm thickness. The operating temperature is -9°C to 60°C.

Additionally, two driver controller circuits are selected to be used in this project; SC08A for servo motor driver and SK40C for PIC MCU. Both of these driver controller circuits are aligned and incorporated with other components with high compatibility in order to achieve the objectives of this research as required. Besides, three circuits are designed and implemented in this research using the electronic components, which have reliable performance and are available at low cost. These circuits are based on three methods, including the modified WBC type 1, modified WBC type 2, and TPSC.

1.5 Thesis Layout

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the overview of robotic gripper prototype for grasping mechanism and includes concise information about the performance of the robotic gripper system based on pressure sensor technique that implies the current proposed design. The problem statement in this project is presented in the next section of this chapter. This initiated the research to overcome the current problem by developing a robotic gripper prototype with new features. After that, the chapter explicitly explained the objectives to be met as outcome as well as the research scope to be carried out for this research. Eventually, the layout and summary of this thesis are also presented as the two last sections of this chapter.

The second chapter presents the literature review related to the research. Different techniques of measuring force and interface pressure between the robotic gripper and objects are presented. Then the chapter focuses on the concept of a WBC and its modifications that are devoted to measuring various types of resistances with high sensitivity. Besides, the literature studies have also discussed the related research of force sensor based on various types of transduction methods. Then, this chapter offers a related robotic gripper system applications based on tactile pressure sensor with different transduction methods and the control algorithm of grasping objects. Finally, the controller part is presented as one of the main component parts of the robotic gripper system.

The third chapter illustrates the applied methodology for this research to develop a robotic gripper prototype, equipped with piezoresistive pressure sensors based on a modified WBC. In the first main section of this chapter, the developed robotic gripper prototype and its operations are explained. After that, the pressure sensor distribution and signal conditioning for extracting the data are demonstrated. The next two sections describe the comparison between three circuits for pressure distribution to grasp the object and measure its weight. The analog readout circuit for three techniques are designed and implemented. Lastly, the proposed algorithm, which is based on the robotic gripper system for automatic grasped object is presented as well as all required components to reach the objectives of this project.

The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of experimental results and discussions of the robotic gripper prototype system. This encompasses the illustration of the robotic gripper prototype development and the distribution of pressure sensors based on the proposed WBC. In addition, it describes the pressure distribution results of designing analog readout circuit based on the TPSC as well as the proposed WBC type 1 and WBC type 2.

Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the overall outcome of proposed current research and recommendations for future work for robotic gripper grasping mechanism. The conclusion and future work are presented based on the proposed methodology as well as the achieved experimental results.

1.6 Summary

A comprehensive introduction to develop robotic gripper prototype system for grasping an object and measuring its weight has been described in the current chapter. The previous works have faced with some difficulties in this field, which led this study to propose a new approach that can be implemented to overcome the current weakness. To complete this proposed method, a large number of investigations with lots of analysis are implemented so that the outcome of this research can overcome the obstacles.



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