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# Chatter control by spindle speed variation in high-speed milling

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## Abstract

High-speed milling operations are often limited by regenerative vibrations. The aim of this paper is to analyze the effect of spindle speed variation on machine tool chatter in high-speed milling. The stability analysis of triangular and sinusoidal shape variations is made numerically with the semi-discretization method. Parametric studies show also the influence of the frequency and amplitude variation parameters. This modeling is validated experimentally by variable spindle speed cutting tests with a triangular shape. Stable and unstable tests are analyzed in term of amplitude vibration and surface roughness degradation. This work reveals that stability must be considered at period variation scale. It is also shown that spindle speed variation can be efficiently used to suppress chatter in the flip lobe area.

## 1 Introduction

Machining by material removal, like turning or milling, is one of the main means of implementation for mechanical parts in the industry. However, the productivity of cutting processes is severely limited by vibrations that arise during the material removal process. These vibrations causes poor surface finish, increase the rate of tool wear and reduce the spindle lifetime. One reason for such vibrations is the surface regeneration. The theory of regenerative machine tool chatter is based on the work of Tobias and Fishwick [1]. This knowledge initially dedicated to the turning process has been adapted to milling [2] and led to the development of the stability lobes theory. Since then several improved model and analysis techniques have been appeared including detailed analysis of the governing delay differential equation and time domain simulations, see, for example, [3, 4, 5]. These models all use the so-called stability lobe diagrams, which allows to choose the spindle speed associated with the axial depth of cut with a chatter free machining. In many practical cases, the choice of the optimal speed is difficult because contradictory parameters interact with productivity [6].

There are different solutions to reduce chatter vibrations. Classical solutions are based on the increase of the stiffness of the mechanical components and on the increase of the damping by reducing cutting speed or by adding dampers. The application of variable tool pitches is possible ways to suppress chatter [7]. However, these methods have shown their interest in specific cases, but they are not generally used in industry, often because they are incompatible with the constraints of mass production.

Another technique to reduce chatter vibrations is the spindle speed variation. As opposed to variable pitch cutters, spindle speed variation can effectively be used in a wider spindle speed range, since the frequency and the amplitude of the speed variation can easily be adjusted in CNC machines even during the machining process. The idea of spindle speed variation became the focus of interest in the 1970's. Takemura et al. [8] presented the first simple model to study the stability of variable speed machining; they predicted significant shift of the stability lobes to higher depth of cuts, but the experimental tests showed only small improvements. Sexton and Stone [9] developed a more realistic model, and they found some improvements in the stability properties for low spindle speeds. Moreover, they showed that the presence of transient

vibrations may further reduce these gains [10].

The study of the stability for variable speed machining requires a special mathematical analysis to compute stability lobes. Tsao et al. [11] have developed a model taking the angular coordinates as variables instead of time. Insperger and Stépán [12] showed that the semi-discretization method can effectively be used for the stability analysis of turning at variable speed. They showed that the critical depths of cut can be increased for low speeds, but for the high-speed domain, no improvement was found. Experimental results were presented by Al-Regib et al. [13] showing gains on surface roughness for turning at low speed.

The modeling of variable speed milling is more complex than that of turning, since the speed variation frequency and the tooth passing frequency interact and the resulting system is typically quasi-periodic. Still, there are mathematical techniques to determine approximate dynamic properties. Sastry et al. [14] used Fourier expansion and applied the Floquet theory to derive stability lobe diagrams for face milling. They obtained some improvements for low spindle speeds. Recently, Zatarain et al [15] presented a general method in frequency domain to the problem, and show that varying spindle speed can effectively be used to chatter suppression. Another approach is to use time domain simulation [16, 17] that makes it possible to obtain more detailed information like the amplitude of vibrations, the chip thickness or the cutting forces. Simulations were sometimes made at high speed [17], but to the best knowledge of the authors, experimental validations are only made at low spindle speed [13, 14, 15, 16].

In this paper, the stability of variable speed milling is analyzed in the high-speed domain, for spindle speeds corresponding to the first flip (period doubling). Theoretical stability predictions are obtained using the semi-discretization method based on [3], and the results are confirmed by experiments. The structure of the paper is as follows. First the model of the process is presented in Section 2. Then the selection of the optimal amplitude and frequency is presented in Section 3. Experimental verifications are provided in section 4. Finally, the paper is concluded.

## 2 Milling modeling

### 2.1 Variation of the spindle speed

In the literature, mostly sinusoidal, triangular or square-wave modulations are considered [18]. Here, the sinusoidal and the triangular variation shown in Figure 1 are compared and analyzed. Assume that the spindle speed variation is periodic at period  $T_v$  with a mean value  $N_0$  and an amplitude  $N_a$ , that is,  $N(t) = N(t + T_v) = N_0 + N_a S(t)$ , where  $S(t) = S(t + T_v)$  is the shape function. For a triangular modulation the shape function is defined as:

$$S(t) = \begin{cases} 1 - 4 \text{mod}(t, T) / T & \text{if } 0 < \text{mod}(t, T) \leq T/2 \\ -3 + 4 \text{mod}(t, T) / T & \text{if } T/2 < \text{mod}(t, T) \leq T \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Here,  $\text{mod}(t, T)$  denotes the modulo function, for example,  $\text{mod}(12, 5) = 2$ . For a sinusoidal modulation  $S(t)$  is defined as:

$$S(t) = \sin\left(\frac{2\pi t}{T_v}\right). \quad (2)$$

In order to normalize amplitude and frequency variation, the well know, parameters  $RVA$  and  $RVF$  are introduced:

$$RVA = \frac{N_a}{N_0}, \quad (3)$$

$$RVF = \frac{60}{N_0 T_v} = \frac{60 f_v}{N_0}. \quad (4)$$

$RVA$  represents the amplitude ratio between the amplitude  $N_a$  and the mean value  $N_0$ , it is always less than 1. In order to have reasonable cutting conditions, its value was limited at 0.3. This represents a variation of 30% of the spindle speed. This represents also a variation of 30% of the feed by tooth due to the constant feed velocity.  $RVF$  is the ratio between the variation frequency  $f_v$  and the average spindle frequency  $N_0$ . It

may be higher than 1. If  $RVF$  equal to 1, then the spindle makes one variation period during only one revolution of the tool.

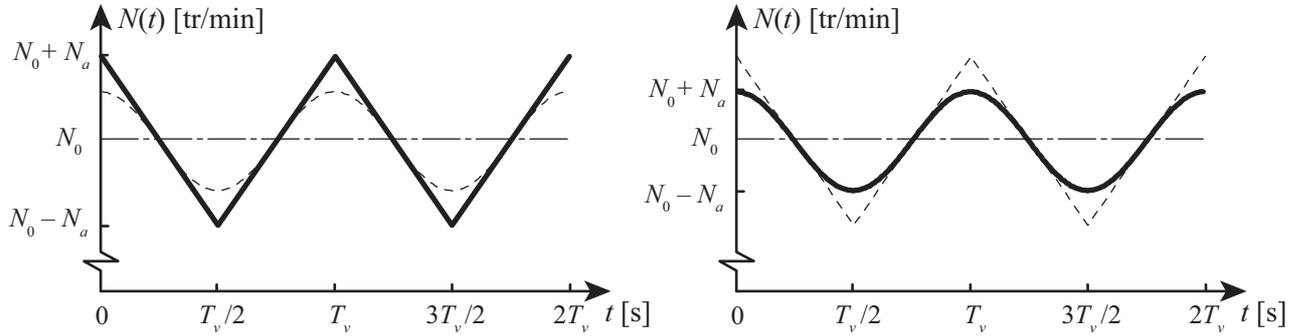


Figure 1: Typical triangular and sinusoidal shape variation.

Figure 1 also compares the triangular and sinusoidal shape for a given spindle acceleration. With the same acceleration, the triangular shape allows more important amplitude than the sinusoidal.

## 2.2 Mechanical model

A schematic diagram of the milling process is shown in Figure 2. The structure is assumed to be flexible in the  $x$  direction, while the feed is parallel to the  $y$  direction.

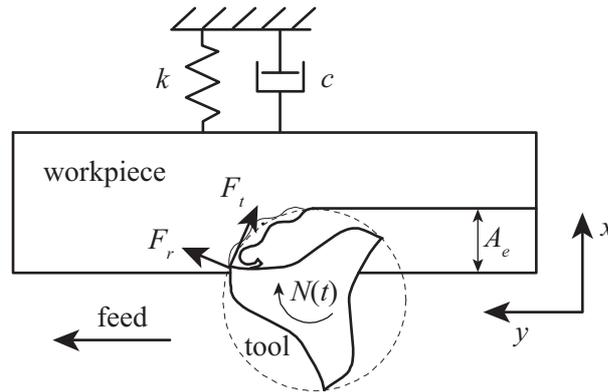


Figure 2: Mechanical model of the milling process.

The dynamic model is given by the following equation:

$$m\ddot{x}(t) + c\dot{x}(t) + kx(t) = F_x(t), \quad (5)$$

where  $m$  is the modal mass,  $c$  is the damping,  $k$  is the stiffness and  $F_x(t)$  is the cutting force in the  $x$  direction. According to a linear cutting law, the  $x$  component of the force is given by:

$$F_x(t) = A_p \sum_{j=1}^z [(K_R \cos \varphi_j - K_T \sin \varphi_j) h_j(t)], \quad (6)$$

where  $A_p$  is the axial depth of cut,  $\varphi_j$  is the angular position of the  $j$ th cutting edge and  $K_t$  and  $K_r$  are the specific tangential and radial cutting coefficients. The chip thickness is expressed by:

$$h_j(t) = g_j(t) \left\{ f_z \sin \varphi_j + [x(t) - x(t - \tau(t))] \cos \varphi_j \right\}, \quad (7)$$

where the function  $g_j(t)$  is a unit function, it is equal to 1 when the tooth  $j$  is cutting, otherwise it is equal to 0. Here,  $f_z$  is the feed per tooth,  $x(t)$  is the current position of the tool and  $x(t - \tau(t))$  is the position at the previous cut. The regenerative delay  $\tau(t)$  is periodic in time due to the spindle speed variation.

### 2.3 Stability analysis

Stability of the milling process with variable spindle speed can be estimated theoretically via the analysis of the governing Equations (5), (6) and (7). According to the Floquet theory of delayed differential equations [3], an infinite dimensional operator  $\Phi$  (monodromy operator) can be associated with the system that gives the connection between the current state of the cutter and the state one period earlier:

$$x(t+T) = \Phi x(t). \quad (8)$$

This period  $T$  is equal to the principal period of the system. Thus, for the milling model with spindle speed variation, the regenerative time delay  $\tau$  and the spindle modulation period  $T_v$  are periodic. We assume that the ratio of the modulation period  $T_v$  and the mean time delay  $\tau$  is a rational number, i.e.,  $qT_v = p\tau$  with  $p$  and  $q$  being relative primes. Thus, the system is periodic at the principal period  $qT_v = T$  consequently, the Floquet theory of periodic DDEs can be applied. Note that if the ratio of  $T_v$  and  $\tau$  is not rational, then the system is quasi-periodic and the Floquet theory cannot be used.

Stability properties are described by the eigenvalues of the monodromy operator. If all the characteristic multipliers are in modulus less than 1, then the system is asymptotically stable. Here, the semi-discretization method [3] is used. The basic point of this method is that they provide a finite dimensional matrix approximation of the monodromy operator and the eigenvalues of this matrix can be determined numerically. This method was previously validated by time domain simulation [19].

## 3 Selection of the optimal parameters

### 3.1 Optimal area

Stability lobe can be constructed by scanning the cutting conditions (spindle speed and axial depth of cut) for a couple of ( $RVA$ ,  $RVF$ ) parameters and for a given shape. Figure 3 presents the lobes for constant, triangular and sinusoidal spindle speed.

The critical depth of cut can be seen to be increased by speed variation for some ranges of spindle speeds, but for some other ranges, the critical depth of cut is less than that of the constant spindle speed. For example, a cutting process with an axial depth of cut of 1 mm and a spindle speed of 9100 rpm – that is unstable for constant spindle speed – can be stabilized by a speed variation.

But globally, the critical depth of cut can be seen to be increased essentially in the area of the first flip lobe by spindle speed variation.

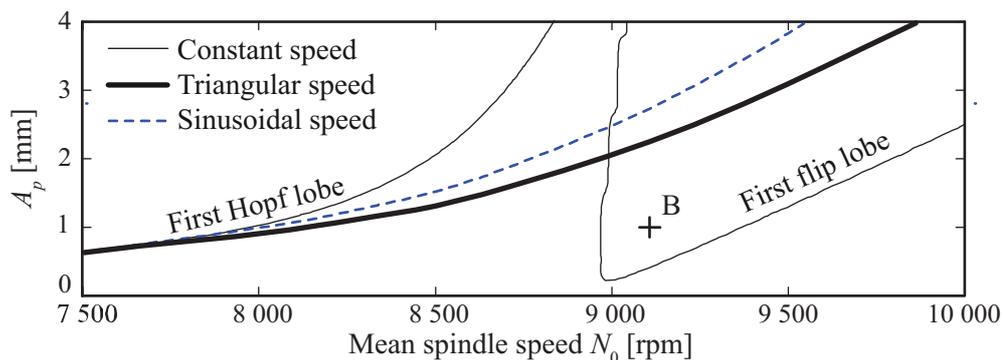


Figure 3: Stability diagrams for variable speed milling with  $RVA = 0.3$  and  $RVF = 0.003$ .

### 3.2 Comparison of the shape variation

The effectiveness of the spindle speed variation is tested on a flip lobe area ( $N_0 = 9100$  rpm) with a triangular and sinusoidal shape variation.

Figure 4 shows a contour plot presenting the maximal depth of cut available without chatter for the amplitude (vertical axis) and frequency (horizontal axis) with an average spindle speed of 9100 rpm. At

constant speed, the maximal depth of cut is 0.5 mm. It can be seen that the triangular shape always increase the critical depth of cut  $A_p$  for any  $RVA$  and  $RVF$  values. For some domains, even  $A_p = 2.4$  mm can be achieved that corresponds to 380% improvements. As mentioned earlier, the choice of the frequency and the amplitude variation is limited by the spindle dynamics. Within the range of variation, the maximum acceleration of the spindle is  $100 \text{ rev/s}^2$ , i.e., 6000 rpm/s. Considering the limits of the dynamic spindle for the triangular shape, the optimal choice is to use low frequency modulation with high amplitude. Such a point is denoted by point D or E.

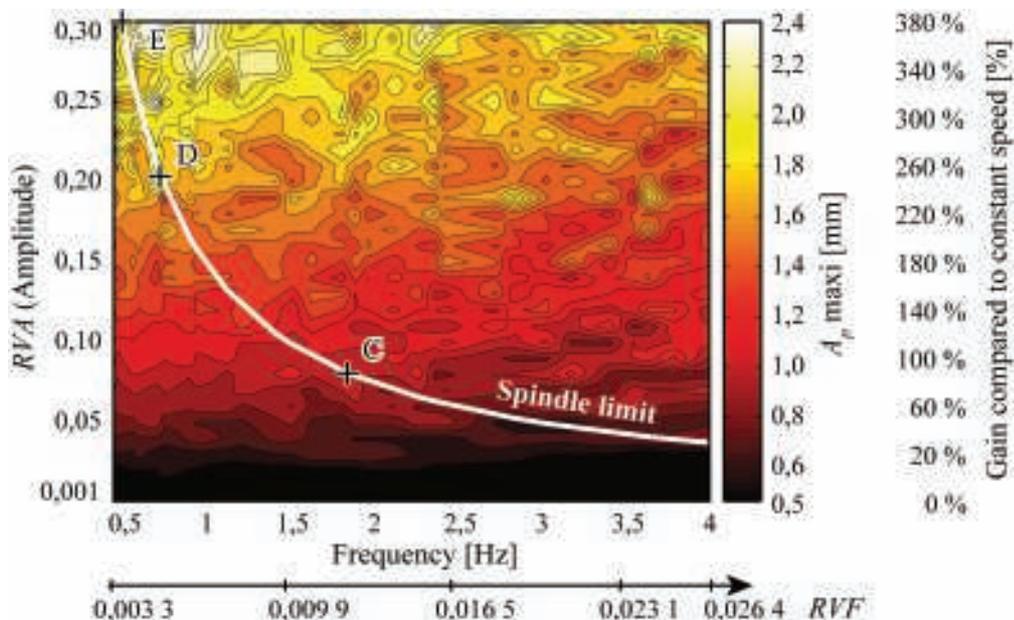


Figure 4: Parametric study for triangular shape ( $N_0 = 9100 \text{ rpm}$  and  $A_e = 2 \text{ mm}$ ).

A similar plot is determined for a sinusoidal shape in Figure 5. Like the triangular shape, the sinusoidal shape always increases the critical depth of cut. For some area, an improvements of 500% can be achieved ( $A_p = 3 \text{ mm}$ ). In fact, for a same frequency and amplitude parameters, the sinusoidal shape is more effective than the triangular shape.

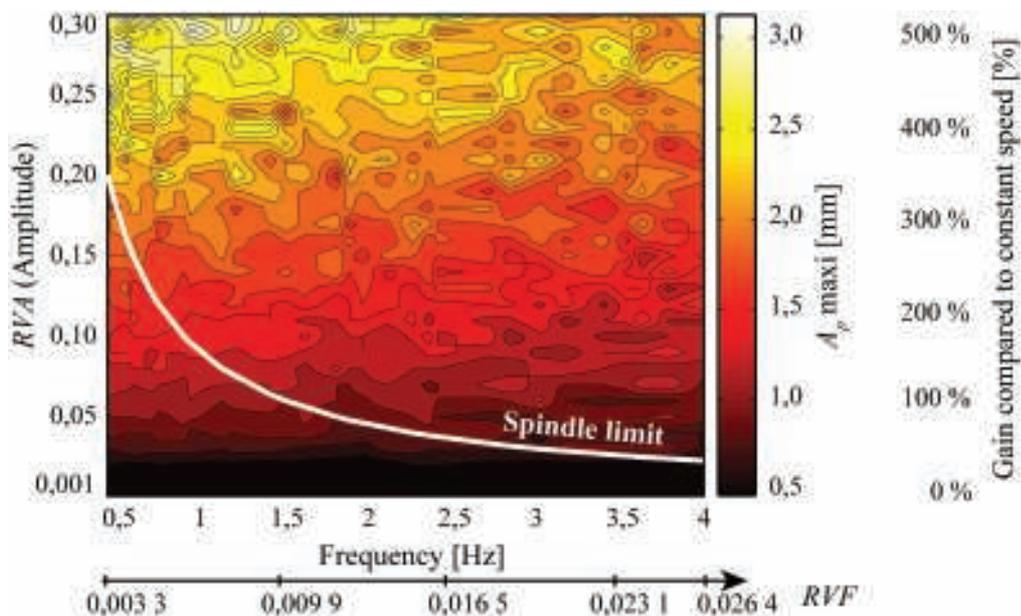


Figure 5: Parametric study for sinusoidal shape ( $N_0 = 9100 \text{ rpm}$  and  $A_e = 2 \text{ mm}$ ).

But if we consider the limit of the spindle, the sinusoidal shape gives – for the machinist – only an improvement of 300%. In fact, the sinusoidal shape needs more acceleration than the triangular shape (see Figure 1). For a given spindle dynamic, the sinusoidal shape allows no more improvements.

Surprisingly, a high frequency of variation, coupled with a low amplitude variation, produce a little gain. The most effective parameter is the amplitude variation, while the frequency of the speed modulation does not have a significant effect.

Based on the above numerical studies, it can be concluded that the triangular shape allows –for a given dynamic spindle – the maximal gain for the machinist. For this reason only triangular shape were analyzed in the experimental part. On the area of the first flip lobe, the critical depth of cut can essentially be increased as shown in Figure 4. Furthermore, the improvements were found to depend mostly on the amplitude of the speed variation, and dependence on frequency is low.

## 4 Experimental work

The machining tests were carried out on a high-speed milling center (Huron, KX10). The average feed by tooth is 0.1 mm/tooth. The tool is an inserted mill with 3 teeth, 25 mm diameter without helix angle. The spindle speed rotation is managed by a sub-program using a synchronous function (Siemens 840D). According to manufacturers of spindles and power controllers, the life span of neither the spindle nor the controller should be shortened by spindle speed variation.

A removable part in aluminium alloy (2017A) is machined in contouring with a radial depth of cut ( $A_e$ ) of 2 mm. Figure 6 shows the experimental set-up of the single degree of freedom flexure, compliant in the  $x$  direction. The tool is considered infinitely rigid compared to the workpiece. The vibrations of the part were measured by a laser velocimeter (Ometron, VH300+). A filtering followed by a numerical integration was used to extract vibrating movement of the part.



Figure 6: Experimental set-up.

The dynamic characteristics of the system were determined by hammer impact test. The cutting force coefficients were determined in coherence with previous work [6]. The modal parameters and the cutting force coefficients are collected in Table 1.

Table 1: Flexure modal parameters and cutting coefficients

$m$ [kg]	$f_0$ [Hz]	$\xi$ [%]	$K_t$ [MPa]	$K_r$ [MPa]
1.637	222.5	0.50	700	140

### 4.1 Some special cases

Firstly, cutting tests were conducted at spindle speed of 9100 rpm with  $RVA = 0,005$ ,  $RVF = 0,15$  ( $f_v = 24$  Hz) and a depth of cut of 1mm. This test uses the maximum acceleration of the spindle with high frequency variation and low amplitude. The results thus obtained are presented in Figure 7. Test (A) refers to the variable speed machining, test (B) to the constant spindle speed machining (note that these cutting

parameters are in the first flip lobe, see point B in Figure 3). Based on the theoretical predictions, this two tests are unstable.

The displacement measured with and without spindle speed variation is the same. Moreover, these two unstable machining generates exactly the same poor surface roughness on the workpiece. For this unstable machining, chatter is clearly identified.

Both machining shows also the minor importance of the variation frequency, like simulation predicts. It is not necessary to change very fast the spindle speed, even with maximum acceleration, because this is not the most important parameter.

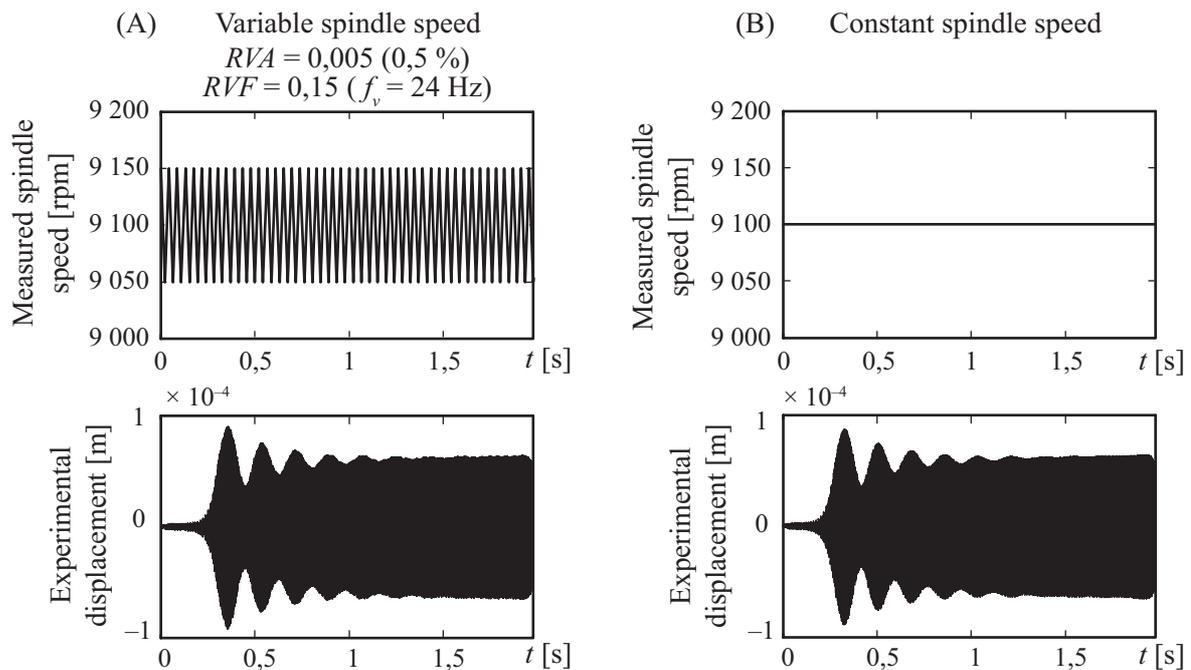


Figure 7: Two machining unstable ( $A_p = 1$  mm and  $N_0 = 9100$  rpm).

Then, other cutting tests were performed at spindle speed of 9100 rpm and depth of cut of 1 mm using variable spindle speed with  $RVA = 0.08$ ,  $RVF = 0.0125$  ( $f_v = 1.9$  Hz). This variation corresponds to point C in Figure 4. Based on the theoretical predictions, the critical depth of cut is about 0.8 mm, i.e., the process is unstable. Figure 8 shows the recorded displacement history and the surface roughness variation during the cutting process. After about two periods of speed variation, the amplitude of the displacement increases very strongly. The envelope curve of the vibrations is illustrated by dashed lines in Figure 8. This behaviour corresponds to the predicted instability. However, chatter does not appear suddenly – some time is needed for it fully develops. In the case of the cutting test in Figure 8, this time span is about 0.7 s. If the duration of the machining process is less than this period, then large amplitude vibrations do not develop. In a sense, this case can be considered as "practically stable" machining, in spite of the fact that the process itself is globally unstable. If the duration of the machining process is longer, then chatter develops.

This effect can also be observed on the surface roughness of the workpiece (see Figure 8). The left hand side of the machined profile, where the cutting was started, has a pitch of approximately 0.3 mm, with roughness of 1.6  $\mu\text{m}$ . For an ideally symmetric tool, the pitch of the machined profile is equal to the feed per tooth. However, if the tool has a runout greater than the roughness of the surface, then it leaves only one mark per revolution. The tool used in the tests had a runout of 10  $\mu\text{m}$ , the feed per tooth was 0.1 mm and the tool had 3 teeth, thus the pitch of the machined profile is expected to be approximately 0.3 mm for stable machining. In fact, the pitch varies slightly around 0.3 mm, since the constant feed velocity and the variable spindle speed produce a varying feed per tooth. As the tool passes over and chatter develops, the surface roughness gets worse and worse. By the end of the workpiece, the roughness increased to 13.9  $\mu\text{m}$ . Here, the pitch is determined mainly by the vibrations of the workpiece and the sign of the feed per tooth cannot be detected on the surface.

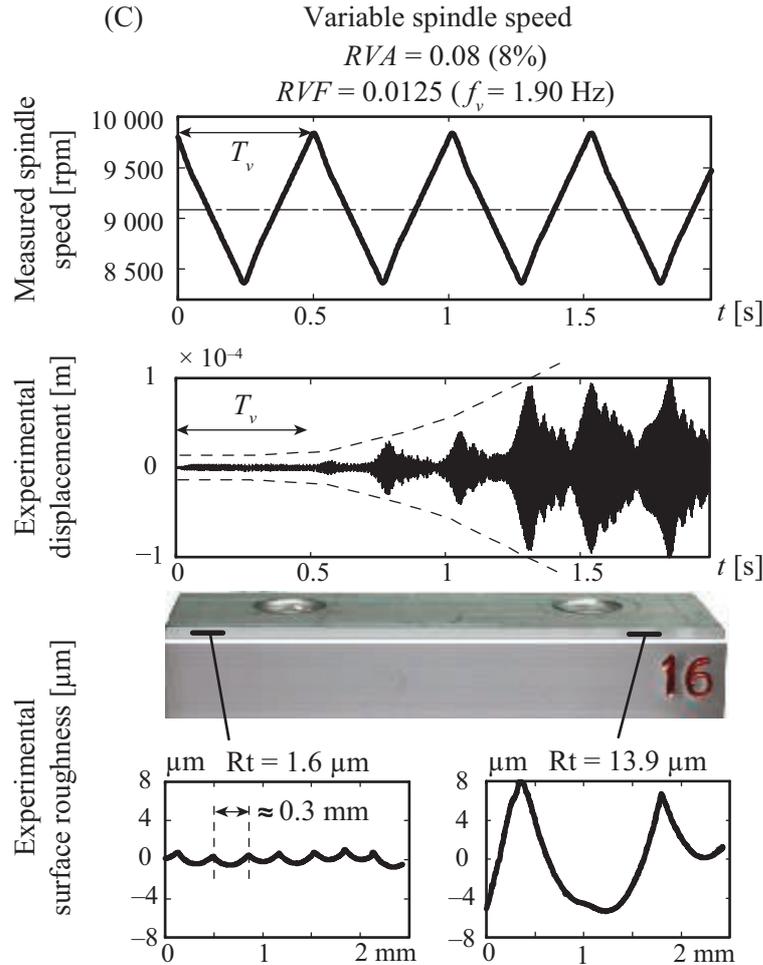


Figure 8: Analysis of an unstable machining ( $A_p = 1$  mm and  $N_0 = 9100$  rpm).

## 4.2 Stabilization by spindle speed variation

In this section, chatter suppression by spindle speed variation is presented by an example. Consider the machining process with spindle speed of 9100 rpm and depth of cut of 1 mm. For constant spindle speed, this process is unstable (see Figure 4). Spindle speed variation is applied according to point D in Figure 4. The corresponding parameters are  $RVA = 0.2$ ,  $RVF = 0.0046875$  ( $f_v = 0.71$  Hz). Based on the theoretical predictions in Figure 4, the critical depth of cut is about 2 mm, i.e., the system with variable spindle speed is predicted to be stable. The experimental results are presented in Figure 9. Test (D) refers to the variable speed machining, test (B) to the constant spindle speed machining.

During the test with variable spindle speed, no chatter was observed. The amplitude of the vibrations was less than 0.01 mm, the roughness was  $1.75 \mu\text{m}$  and the pitch of the machined profile was 0.3 mm as it can be seen in Figure 9. For a 3 fluted tool with runout of  $10 \mu\text{m}$  and feed per tooth 0.1 mm, this corresponds to stable machining. These all refer to a stable cutting process.

For constant spindle speed, chatter was clearly identified. The amplitude of the vibrations was about 0.07 mm, the roughness was  $3.7 \mu\text{m}$  and the pitch of the machined profile was 0.6 mm that refers to the period doubling chatter (see point B in Figure 3).

In these cases, identification of chatter was unambiguous, the pitches of the machined profiles were uniform all along the workpiece.



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