

A GEAR ASSEMBLY

FIELD OF INVENTION

5

The present invention pertains generally to a mechanical transmission system, and a method of transmitting mechanical power.

10 BACKGROUND

In automotive applications, various systems have been used to transmit mechanical power from an input, e.g. an internal combustion engine, to an output, e.g. a driveshaft and/or drive wheels. These systems are typically categorized as
15 either manual transmission or automatic transmission. In manual transmission, a driver needs to shift the gears manually to change the gear ratios in order to deliver the desired torque and speed to the output. In automatic transmission, the changing of the gear ratios is carried out without actions by the driver, e.g. with the help of a computer or controller in modern vehicles. Examples of automatic transmission,
20 which can be "automatic", or "automated" to different degrees, include continuous variable transmission (CVT), direct-shift gearbox (DSG), etc.

There are several limitations associated with existing mechanical transmission systems. For example, many systems make use of a clutch, which
25 usually wears out over time and requires replacement, thus resulting in additional operating costs. Moreover, some automatic systems may be rather complex and expensive to manufacture and maintain. Also, the sizes of existing systems can be quite large, thus reducing the space available for other automotive parts.

30 A need therefore exist to provide a system and method that seek to address and least one of the above problems, or provide a useful alternative.

SUMMARY

According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided a gear assembly comprising a first non-shifting element gear device having a plurality of planetary gear systems, wherein each individual planetary gear system comprises:

a ring gear with a braking mechanism;

a fixed wheel planetary gear mounted on a connecting shaft;

a fixed wheel sun gear;

wherein the planetary gear is meshed between the sun gear and the ring gear; and

wherein the braking mechanism of each planetary gear system can be selectively applied for generating a gear ratio thereof, the first gear device having a plurality of gear ratios corresponding to the plurality of planetary gear systems.

The gear assembly may further comprise a second non-shifting element gear device having at least one planetary gear system, wherein each individual planetary gear system comprises:

a ring gear with a braking mechanism;

one or more loose wheel planetary gears, each mounted on a respective connecting shaft;

a fixed wheel sun gear;

wherein the planetary gear is meshed between the sun gear and the ring gear; and

wherein the braking mechanism of each planetary gear system can be selectively applied for generating a gear ratio thereof, the second gear device having at least one gear ratio corresponding to the at least one planetary gear system.

The gear assembly may further comprise one or more connecting shafts connecting the planetary gears of the first and second gear devices

The gear assembly may further comprise a stabilising structure disposed between the first gear device and second gear device, wherein the connecting

shafts are held rotatably free on its axis in the holder of the stabilising structure, the stabilising structure being rotatably free.

5 The sun gears of first device may be configured to be mounted or coupled to an input device, and sun gear of the second device may be configured to be mounted or coupled to an output device.

10 The planetary gear system of second device may comprise at least two planetary gears, each connected to a planetary gear of the first device.

The sun gear of the second device may be configured to be mounted or coupled to an input device, and the sun gears of the first device may be configured to be mounted or coupled to an output device.

15 A planetary gear of the second device may be connected to a plurality of planetary gears of the first device.

20 There is also provided a method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as defined herein, wherein the mechanical power is transmitted to the planetary gear from the sun gear by the means of the ring gear held in place by the braking mechanism on the ring gear, all within the selected single planetary gear system, thereby transmitting torque to the connecting shaft where the planetary gear is mounted.

25 There is also disclosed a method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as defined herein, wherein the mechanical power is transmitted to the sun gear from the planetary gear by the means of the ring gear held in place by the braking mechanism on the ring gear, all within the selected single planetary gear system, thereby transmitting torque from the chosen connecting shaft.

30 There is also disclosed a method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as defined herein, wherein a torque is transmitted between the first and second gear devices through a chosen connecting shaft.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will be better understood and readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from the following written description, by way of example only, and in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

FIG. 1. A side view of the gear system.

FIG. 2. An axial view of an input planetary gear system.

FIG. 3. An axial view of an output planetary gear system.

FIG. 4. An axial view of the stabilizing structure

FIG. 5. A sample of connecting shaft with both input planetary gear and output planetary gear mounted.

FIG. 6A. A sample of connecting shaft mounted with a non-differentiated ratio input planetary gear and a plurality of differentiated ratio output planetary gear.

FIG. 6B. A sample of connecting shaft mounted with a non-differentiated ratio input planetary gear and a differentiated ratio output planetary gear.

FIG. 6C. A sample of an input shaft mounted with a plurality of non-differentiated ratio input sun gear and an output shaft mounted with a plurality of differentiated ratio output sun gear.

FIG. 7A. A sample of connecting shaft mounted with a differentiated ratio input planetary gear and a plurality of differentiated ratio output planetary gear.

FIG. 7B. A sample of connecting shaft mounted with a differentiated ratio input planetary gear and a plurality of differentiated ratio output planetary gear.

FIG. 7C. A sample of an input shaft mounted with a plurality of differentiated ratio input sun gear and an output shaft mounted with a plurality of differentiated ratio output sun gear.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments of the present invention provide systems and methods to transmit mechanical power provided by a rotating input shaft to a rotatable output shaft through a selected connecting shaft without requiring the use of a clutch or a torque converter.

Figure 1 shows a systematic side view of one of the embodiment of a gear assembly 100, which consist of three planetary gear systems 112, 114, 116 on the input portion 102, three planetary gear systems 118, 120, 122 on the output portion 104, and a stabilizing structure 106 in between the sets of input planetary gear systems and the set of output planetary gear system. An input planetary gear system 112, as shown in Figure 2 illustrating a view taken along the line A-A in Figure 1, comprises a ring gear 204, incorporated with an outer surface area 210 for a braking mechanism in the form of a grip, a disk brake, a caliper brake, etc., a planetary gear 206 mounted to a connecting shaft 128, a sun gear 202 mounted to an input shaft 108. In addition, such a planetary gear system can have a planetary gear or a plurality of planetary gears meshed between the ring gear and the sun gear.

An output planetary gear system 122, as shown in Figure 3 illustrating a view taken along a line B-B in Figure 1, comprises a ring gear 304, incorporated with an outer surface area 310 for a braking mechanism in the form of a grip, a disk brake, a caliper brake, etc., a planetary gear 306 mounted to a connecting shaft 128, a sun gear 302 mounted to either an output shaft 110. In addition, such a planetary gear system can have a planetary gear or a plurality of planetary gears meshed between the ring gear and the sun gear.

In this embodiment, each input planetary gear in the individual planetary gear system 112, 114, 116 is connected to a respective output planetary gear planetary gear in the individual planetary gear system 118, 120, 122 through connecting shafts 112, 126, 128. Input planetary gear of planetary gear system 112 and output planetary gear of planetary gear system 118 are conjoint by mounting on the connecting shaft 128. Input planetary gear of planetary gear system 114 and output planetary gear of planetary gear system 120 are conjoint by mounting on the connecting shaft 126. Input planetary gear of planetary gear system 116 and output planetary gear of planetary gear system 122 are conjoint by mounting on the connecting shaft 124. All connecting shafts are held in relative positions by a free rotating stabilizing structure 106. The input portion 102 includes a first set of breaking mechanism 130 and the output portion 104 includes a second set of braking mechanism 132. In a preferred example, the sets of planetary gear system 112, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, each includes a respective brake holder.

At any time, only an input ring gear and an output ring gear is held in place by the braking mechanism being applied. In a free gear scenario, all brakes are released, allowing all ring gears to be in free rotation motion. While three connecting shafts are used for the connection between input portion 102 and the output portion 104, it will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art the number may be vary depending on the number of geared ratio required.

Figure 4 shows a view, taken along a line C-C in Figure 1, of the stabilizing structure 106, where it is mounted on bearings (not shown) and include through holes 402, 404, 406 with bearings (not shown) for stabilizing the connecting shafts 124, 126, 128 when the selected input planetary gear mounted to either of the connecting shafts, 124, 126, 128, rotates orbitarily about the selected input sun gear, the stabilizing structure 106 is rotated about a center 408 with the remaining connecting shafts being passively driven.

Figure 5 shows an example connecting shaft 502, with both an input planetary gear 504, and an output planetary gear 506 mounted.

Figures 6a to 6c shows a schematic sectional view illustrating a gear system according to a second embodiment. When the subassemblies of Figures 6a, 6b and 6c are assembled together, it would form a partial embodiment of the gear system. The stabilizing structure, the ring gears of input planetary gear system and ring gears of output planetary gear system and braking mechanism are omitted for clarity of illustration on the connecting shafts, the input device, e.g. a shaft, the output device, e.g. a shaft, the input and output planetary gears conjoint by mounting on connecting shafts, and input sun gears mounting on input device e.g. shaft, and the output sun gears mounting on output an output device, e.g. a shaft. In an assembled view, input planetary gear 606 would mesh together with input sun gear 620, input planetary gear 616 would mesh together with input sun gear 622. Output planetary gear 608 would mesh together with output sun gear 624. Output planetary gear 610 would mesh together with output sun gear 626. Output planetary gear 618 would mesh together with output sun gear 628. Input sun gears 620, 622 are attached to an input shaft 630, while output sun gears 624, 626, 628 are attached to an output shaft 632.

Figure 7a to 7c show another schematic sectional view illustrating a gear system according to a third embodiment. The illustration is similar to Figure 6a to 6c where it is a partial embodiment of the gear system when assembled together. The stabilizing structure, the ring gears of input planetary gear system and ring gears of output planetary gear system and braking mechanism are omitted for clarity of illustration on the connecting shafts, the input device, e.g. a shaft, the output device, e.g. a shaft, the input and output planetary gears conjoint by mounting on connecting shafts, and input sun gears mounting on input device e.g. shaft, and the output sun gears mounting on output an output device, e.g. a shaft. In an assembled view input planetary gear 706 would meshed together with input sun gear 722, input planetary gear 716 would mesh together with input sun gear 724. Output planetary gears 708, 718 would mesh together with output sun gear 726. Output planetary gears 710, 720 would mesh together with output sun gear 728. Input sun gears 722, 724 are attached to an input shaft 730, while output sun gears 726, 728 are attached to an output shaft 732.

All sun gears will have fixed wheel mounting to the shafts. All input planetary gears will have fixed wheel mounting on the connecting shafts. All output planetary gears will have loose wheel mounting on the connecting shafts. In fixed wheel mounting, the gears rotate in tandem with the shafts. In loose wheel mounting, the gears will rotate in a one way engagement, where the torque will be transferred if the gear is rotating in one direction to the shaft but no torque will be transferred if the gear is rotating in the opposite direction.

Here, example configurations of input and output gears have been described. These example configurations are for illustration only. Further configurations are possible, e.g. by changing the number of gear sets at the input and/or the output portions. For example, if more gear ratios are desired, more gear sets can be used. Different permutations can be used as will be understood by a person skilled in the art.

In the example embodiments, rotational energy, e.g. in the form of a torque, is provided by an input device, e.g. a shaft, to the input sun gear(s). The energy is transmitted from the input sun gear(s) to the input planetary gears. When a specific input ring gear is selected by applying the input braking mechanism, the rotational energy is transmitted to a connecting shaft that is attached to the input planetary gear that is

meshed with the selected ring gear. The shaft drives the output planetary gears which are meshed with respective output ring gears and output sun gears. When a specific output ring gear is selected by applying the output braking mechanism, the rotational energy is transmitted from the planetary gear meshed with the selected ring gear, to the
5 output sun gear(s). The rotational energy is thus transmitted to an output device, e.g. an output shaft that is coupled or mounted to the output sun gear(s).

It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present invention as shown in the specific
10 embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A gear assembly comprising a first non-shifting element gear device having a plurality of planetary gear systems, wherein each individual planetary gear system comprises:

a ring gear with a braking mechanism;

a fixed wheel planetary gear mounted on a connecting shaft;

a fixed wheel sun gear;

wherein the planetary gear is meshed between the sun gear and the ring gear; and

wherein the braking mechanism of each planetary gear system can be selectively applied for generating a gear ratio thereof, the first gear device having a plurality of gear ratios corresponding to the plurality of planetary gear systems.

2. The gear assembly as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a second non-shifting element gear device having at least one planetary gear system, wherein each individual planetary gear system comprises:

a ring gear with a braking mechanism;

one or more loose wheel planetary gears, each mounted on a respective connecting shaft;

a fixed wheel sun gear;

wherein the planetary gear is meshed between the sun gear and the ring gear; and

wherein the braking mechanism of each planetary gear system can be selectively applied for generating a gear ratio thereof, the second gear device having at least one gear ratio corresponding to the at least one planetary gear system.

3. The gear assembly as claimed in claim 2, further comprising one or more connecting shafts connecting the planetary gears of the first and second gear devices

4. The gear assembly as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, further comprising a stabilising structure disposed between the first gear device and second

gear device, wherein the connecting shafts are held rotatably free on its axis in the holder of the stabilising structure, the stabilising structure being rotatably free.

5 5. The gear assembly as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the sun gears of first device are configured to be mounted or coupled to an input device, and sun gear of the second device is configured to be mounted or coupled to an output device.

10 6. The gear assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein the planetary gear system of second device comprises at least two planetary gears, each connected to a planetary gear of the first device.

15 7. The gear assembly as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 4, wherein the sun gear of the second device is configured to be mounted or coupled to an input device, and the sun gears of the first device are configured to be mounted or coupled to an output device.

20 8. The gear assembly as claimed in claim 7, wherein a planetary gear of the second device is connected to a plurality of planetary gears of the first device.

25 9. A method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mechanical power is transmitted to the planetary gear from the sun gear by the means of the ring gear held in place by the braking mechanism on the ring gear, all within the selected single planetary gear system, thereby transmitting torque to the connecting shaft where the planetary gear is mounted.

30 10. A method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the mechanical power is transmitted to the sun gear from the planetary gear by the means of the ring gear held in place by the braking mechanism on the ring gear, all within the selected single planetary gear system, thereby transmitting torque from the chosen connecting shaft.

11. A method of transmitting mechanical power using the gear system as claimed in claim 3, wherein a torque is transmitted between the first and second gear devices through a chosen connecting shaft.