

Robotic System

The invention relates to a robotic system with at least one robotic arm, at the end of which, for the operation of the robotic system, an effector may be mounted, which e.g. can consist of a tool.

Robots have now become established in many areas of industry and are e.g. used in the automotive industry for mounting, gluing, screwing, cutting, welding, painting or lifting heavy objects.

In order to teach a robotic system the desired operations, the robotic system must be programmed. This can be done with an on-line or off-line method, whereby in the off-line method the robot program is created without using the robot.

In on-line programming, the robot is needed for programming, which e.g. is the case with direct teach-in programming. Here, the individual points of the desired trajectories are approached by directly guiding the effector by an operator and the respective position of the effector, e.g. of a gripping tool, is determined via the internal encoders and stored. After the geometry of the trajectory has been programmed in this way, the trajectory program can be supplemented with additional instructions entered via an external handheld programming user device.

The previous methods of the described on-line programming are time consuming and uncomfortable for the operator.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a robotic system in which the programming of the robotic system can be performed faster and easier as compared to previous systems.

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This object is achieved by a robotic system as indicated in claim 1.

10 Advantageous embodiments of the invention are specified in the dependent claims 2 to 22.

Embodiments of the invention will be explained with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which

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Fig. 1 shows a robot according to an embodiment of the robotic system according to the invention;

Fig. 2 shows a distal robotic arm member of the robotic arm of the robot system according to the invention, called as pilot head, which is used in connection with an embodiment of the robotic system according to the invention; and

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Fig. 3 shows a part of an input device which is used in connection with a preferred embodiment of the robotic system according to the invention.

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Fig. 1 shows a robotic system according to the invention comprising a robot 1 which stands on a robot basis 2 which carries a robotic arm (or manipulator) which consists of seven robotic arm members 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 which are linked by means of motion axes (joints). The last (distal) robotic arm member 9, which is also referred to hereinafter as a pilot head, is designed so that in the lower part of the pilot head (not shown in Fig. 1) an effector can be attached thereto,

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which effector can cause any interaction of the robot with the environment.

Effectors used in connection with the robotic system according to the invention may e.g. be tools for workpiece machining, e.g. a drill, gripper systems for handling and manipulating objects, measuring equipment for carrying out test jobs or cameras, with which the robot can perform observations.

10 The robot 1 is connected to a computer 10, which takes over the control of the robot 1 and is connected to a display device 11, on which a graphical user interface for programming the robot can be displayed and which, e.g. can consist of a computer screen or the screen of a laptop. The computer 10 is
15 hereinafter also referred to as a control unit.

The pilot head 9 of the robotic system, which is shown in Fig. 2 in a larger dimension, comprises in the upper part a key panel 12, which is also shown in a larger dimension in Fig. 3.

20 The key panel as shown in Fig. 3 has four operating keys 13, 14, 15 and 16 in the form of short-stroke keys, which can be defined or occupied with various functions which must often be called up by the operator in the course of programming and/or parameterizing the robotic system, e.g. delete, save or set,
25 and which are marked with appropriate symbols.

The four operating keys 13, 14, 15 and 16 encircle a D-pad short-stroke key 17, which can be tilted up, down, left and right, e.g. to control a cursor or a selection in a menu
30 displayed on the graphical user interface of the display device in the directions up, down, left and right. In summary, the keys of the key panel 12 attached to the robotic arm and the key 20 constitute an input device.

Instead of a D-pad short-stroke key, other direction keys can also be used for cursor control, e.g. four mutually isolated keys for each of the directions up, down, left and right.

- 5 In the center of the D-pad short-stroke key 17, a transparent luminous surface 18 is arranged, which can be illuminated by lighting elements, e.g. one or more LEDs that can be activated by the control unit, in one color or different colors.
- 10 In addition, in the lower part of the pilot head 9, a handle 19 is attached, with which the pilot head can be easily guided by an operator of the robotic system.

Further, located in the lower part of the pilot head 9,
15 another button or key 20 is provided, which is mounted on the pilot head such that it can be operated by the operator of the robotic system with the same hand, which hand guides the pilot head 9 or the handle 19 of the pilot head 9 and thus the robotic arm.

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The control unit 10, which comprises hardware and software, is designed such that it can specify at least one predefined operation which can be carried out by the robotic system, wherein this operation includes the corresponding control
25 commands with which the axes and the drive of the robot are regulated and the sensors (not shown in Fig. 1) of the robot are controlled.

Preferably, a plurality of predefined operations and the
30 associated commands are stored in the control unit. These predefined operations could include, e.g. picking up objects, placing objects, inserting objects, screwing in objects, drilling, surface finishing or button/key actuating.

In the control unit the predefined operations are assigned to icons that can be presented on a graphical user interface, which can be displayed on the display device by means of the control unit.

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In a preferred embodiment of the robotic system according to the invention, the operator can use the keys 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 of the input device to select the desired operations, that the robotic system should perform to accomplish a given task, from a menu displayed on the graphical user interface, in that the operator moves e.g. by means of the D-pad short-stroke key, in the menu to the corresponding operation icon and then, after having selected this icon, confirming this icon by pressing one of the four operating keys 13, 14, 15 and 16, which keys have been previously set with a corresponding function.

In an alternative embodiment, key 20 may also be used to confirm an operation previously selected by means of the D-pad stroke key.

In a further embodiment, the robotic system according to the invention can also be designed in such a way that the control unit is designed to, for each operation, display in the graphical user interface during the parameterization of an operation a predetermined parameterization submenu (context menu) stored in the control unit, in which submenu the various predetermined parameterization options are shown, which can then be selected with the input device on the pilot head 9 via the keys 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and/or 20 by means of a control of the graphical user interface of the parameterization submenu in order to perform a parameterization.

With such a parameterization, e.g. parameters such as the coordinates of points to be approached by the effector,

torques, forces, accelerations, time durations, number of repetitions or subsequent operations of an operation can be entered by means of the input device.

5 In a further embodiment, the control unit stores all possible operations of the robotic system and all possible parameterization submenus aimed for these operations, which are structured such that the operator can conduct all programming of the robotic system at the input device with a
10 very limited number of input elements, e.g. keys, so that the programming can be done without the aid of external input devices such as computer keyboards. Ideally, with the pilot head as shown in Fig. 1, this can even be done with only one hand, so that the operator's second hand is free to be used
15 for other functions, e.g. the actuation of an EMERGENCY STOP switch.

The setting of the parameters can also be done by a dialog menu stored in the control unit, wherein the individual
20 parameters are queried individually and one input must be made on the input device via the keys, respectively. Corresponding feedback on the input device can then be provided, which confirms the respective input of the operator (for example by a green light field 18) or can be displayed as faulty (for
25 example by a red light field 18).

The input device attached to the pilot head does not necessarily have to consist of keys, but may e.g. also include a touchpad, a trackball, a joystick or similar device.

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In the robotic system according to the invention, the input device is further adapted to provide a user-directed feedback to an operator of the robotic system while setting the sequence of operations of the robotic system and/or

parameterizing the predefined operations for the robotic system.

Such feedback may be provided e.g. optically, in that static
5 or varying light signals are emitted through the light field
18, which are triggered by the control unit.

In another embodiment, the feedback may be designed such that
it can be detected haptically by the operator of the robot
10 system. This can be performed e.g. by vibrating the input
device, i.e. the pilot head 9, which is triggered by the
control unit, in that a drive belonging to the pilot head is
activated, accordingly.

15 According to a further embodiment, the keypad can also have a
plurality of light fields by means of which the optical
feedback occurs.

20 The feedback signals are preferably designed so that they
confirm an input of the operator as being positive or
negative. For example, in the event of a faulty input by the
operator, the illuminated field 18 lights up red, while it
lights up green when the input is correct.

25 In another embodiment, the feedback may also be arranged to
represent a request to select a predefined operation of the
robotic system from a group of predefined operations or to
input a parameter with respect to an operation.

30 According to a further embodiment, the control unit may be
configured such that a certain selection of operations and/or
parameters is performed by actuating certain keys and/or
specific key combinations on the input device.

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- Further, according to another embodiment, the control unit of the robotic system may be configured to display a graphical user interface on a display device on which the predefined operation can be displayed, wherein the control unit is further configured to provide feedback to the operator depending on the operation represented on the graphical user interface.
- 10 In a further embodiment of the robotic system according to the invention, the feedback can also be effected by an acoustic signal. For this, e.g., a speaker can be mounted directly on the input device, which is controlled by the control unit.
- 15 The display device of the robotic system may also consist of a 3D display device, e.g. electronic 3D glasses.

Claims

1. Robotic system having at least one robotic arm, a control unit configured to specify at least one predefined operation to be performed by the robotic system, and at least one input device attached to the robotic arm configured to parameterize the predefined operations with respect to the robotic system by means of the input device, wherein the input device is adapted to provide a user-directed feedback to an operator of the robotic system when setting the execution of operations, setting the logical sequence of operations, and/or parameterizing the predefined operations for the robotic system.
2. Robotic system according to claim 1, in which the feedback occurs optically.
3. Robotic system according to claim 2, in which the feedback is effected by static or varying light signals.
4. Robotic system according to one of the preceding claims, in which the feedback is designed so that it can be detected haptically by the operator of the robotic system.
5. Robotic system according to claim 4, in which the feedback is provided by a vibration of the input device.
6. Robotic system according to one of the preceding claims, in which the input device consists of a multi-key keypad.
7. Robotic system according to claim 6, in which in addition the keypad comprises luminous fields, by means of which the optical feedback takes place.

8. Robotic system according to claim 6 or claim 7, in which the keys of the keypad are adapted to emit light signals.
- 5 9. Robotic system according to any one of claims 6 to 8, in which the keys comprise color coding associated with a parameterization procedure.
- 10 10. Robotic system according to any one of claims 6 to 9, in which the keys also include direction keys for two-dimensional control on a graphical user interface.
- 15 11. Robotic system according to one of claims 1 to 5, in which the input device consists of a touchpad, a trackball, a touch display, a proximity sensor or a joystick.
- 20 12. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the feedback is configured to positively or negatively acknowledge an operator input, or to provide neutral feedback.
- 25 13. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the feedback is configured to represent a request to select a predefined operation with respect to the robotic system from a group of predefined operations.
- 30 14. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the feedback is configured to represent a request to input a parameter of an operation.
- 35 15. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the parameters acquired in the course of the parameterization comprise parameters derived from the group of parameters, which include coordinates of points to be approached by the effector, torques, forces,

accelerations, time durations, number of repetitions or subsequent operations of an operation.

- 5 16. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding
 claims, in which the feedback is designed so that it
 represents a fault signal.
- 10 17. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding
 claims, in which the operations comprise one or more of
 the operations of the group of operations, which include
 picking objects, placing objects, inserting objects,
 screwing objects, drilling, machining surfaces or
 actuating keys.
- 15 18. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding
 claims, in which the control unit is configured to select
 particular operations and/or parameters by actuating
 certain keys and/or specific key combinations on the
20 input device.
- 25 19. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding
 claims, in which the robotic arm is comprised of a
 plurality of arm members, the input device being attached
 to the arm member to which the effector can be mounted.
- 30 20. Robotic system according to claim 19, in which the
 input device is configured so that the operator, while
 guiding the arm member to which the effector can be
 attached, with his hand, can operate the input device
 simultaneously with the same hand.
- 35 21. Robotic system according to any one of claims 19 to
 21, in which the input device is axially opposed to the
 effector.

22. Robotic system according to any one of the preceding
claims, in which the control unit is adapted to display a
graphical user interface on a display device on which the
predefined operation can be presented, and the control
5 unit is further adapted to provide feedback to the
operator depending on the operation as represented on the
graphical user interface.