

Smart Actuators for Exoskeletons

3D-Printed Continuous Carbon Fiber Reinforced Shape Memory Polymer Actuators

— 1st August 2022 —

Master's Thesis

Context

Shape memory polymers (SMP) demonstrate the ability to remember a preset shape configuration when stimulated at specific elevated temperature. Actuators, which are entirely or partly **3D-printed** with **continuous carbon fiber reinforced SMP**, are promising alternatives to conventional bulky actuators and comparable shape memory materials such as shape memory alloys. Especially for applications in the context of lightweight robotic **exoskeletons**, large reversible strains and more compliance of SMP present an exciting new approach in the field of wearable robotics.

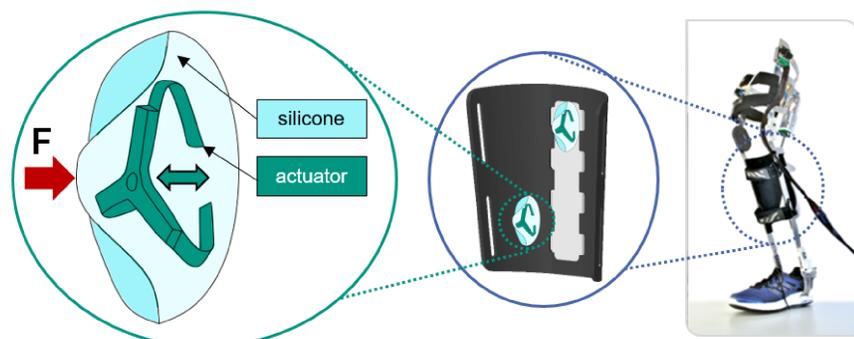


Figure 1: Schematic of smart actuator in the interface of a robotic exoskeleton application.

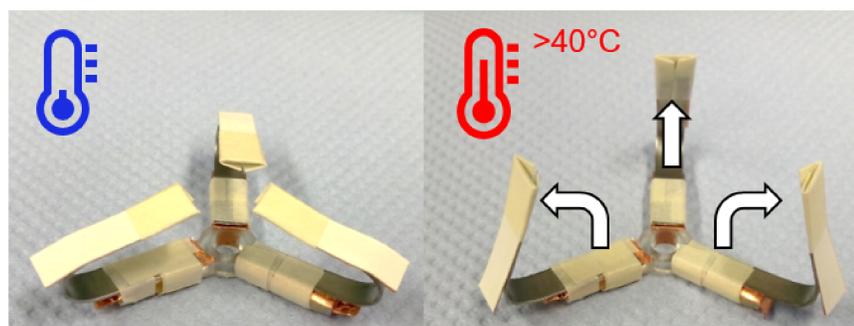


Figure 2: Working principle of existing actuator prototype based on shape memory alloys.

Objective

Investigate the performance of SMP-based actuators as an alternative for an existing actuator unit made from shape memory alloys.

Task Summary

- **Read** about SMP actuation and manufacturing.
- **Modify** an existing actuator design.
- **Fabricate** your design by 3D-printing.
- **Evaluate** the actuator's performance.

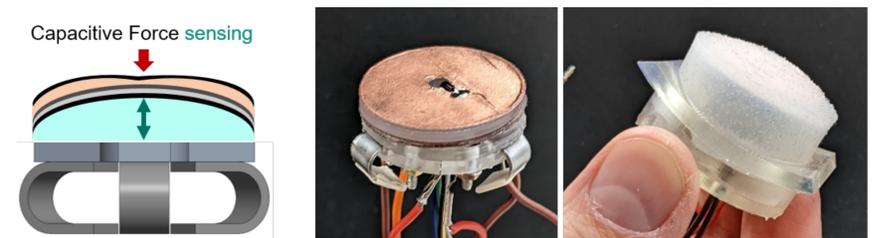


Figure 3: Deployment as sensor-actuator unit for embedded applications.

Requirements

Qualified candidates from the fields of: **mechatronics, electronics, computer science** shall be interested in:

- Additive manufacturing
- Smart materials
- Design & Experimentation

Contact

This thesis is offered in collaboration with the Institute for Pulsed Power and Microwave Technology (IHM):

Dr. Nanya Li

Campus North, KIT 421

nanya.li@kit.edu

+49 721 608-23620

Nikola Fischer, M.Sc.

Building 40.28 — Room 102

nikola.fischer@kit.edu

+49 721 608 - 44263