Sensors and Robotics Technology

Measurement and Sensors Unit - 1

Dr. Praveen Barapatre

Static and Dynamic Characteristics of Transducers

- Transducers are devices that convert one form of energy into another, typically from a physical quantity (like pressure, temperature, or displacement) into an electrical signal.
- Their performance is characterized by two main sets of properties: static and dynamic characteristics.

Static Characteristics

- Static characteristics describe the transducer's behavior when the measured quantity is constant or changing very slowly. These properties include:
- Accuracy: How close the measured value is to the true value.
- Precision: The ability to reproduce measurements consistently.
- Sensitivity: The ratio of change in output to the change in input.
- Linearity: The degree to which the output is directly proportional to the input.
- Range: The maximum and minimum values of input that the transducer can measure.

Static Characteristics

- Span: The difference between the maximum and minimum input values. Threshold: The minimum input value required to produce a detectable output.
- Hysteresis: The difference in output for the same input when approached from different directions.
- Dead zone: The range of input values for which there is no output.
- Repeatability: The ability of a transducer to produce the same output for the same input under the same conditions.
- Stability: The ability of a transducer to maintain its calibration over time.
- Drift: The gradual change in output over time for a constant input.

Dynamic Characteristics

Dynamic characteristics describe the transducer's behavior when the measured quantity is changing rapidly. These properties are essential for accurate measurement of dynamic phenomena:

- Response time: The time taken for the output to reach a certain percentage (usually 90%) of its final value when subjected to a step input.
- Frequency response: The range of frequencies that the transducer can accurately measure.
- Phase shift: The time delay between the input and output signals.
- Damping: The reduction in the amplitude of the output over time due to internal energy dissipation.
- Overload: The maximum input that the transducer can withstand without damage.

Importance of Understanding Characteristics

- Understanding both static and dynamic characteristics is crucial for selecting the appropriate transducer for a specific application. For example:
- A pressure sensor used to measure static pressure in a tank would primarily require good accuracy, precision, and stability.
- A pressure sensor used to measure fluctuating pressure in an engine would require good response time, frequency response, and damping.

Performance Measures of Sensors

- Sensor performance is crucial for accurate and reliable data acquisition. Several parameters are used to evaluate a sensor's capabilities. These can be broadly categorized into static and dynamic characteristics.

Static Characteristics

- These parameters describe the sensor's behavior under steady-state conditions.
- Accuracy: How close the measured value is to the true value.
- Precision: The ability to reproduce measurements consistently.
- Sensitivity: The ratio of change in output to the change in input.
- Linearity: The degree to which the output is directly proportional to the input.
- Range: The maximum and minimum values of input that the sensor can measure.
- Span: The difference between the maximum and minimum input values.

Static Characteristics

- Threshold: The minimum input value required to produce a detectable output.
- Hysteresis: The difference in output for the same input when approached from different directions.
- Dead zone: The range of input values for which there is no output.
- Repeatability: The ability of a sensor to produce the same output for the same input under the same conditions.
- Stability: The ability of a sensor to maintain its calibration over time.
- Drift: The gradual change in output over time for a constant input.
- Resolution: The smallest measurable change in the input quantity.

Dynamic Characteristics

These parameters describe the sensor's behavior under changing conditions.

- **Response time:** The time taken for the output to reach a certain percentage (usually 90%) of its final value when subjected to a step input.
- **Frequency response:** The range of frequencies that the sensor can accurately measure.
- **Phase shift:** The time delay between the input and output signals.
- **Damping:** The reduction in the amplitude of the output over time due to internal energy dissipation.
- **Overload:** The maximum input that the sensor can withstand without damage.

Other Measures

- Noise: Unwanted signals that interfere with the measured signal.
- Output impedance: The electrical resistance of the sensor's output.
- Power consumption: The amount of power required to operate the sensor.
- Size and weight: Important for applications with limited space or weight constraints.
- Cost: The economic viability of the sensor.

Classification of Sensors

Sensors can be classified based on various criteria. Here are some common classifications:

Based on Energy Conversion

- **Passive Sensors:** These sensors do not require an external power source. They convert the input energy directly into an electrical output. Examples include thermocouples, photodiodes, and piezoelectric sensors.
- **Active Sensors:** These sensors require an external power source to operate. They convert the input energy into a form suitable for processing. Examples include strain gauges, LDRs, and ultrasonic sensors.

Based on Output Signal

- **Analog Sensors:** These sensors produce an output signal that is continuously varying in proportion to the input. Examples include thermistors, pressure sensors, and accelerometers.
- **Digital Sensors:** These sensors produce a discrete output signal, typically in binary form. Examples include digital temperature sensors, encoders, and proximity switches.

Based on Measured Parameter

- **Temperature Sensors:** Measure temperature (e.g., thermocouples, thermistors, RTDs).
- **Pressure Sensors:** Measure pressure (e.g., strain gauge pressure transducers, piezoelectric pressure sensors).
- **Flow Sensors:** Measure fluid flow rate (e.g., ultrasonic flow meters, turbine flow meters).
- **Level Sensors:** Measure liquid or solid level (e.g., ultrasonic level sensors, hydrostatic pressure sensors).
- **Force Sensors:** Measure force or weight (e.g., load cells, strain gauge force transducers).

Based on Measured Parameter

- **Position Sensors:** Measure linear or angular displacement (e.g., potentiometers, encoders).
- **Proximity Sensors:** Detect the presence of an object without physical contact (e.g., inductive, capacitive, ultrasonic proximity sensors).
- **Light Sensors:** Detect light intensity (e.g., photodiodes, photoresistors).
- **Chemical Sensors:** Detect chemical substances (e.g., gas sensors, pH sensors).

Based on Sensing Principle

- **Resistive Sensors:** Change resistance with the measured parameter (e.g., thermistors, strain gauges).
- **Capacitive Sensors:** Change capacitance with the measured parameter (e.g., capacitive level sensors, proximity sensors).
- **Inductive Sensors:** Change inductance with the measured parameter (e.g., LVDT, proximity sensors).

Based on Sensing Principle

- **Piezoelectric Sensors:** Generate voltage when subjected to mechanical stress (e.g., pressure sensors, accelerometers).
- **Magnetic Sensors:** Respond to magnetic fields (e.g., hall effect sensors, magnetometers).
- **Optical Sensors:** Detect light or generate light (e.g., photodiodes, phototransistors, laser sensors).

Sensor Calibration Techniques

- Sensor calibration is a crucial process to ensure accurate and reliable measurements. It involves establishing a relationship between the sensor's output and the corresponding physical quantity being measured.

Common Calibration Techniques

Zero and Span Calibration:

- **Zero calibration:** Determines the sensor's output when the input is zero.
- **Span calibration:** Determines the sensor's output range for a known input range.
- Commonly used for sensors with linear output characteristics.

Common Calibration Techniques

Multi-point Calibration:

- Involves calibrating the sensor at multiple points within its operating range.
- Provides a more accurate calibration curve, especially for non-linear sensors.
- Often used with polynomial curve fitting to establish the relationship between input and output.

Common Calibration Techniques

Temperature Compensation:

- Accounts for the effect of temperature on sensor performance.
- Involves calibrating the sensor at different temperatures and using the data to correct for temperature-induced errors.

Common Calibration Techniques

Linearization:

- Corrects for non-linearity in sensor output.Involves fitting a linear equation to the sensor's calibration curve.

Offset and Gain Adjustment:

- Corrects for sensor offset (zero error) and gain (sensitivity error).Involves adjusting the sensor's output to match the desired calibration curve.

Calibration Standards and Equipment

- **Reference standards:** Highly accurate instruments used to establish the true value of the measured quantity.
- **Calibration equipment:** Devices used to apply known inputs to the sensor and measure its output.
- **Data acquisition systems:** Collect and process calibration data.

Factors Affecting Calibration

- **Environmental conditions:** Temperature, humidity, pressure, and electromagnetic interference can affect sensor performance.
- **Sensor aging:** Over time, sensor characteristics may change, requiring recalibration.
- **Calibration method accuracy:** The chosen calibration technique and the accuracy of the reference standards impact calibration results.

Calibration Frequency

- The frequency of calibration depends on factors such as sensor type, application criticality, and environmental conditions. Regular calibration is essential to maintain measurement accuracy.