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Energy-efficient operation of vapor
compression systems applied to the battery
thermal management of electric buses

Sebastian Angermeier

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Preface and Acknowledgments

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Abstract

The vapor compression cycle is the most widely used process for refrigerant systems, covers a wide range of applications and accounts for a significant share of global electrical energy consumption. Hence, the optimization of the operational strategy of vapor compression systems (VCS) is an important topic for thermal engineers. In the course of the electrification of vehicles, VCS are increasingly used for temperature control of batteries, as the temperature influences the performance, lifespan, and safety of the batteries. However, few studies investigate the energy-efficient operation of VCS applied to the control of battery cell temperature used in electric vehicles, especially in electric buses. In order to address this research gap, the present study examines the energy-efficiency of a vapor compression system and the thermal behavior of a battery system to derive a suitable operating strategy of the VCS subject to battery cell temperature requirements and energy efficiency. Therefore, a new transient calculation method is proposed to simulate the thermal behavior of a coolant-cooled battery system as a function of constant charging rates and driving profiles. The method is based on the system identification technique and combines the advantages of low computational effort and high accuracy. In detail, four transfer functions are extracted by a thermo-hydraulic 3D simulation model comprising 12 prismatic lithium nickel manganese cobalt oxide (NMC) cells, housing, arrestors, and a cooling plate. The transfer functions describe the relationship between heat generation, cell temperature, and coolant temperature. A vehicle model calculates the power consumption of an electric bus and thus provides the input for the transient calculation. The data gathered from the simulation demonstrate the high thermal inertia of the system and therefore imply a sufficient control of the battery cell temperature using a quasi-stationary cooling strategy. To meet this quasi-stationary coolant demand with maximum energy efficiency, a novel optimization strategy of an air-cooled vapor compression system (VCS) is introduced. The optimization problem is

Abstract

based on a steady-state modeling approach of the main components of the VCS and is formulated as minimizing the total energy consumption by respectively adjusting the condenser fan and compressor speed. In this context, previous research has indicated that an ideal condenser fan speed can be determined for each set-point of the VCS. However, in contrast to common optimization strategies found in the literature, the proposed model provides a directly solvable optimization term and thus allows a simple and rapid calculation of the ideal condenser fan speed. A detailed model validation reveals a coefficient of system performance (COSP) prediction error within $\pm 10\%$ and negligible error for the ideal condenser fan speed calculation. Moreover, comprehensive experimental investigations contribute to the understanding of the phenomena leading to an ideal condenser fan speed and thus explain the high accuracy of the model approach. To conduct the experiments, an ordinary system test bench is developed and set up. In addition, a control strategy based on the developed model is presented, which regulates the VCS to an optimal operation for all examined set-points. The introduced optimization strategy can be easily adapted to other air-cooled VCS, is expected to be applicable for real time operation, and is particularly suitable for the suggested quasi-stationary control of the battery temperature. In general, the thesis provides both a crucial design input for battery cooling systems with respect to thermal transfer behavior and control strategy, as well as comprehensive findings for the set-point optimization and steady-state modeling of vapor compression systems.

Kurzfassung

Der Kaltdampf-Kompressions-Kältekreislauf ist das meistgenutzte Verfahren für Kältemittelsysteme, deckt ein breites Anwendungsspektrum ab und verursacht einen erheblichen Anteil des weltweiten Stromverbrauchs. Die Optimierung der Betriebsstrategie von Kompressionskältemaschinen (KKM) ist daher eine wichtige Herausforderung. Im Zuge der Elektrifizierung von Fahrzeugen werden KKM zunehmend zur Regelung der Batterietemperatur eingesetzt, da diese Leistung, Lebensdauer und Sicherheit der Batterien beeinflusst. Eine interessante Forschungsfrage ergibt sich hierbei für den energie-effizienten Betrieb von kältemittelbasierten Batteriekühllanlagen elektrischer Fahrzeuge. Um dieses Thema anzugehen, untersucht die vorliegende Studie die Energieeffizienz einer Kompressionskältemaschine und das thermische Verhalten eines Batteriesystems. Es wird eine geeignete Betriebsstrategie für die KKM abgeleitet, die sowohl die Temperaturanforderungen der Batteriezellen berücksichtigt als auch den Energieverbrauch minimiert. Hierzu wird ein neues, transientes Berechnungsverfahren vorgeschlagen, mit dem das thermische Verhalten eines kühlmittelgekühlten Batteriesystems in Abhängigkeit von konstanten Laderaten und Fahrprofilen simuliert werden kann. Das Verfahren basiert auf der Systemidentifikationstechnik und kombiniert die Vorteile geringen Rechenaufwands und hoher Genauigkeit. Im Detail werden vier Übertragungsfunktionen anhand eines thermohydraulischen 3D-Simulationsmodells extrahiert, das 12 prismatische Lithium-Nickel-Mangan-Cobalt-Oxide (NMC) Zellen, ein Gehäuse, Ableiter und eine Kühlplatte umfasst. Die Übertragungsfunktionen beschreiben die Beziehung zwischen Wärmeerzeugung, Zelltemperatur und Kühlmitteltemperatur. Ein Fahrzeugmodell berechnet den Stromverbrauch eines Elektrobusses und liefert somit den Input für die transiente Berechnung. Die aus der Simulation gesammelten Daten zeigen eine hohe thermische Trägheit des Systems und implizieren dadurch eine ausreichende Kontrolle der Batteriezellentemperatur.

unter Verwendung einer quasistationären Kühlstrategie. Um diesen quasistationären Kühlmittelbedarf mit maximaler Energieeffizienz zu decken, wird eine neuartige Optimierungsstrategie einer luftgekühlten KKM eingeführt. Das Optimierungsproblem basiert auf einem stationären Modellierungsansatz der Hauptkomponenten der KKM und wird so formuliert, dass der Gesamtenergieverbrauch durch Anpassen der Verflüssiger-Lüfter- und Verdichter-Drehzahl minimiert wird. In diesem Zusammenhang haben frühere Untersuchungen gezeigt, dass für jeden Betriebspunkt der KKM eine ideale Verflüssiger-Lüfter-Drehzahl bestimmt werden kann. Im Gegensatz zu Optimierungsstrategien in der Literatur, bietet das vorgeschlagene Modell einen direkt lösbarer Optimierungsterm und ermöglicht somit eine einfache und schnelle Berechnung der idealen Drehzahl. Eine detaillierte Modellvalidierung zeigt einen Vorhersagefehler der System-Leistungszahl (COSP) innerhalb von $\pm 10\%$ und einen vernachlässigbaren Fehler für die Berechnung der idealen Verflüssiger-Lüfter-Drehzahl. Darüber hinaus tragen umfassende experimentelle Untersuchungen zum Verständnis der Phänomene bei, die zu einer idealen Drehzahl führen, und erklären damit die hohe Genauigkeit des Modellansatzes. Zur Durchführung der Experimente wird ein Systemprüfstand entwickelt und aufgebaut. Zusätzlich wird eine auf dem entwickelten Modell basierende Regelstrategie vorgestellt, die die KKM für alle untersuchten Betriebspunkte auf einen idealen Betrieb einregelt. Die eingeführte Optimierungsstrategie kann leicht auf andere luftgekühlte KKM übertragen werden, kann voraussichtlich in Echtzeitanwendungen verwendet werden und eignet sich besonders für die vorgeschlagene quasistationäre Regelung der Batterietemperatur. Im Allgemeinen liefert die Arbeit entscheidende Auslegungskriterien für die Regelstrategie von Batteriekühlsystemen als auch umfassende Ergebnisse für die Betriebsoptimierung und die stationäre Modellierung von Dampfkompressionssystemen.

Nomenclature

Abbreviations

Symbol	Quantity
AC	Air conditioning
BTMS	Battery thermal management system
CAD	Computer aided design
CFD	Computational fluid dynamics
COP	Coefficient of performance
COSP	Coefficient of system performance
C-rate	Charging rate
FFT	Fast Fourier transformation
HVAC	Heating, ventilation and air conditioning
IRDC	Indirect receiver dryer condenser
KKM	Kompressionskältemaschine
LFP	Lithium ferrite phosphate/graphite – battery cell
LiCoO ₂	Lithium cobalt oxide
LiFePO ₄	Lithium ferrite phosphate
LiNiCoO ₂	Lithium nickel cobalt oxide
LiTiO ₂	Lithium titanate oxide
LTI	Linear and time-invariant
LTO	LiNiMnCoO ₂ /LiTiO ₂ – battery cell
MHTC	Mean heat transfer coefficient
MSS	Minimum stable superheat
NEDC	New European driving cycle
NMC	Lithium nickel manganese cobalt oxide/graphite – battery cell
NTU	Number of transfer units
RMSE	Root mean square error
R134a	1,1,1,2-Tetrafluoroethane

Symbol	Quantity
R1234yf	2,3,3,3-Tetrafluorpropene
SEI	Solid electrolyte interface
SOC	State of Charge
SORT	Standardized on road test cycle
TXV	Thermostatic expansion valve
VCC	Vapor compression cycle
VCS	Vapor compression system

Formula symbols

Symbol	Quantity	SI Units
a	Acceleration	m/s^2
A	Area, Aggressiveness	$\text{m}^2, \text{m}/\text{s}^2$
c_w	Drag coefficient	—
c	Specific heat capacity	$\text{J}/\text{kg}\text{K}$
$c_{i,f}$	Sensitivity of a value i to function f	
C	Constant	
C – rate	Charging rate	$1/\text{h}$
E	Energy	J
f_r	Rolling resistance coefficient	—
F	Force	N
G	Transfer function	—
h	Specific enthalpy	J/kg
I	Current	A
k	Overall heat transfer coefficient	$\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$
k	Coverage factor	—
K	Lumped property value	
m	Mass	kg
\dot{m}	Mass flow	kg/s
n	Rotation speed	rpm

Nomenclature

Symbol	Quantity	SI Units
P	Power	W
p	Pressure	bar
Δp	Pressure difference	bar
q	Specific heat flux	W/kg
q''	Specific heat flux	W/m ³
\dot{Q}	Heat flux	W
r	Evaporating enthalpy, Recuperation rate	J/kg, %
R _m	Specific gas constant	J/kgK
R _i	Internal resistance	Ω
R ²	Coefficient of determination	—
s	Specific entropy, Laplace variable	J/molK, —
t	Time	s
T	Temperature	°C
ΔT_m	Mean temperature difference	K
U	Cell potential	V
U ₀	Open circuit potential	V
v	Specific volume, Velocity	m ³ /kg, m/s
\dot{V}	Volume flow	m ³ /s
V _d	Compressor displacement	m ³
x	Vapor fraction	—
X	Input	—
Y	Output	—
z	Zeros, Real gas factor	—

Greek symbols

Symbol	Quantity	Unit
α	Convective heat transfer coefficient	W/m ² K
β	Scope	—
δ	Indicate a part of a measurement chain	—
η	Efficiency	—
θ	Substitution	
λ	Heat conductivity	W/mK
λ_{\perp}	Heat conductivity across electrode	W/mK
λ_{\parallel}	Heat conductivity along electrode	W/mK
ρ	density	kg/m ³
τ	poles	—
Φ	heat exchanger characteristic	—
Ψ	Sensitivity coefficient	J/kg

Subscripts

Symbol	Quantity
air	Air
aux	Auxiliaries
Bat	Battery
c	Condenser
com	Compressor
cool	Coolant
cell	Batter cell
e	Evaporator
ex	Excess
EM	Electric motor
F	Fan
gen	Generated
G	Gear

Nomenclature

Symbol	Quantity
is	Isentropic
id	Ideal
in	Inlet
mix	Mixing
out	Outlet
ph	Phase change
PE	Power electronic
req	Required
R	Refrigerant
s	Sound
sc	Subcool
sec	Secondary fluid
sur	Surroundings
sh	Superheat
t	Total
th	Theoretical
tp	Two phase
TXV	Thermostatic expansion valve
v	Vehicle, volumetric
x	x direction
y	y direction
z	z direction

Superscripts

Symbol	Quantity
avg	Average composition
Bat	Battery
Evap	Evaporator

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