Tool Remaining Useful Life Prediction Using Deep Transfer Reinforcement Learning Based on Long Short Term Memory Networks

Jiachen Yao (✉ 791344334@qq.com)  
Nanjing University of Science and Technology  
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1575-891X

Baochun Lu  
Nanjing University of Science and Technology

Junli Zhang  
Nanjing University of Science and Technology

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Author information
Jiachen Yao
Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China
Email: 791344334@qq.com
Baochun Lu
Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China
Email: nlglbc@126.com
Junli Zhang
Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China
Email: maysevenhero@126.com

Declarations

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Baochun Lu contributed to the conception of the study;
Junli Zhang performed the experiment and helped perform the analysis.

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Abstract
Tool wear and faults will affect the quality of machined workpiece and damage the continuity of manufacturing. The accurate prediction of remaining useful life (RUL) is significant to guarantee processing quality and improve productivity of automatic system. At present, the most methods for tool RUL prediction are trained by history fault data. However, when researching on new types of tools or processing high value parts, fault datasets are difficult to acquired, which led to RUL prediction a challenge under limited fault data. To overcome shortcomings of above prediction methods, a deep transfer reinforcement learning (DTRL) network based on long short term memory (LSTM) network is presented in this paper. Local features are extracted from consecutive sensor data to track the tool states, and the trained network size can be dynamically adjusted by controlling time sequence length. Then in DTRL network, LSTM network is employed to construct the value function approximation for smoothly processing temporal information and mining long-term dependencies. On this basis, a novel strategies of Q-function update and transfer are presented to transfer the DRL network trained by historical fault data to a new tool for RUL prediction. Finally, tool wear experiments are performed to validate effectiveness of the DTRL model. The prediction result demonstrate that the proposed method has high accuracy and generalization for similar tools and cutting conditions.

Keywords
Tool wear monitoring, remaining useful life (RUL) prediction, deep reinforcement learning, transfer learning

1 Introduction
Tool is a key part in manufacturing process, including turning, milling, cutting and so on. Tool wear in manufacturing process affects the machining performance and reduces the productivity of high-speed computer numerical control (CNC). Thus, effective tool wear monitoring and remaining useful life (RUL) prediction are of great significance for improving machining quality and predictive maintenance [1-3]. Generally, tool monitoring and RUL prediction methods can be roughly classified into statistical model-based and data-driven methods.

In the statistical model-based methods, the core idea is to establish a failure mechanisms model for RUL prediction on the basis of stochastic process. Si et al. [4] developed a Wiener-process-based degradation model for RUL prediction, and recursive filter was used to reduce the estimation error. Yan et al. [5] designed a stage-based Gamma process to predict the probability density function of tool unobservable degradation. Wang et al. [6] presented a particle filtering method for tool wear state prediction.

In the data-driven methods, machine and deep learning approaches are used to process observation data for diagnosis and prognosis [7]. In this kind of method, vibration sensors, torque sensors, or other kinds of sensors are installed on machining centers to monitor tool working states. Sensory signals are extracted by signal processing technology to get discriminant signal features [8-10]. Due to the advantages of high prediction accuracy and easy modeling, data-driven methods have been a research hotspot for tool state monitoring and RUL prediction. For instance, Widodo et al. [11] reviewed the implement of support vector machine (SVM) in machine condition monitoring and diagnosis. Chen et al. [12] utilized logistic regression model to process vibration signals for cutting tool monitoring. Karandikar et al. [13] evaluated the performance of two different machine learning methods in predicting tool life curve. Yang et al. [14] established a v-support vector regression (v-SVR) model to study the relationship between fused features and actual tool wear for tool wear monitoring. Zhang et al. [15] used a least square support vector machine (LS-SVM) to predict tool wear of cutting edge position under joint effect of machining conditions. Kong et al. [16] presented a Gaussian process regression technique for accurately monitoring flank wear width. Kong et al. [17] developed a Gaussian mixture hidden Markov models to determine the tool wear states.
Zhou et al. [18] utilized extension neural networks (ENNs) to fast recognize cutting tool conditions with high precision.

The machinery health prognostic program generally follows a similar technical process: first is extracting artificially designed features from acquired signals for determining state change of tool, and then establishing the nonlinear mapping function between extracted features and tool state by regression methods. But in the above methods, there are two main shortcomings in ANNs-based fault prognosis approaches. First, the inputs rely heavily on signal preprocessing techniques. Second, the simple architecture of ANNs lacks sufficient breadth and depth to map complex nonlinear relationship. The development of deep learning have relieved the above problems to a certain extent [19,20].

Deep learning can adaptively learn hierarchical representation without extracting the fault features manually [21,22], which is beneficial to improve adaptability. In addition, more hidden layers are added to process nonlinear inputs, which is more likely to learn deeper hidden information and then to improve prediction accuracy. Deep learning models have attracted increasing attention in tasks of fault diagnosis and prognosis. Jia et al. [23,24] designed a deep neural networks (DNNs) based method for fault diagnosis in rolling element bearings and planetary gearboxes. Shao et al. [24] constructed a convolutional deep belief network for fault diagnosis of rolling bearing, which used compressed sensing (CS) for reducing data amount. Wu et al. [25] utilized bidirectional long short-term memory neural network (BiLSTM) to deal with singular value decomposition features to predict current tool wear value. Zhao et al. [26] proposed a deep residual network with dynamically weighted wavelet coefficients for planetary gearbox fault diagnosis.

Different from above-mentioned approaches, deep reinforcement learning can directly map raw extracted features to corresponding tool wear state, which is helpful to further improve intelligence of prediction methods. Combining the advantages of deep learning and reinforcement learning, deep reinforcement learning is able to construct environment according to extracted features, from which artificial agents can learn observations and rewards. Reinforcement learning gives agents the ability to interact with its environment, while deep learning enables agents to learn the better decisions to scale to problems with high-dimensional state and action spaces [27]. As the most significant breakthrough in the field of artificial intelligence, AlphaGo, proves the effectiveness of DRL mechanism [28]. Since then DRL algorithms have been widely applied in domain of modern manufacturing systems, natural language processing, and automated machine learning. In modern manufacturing systems, as a common solution for optimization problems by trial and error, DRL has already been used in fields such as robot training [29,30], management of Industrial Internet of Things [31,32], dynamic scheduling of flexible job shop [33,34], and machinery fault diagnosis [35]. While, how to transfer a DRL network to an effective application against the limited availability of training data for RUL prediction is still a hotspot issue in accurate prediction of tool RUL.

To overcome the deficiencies of limited data and further improve accuracy and intelligence of prediction methods, a deep reinforcement transfer learning (DTRL) method is researched in this paper. This novel approach first extract local features from consecutive time series data to reduce the network size. Then in DRL prediction method, LSTM network is adopted to construct the value function approximation for deeply mining temporal information. A novel strategy of Q-function update and transfer has been proposed to guarantee transferability of trained network to new domain. Finally, tool wear experiments are carried out and the effectiveness of the proposed method is verified by analyzing the datasets.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Theoretical foundation about DRL is introduced in Section 2, based on which the framework of proposed DTRL method is shown in Section 3. Tool wear experiments and case study on RUL prediction are conducted in Section 4. Model comparison and validation are shown in Section 5. Finally, the conclusions are summarized in Section 6.

## 2 Theoretical foundation

Deep reinforcement learning (DRL) is a branch of dynamic programming based reinforcement learning, in which agents interact with the environment while learning. The interactive learning process can be modeled by Markov decision process (MDP) expressed by a tuple:

\[ M = (S, A, T, R, \gamma) \]

where \( S \) is a finite set of states, \( A \) is a finite set of actions, \( T: S \times A \times S \rightarrow [0,1] \) is the transition function, \( R: S \times A \times S \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \) is the reward function, and \( \gamma \in [0,1) \) is the discount factor. \( \pi: S \times A \rightarrow [0,1] \) is a deterministic policy to demonstrate the probability of the action. The state-action value function \( Q: S \times A \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \) following policy \( \pi \) can be defined as:

\[ Q^\pi(s,a) = E[ \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \gamma^k r_{t+k} | s_t = s, a_t = a ] \]

The goal of each MDP is to find an optimal policy \( \pi^* \), and it owns expected return \( V^\pi(s) \) and value function \( Q^\pi(s,a) \). The Q-function in DRL satisfies the Bellman optimality equation. Therefore, an optimal state-action value satisfies the following equation:

\[ Q^*(s,a) = \sum_{s' \in S} T(s,a,s') [ R(s,a,s') + \gamma V^*(s') ] \]

One of the most popular methods to estimate the value of state-action is the Q-learning algorithm. The basic idea of deep Q-learning is to estimate Q-values based on rewards.
and the agent’s Q-value function. The Q-update rule for model-free online learning can be expressed as:

$$Q'(s, a) = Q(s, a) + \alpha [R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s', a') - Q(s, a)]$$  (4)

where $\alpha$ is the learning rate. The max error is utilized to evaluate the quality of Q-function:

$$\text{error} = \left( R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s, a) - Q^*(s, a) \right)$$  (5)

### 3 Proposed DTRL architecture

In the practical application of deep learning, there are two common problems: the first is to deal with extremely large state space of tabular Q-learning in time series analysis, the second is to process unlabeled data. To solve the above issues, the DTRL architecture is designed, which combines deep learning with transfer reinforcement learning. More specifically, the DTRL method inputs the current state and action, then adopts a LSTM to estimate the value of $Q(s, a)$, and at last transfer the Q-values to another LSTM network. The estimated value of $Q(s, a)$ is defined as

$$Q(s, a) = E \left[ R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s', a') \right]$$  (6)

#### 3.1 Parameter reinforcement Q learning

To solve the problem caused by large state space in the RUL prediction and improve the generalization ability of deep Q-function, Deep Q-Network (DQN) is adopted. DQN is a model parameterized by weights and biases collectively denoted as $\theta$. In DQN, Q-values at each training iteration $t$ can be denoted by $Q_{\theta_t}(s, a)$. More specifically, Q-values are estimated by performing forward propagation then querying the output nodes. To obtain the estimation of Q-values shown in (6), the proposed DTRL method adopts the experience replay method [36]. After one prediction, the experiences at current time step, denoted as $e=(s, a, R, s')$, are recorded in the replay memory $M=\{e_1, e_2, ..., e_l\}$, and then sampled randomly at training time. Instead of updating Q-table lookups, now the network parameters $\theta$ are updated with stochastic gradient algorithm to minimize the differentiable loss function:

$$L(\theta_t) = E_{(s, a, R, s')} \left[ R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q_{\theta_t}(s', a') - Q_{\theta_t}(s, a) \right]^2$$  (7)

When the Q-function changes quite rapidly, the updates may oscillate or diverge. At the same time, when there are too many iterations, the algorithms will be inefficient. To avoid the above problems, the proposed DTRL method adopts the fixed Q-targets method. Instead of using the latest parameters $\theta_t$ to calculate the maximum possible reward of the next state $\gamma \max_{a'} Q_{\theta_t}(s', a')$, we update the parameters $\theta'$ every certain iterations. Differentiating the loss function with respect to the parameters, the gradient is shown as follows:

$$\nabla_{\theta'} L(\theta_t) = E_{(s, a, R, s')} \left[ (y_{t_{-1}} - Q_{\theta_t}(s, a))\nabla_{\theta_t} Q_{\theta_t}(s, a) \right]$$  (8)

where $y_{t_{-1}} = R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q_{\theta_t}(s', a')$ is the stale update target.

#### 3.2 Parameter reinforcement Q learning

In the DQN-based RUL prediction method, we use densely connected networks to capture the state correlations. However, the real-world RUL prediction tasks also exist temporal correlations and vanishing gradient problems, which may result in degradation of DQN’s performance. Therefore, in the proposed DTRL method, LSTM layers are adopted instead of dense layers to carry information across many timesteps. More specifically, the Q-function in the DTRL-based RUL prediction can be defined as

$$Q_{\theta_t}(s, a, h_{t-1})$$  (9)

where $h_{t-1}$ is the supplementary input calculated by LSTM layers according to the previous information. Consequently, the gradient of the loss function is shown as

$$\nabla_{\theta_{t_{-1}}} L(\theta_t) = E_{(s, a, R, s')} \left[ (y_{t_{-1}} - Q_{\theta_t}(s, a, h_{t_{-1}}))\nabla_{\theta_t} Q_{\theta_t}(s, a, h_{t_{-1}}) \right]$$  (10)

$$y_{t_{-1}} = R + \gamma \max_{a'} Q_{\theta_t}(s', a', h'_{t_{-1}})$$  (11)

The DTRL method adopts LSTM layers instead of simple dense layers to process temporal series. As shown in Fig. 1, LSTM layers take as input temporal sequential experiences $e=(e_1, e_2, ..., e_l)$ and Q-values are calculated after the output layer. In the practical prediction process, as LSTM layers save multi-timesteps information, we are supposed to choose experiences traces with certain length instead of single experience.

#### 3.3 Deep Q transfer learning

After deep reinforcement Q learning, we can calculate the Q-function of each state action pair, which can help to select the values with the least error in the prediction tasks. But the above algorithm requires a large amount of experimental fault datasets, which is almost impossible to be acquired at the beginning of practical manufacturing. Hence the transfer learning method is introduced to reduce the amount of training datasets and make full use of the trained Q-function. In the RUL prediction tasks, the proposed DTRL method transfers the Q-function calculated from different tool tasks
(source domain) to another tool task (target domain), which aims to improve the learning ability in new prediction tasks by introducing knowledge from a similar learned prediction task.

According to the DRL, the tool RUL prediction tasks can be defined as $M = (S, A, T, R, \gamma)$, and the tasks are different in transition function $T$, reward function $R$ and discount factor $\gamma$. As shown in Fig. 1. The source domain, denoted as $M_1 = (S, A, T_1, R_1, \gamma_1)$, is the trained DRL network, and the target domain, denoted as $M_2 = (S, A, T_2, R_2, \gamma_2)$, is the new DRL network. Assume $Q_1^*$ and $Q_2^*$ are corresponding optimal Q-functions. The main goal of the DTRL method is using the information of $M_1$ and $Q_1^*$ to update $Q_2$ and improve training speed of $M_2$ while ensuring the prediction accuracy.

To learn similar and joint Q-function for the source domain and the target domain, the distance between Q-functions calculated by two networks are minimized. The distance between two tasks is defined as

$$\text{Dis}(M_1, M_2) = \max_{s,a} \left| Q_1^*(s,a) - Q_2^*(s,a) \right|$$

By minimizing the distance between two tasks, Q-functions learned in the target domain are restricted to be similar to that of the source domain, consequently deep Q transfer learning is achieved. According to the distance between two tasks calculated in Eq. (12), the Q-function update in the new DRL network is performed. Finally, the forward iteration process is implemented in the new DRL network, and the RUL prediction results of the target domain are output.

The DTRL network is realized through above mentioned steps, and the whole architecture is shown in Fig. 1.

### 3.4 DTRL for RUL prediction

In the real prediction tasks, the first step is feature extraction and data preprocess, then take the results as the input of the DTRL method. We model the mapping function between the extracted features and the corresponding RUL sampling points, which can be expressed as

$$b_{FRUL} = \sum_{f_i} \varphi(f_i) \omega + b$$

where $[f_1, f_2, ..., f_m]$ denote the extracted features with $m$ denoting numbers of input features at a certain point in time, and $[t_1, t_2, ..., t_n]^T$ denote the RUL with $n$ denoting sampling time points during run-to-failure. In the real tool processing, the tool performance is generally nonlinear due to the influence of nonlinear factors such as crack growth in material and sudden change of machining parameters. Therefore, a nonlinear activation function $\varphi(*)$ is adopted to fit mapping function between feature matrix and RUL series.

$$\text{RUL} = \varphi(F) \omega + b$$

where $RUL = [t_1, t_2, ..., t_n]^T$ is time sample series, $\varphi(F)$ is a nonlinear feature matrix, $\omega$ is the corresponding weights for nonlinear regression and $b$ is the bias.

The DTRL-based RUL prediction algorithm is summarized in Algorithm 1.
Algorithm 1 RUL prediction based on DTRL

1. Data Preprocessing:
   Input: Historical failure datasets $H_{nm}$ of several tools.
   1) Extract features $F_{nm}$ from acquired datasets.
   2) Take data standardization and regularization on extracted features.
   Output: Standard datasets $F_{nm}$ as input of the DTRL.

2. Algorithm Training:
   Input: Standard training and validation datasets and RUL series $RUL = [t_1, t_2, ..., t_n]^T$.
   1) Train a deep reinforcement learning network with training feature datasets.
   2) Train mapping model with training feature datasets and time series.
   Output: The trained DRL network and mapping model.

3. RUL Prediction:
   Input: Feature datasets of another tool.
   1) Transfer the trained Q-function to the new DRL network and then perform update to get the new Q-function $Q_2$.
   2) Input the new feature training datasets perform forward propagation by the new Q-function to achieve feature prediction.
   3) Input the predicted feature matrix and realize the RUL prediction of the new tool by trained nonlinear mapping function.
   Output: Feature and RUL prediction of the new tool.

4 Experiment validation

4.1 Benchmarking data description

To validate effectiveness of the proposed DTRL method, extensive experiments on tool performance degradation are conducted. The experiments are carried out on a high-speed CNC machine, as shown in Fig. 2. The cutting tools are end-milling cutters with TiAIN coating and the material of cutting workpiece is CR12moV. The key signals collected synchronously are cutting force and vibration signals. Other experimental conditions for tool processing are as follows: The spindle rotation frequency was 3000 r/min; the cutting depth in radial and axial direction was 0.5mm; the sampling frequency was 10kHz and a run-to-failure tool produced a total of 312 cutting segments. A Kistler compact multi-component dynamometer was mounted to collect cutting force signals in real time, and a DAQ Elsys TraNET 404S8 was used to collect vibration signals synchronously. Therefore, six kinds of sensor signals were acquired, including force in three directions and vibration in three directions.

4.2 Data preprocessing and DRL training

In order to make the raw sensor signal more amenable to models, the first step is data preprocessing, including feature extraction and normalization. The simplest way to prevent overfitting is to reduce the memorization capacity of the model. Therefore, orthogonal wavelet packet transform (OWPT) is used to extract the features of cutting force and vibration signals, so as to reduce the input data without losing information. In this paper, to acquire discriminated feature, six-level OWPT using db1 is adopted to calculate the energy of each sub-band. Each feature can be separated into 64 sub-bands, of which the energy is defined as

$$E_i = \sum_{n=1}^{n} |x_{i,m}|$$

where $x_{i,m}$ is wavelet coefficient in scale $2^i$, and $n$ is the oscillation parameter. The number of energy can effectively reflect the tool wear state, and the energy spectrum of cutting force and vibration signal in each cutting segment can be converted into the form shown in Fig. 3. Then, each energy feature is normalized independently to accelerate model convergence.

After data preprocessing, frequency spectrum of the signals monitored from tool wear process is extracted as weighted average energy, which is used as input to DTRL for model training and RUL prediction. To configure network...
structure of the first Q-function of tool1, the number of nodes in both input and output layers is set to be 6, which is equal to the number of extracted features. The discount factor \( \gamma \) is set to 0.9 and the learning rate \( \alpha \) is set to 0.05 in Eq. (10). In order to ensure that the training results converge to the global optimum, the learning rate is set to decrease exponentially with the number of training epochs. Then to accelerate the convergence speed of network in training process, RMSprop is used to optimize gradient descent process. Finally, training the Q-function on the training dataset by conducting updating until the Q-function is converged.

### 4.3 Tool Prediction Results

After model training stage, a well trained Q-function is obtained and applied in next testing stage. The network structure of the trained Q-function is first updated and transferred to establish a new DRL network for feature learning of tool2. Then the sensor data of tool2 is preprocessed and the extracted energy features are input to the new DRL network. After a forward iteration process, for clarity, the force and vibration energy features learned by the DTRL network is independently shown in Fig. 4. The X axis represents the cutting steps of tool2, and the Y axis represents the corresponding energy features. It can be seen that with increase in time of tool running, the predicted value has a similar increasing trend with the real value. Increasing trend of each extracted feature is consistent with that of tool wear degree in tool2, which shows the extracted features can effectively reflect the degradation of tool performance. The result demonstrates that DTRL network is an effective feature prediction model for tool wear monitoring.

To further perform RUL prediction by the DTRL network for tool2, first is establishing nonlinear mapping function between predicted energy features and time series of RUL. Support vector regression (SVR) is used to construct the regression model, in which the kernel function choosing radial basis function (RBF). The kernel function can be expressed as

\[
K(x, x_i) = \exp(-\gamma \|x - x_i\|^2)
\]  

(16)

where \( \gamma \) denoting the width parameter. The energy features and corresponding RUL time of tool1 form the training samples. In order to minimize the training error, the width parameter \( \gamma \) is adjusted to 30.

Finally, the energy features of tool2 are input to the trained regression model to further evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed DTRL method. RUL prediction result is shown in Fig. 5, and it can be seen that the predicted curve is very close to the real curve. To quantitatively measure the performance of DTRL method on RUL prediction tasks, two indicators for evaluating prediction precision are utilized including mean absolute error (MAE) and root mean squared error (RMSE). The corresponding equations to calculate errors are expressed as follows:

\[
MAE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N}|\hat{T}_i - T_i|
\]

(17)
where $\tilde{T}_i$ and $T_i$ are true and predicted tool RUL, respectively.

The prediction error is shown in Table 1. It can be seen that the validation MAE and RMSE translate to RUL of 16.54 min and 20.23 min after denormalization. The results show a low prediction error is acquired and demonstrate the effectiveness of DTRL method on RUL prediction tasks.

5 Model Comparison and Validation

In Section 4, the proposed DTRL method is used to predict RUL of a new tool. The tool types and cutting conditions are rather limited. To verify effectiveness of deep Q transfer learning (DQTL) strategy in improving prediction performance, a comparison research without transfer learning for tool2 is performed. Furthermore, to investigate the generalization ability of the proposed DTRL method, more experiments are conducted.

5.1 Model Comparison

The energy features of tool2 are input to the trained regression model without DQTL. RUL prediction result is shown in Fig. 6, which shows a larger prediction error compared with Fig. 5, especially from middle stage of cutting processing. The corresponding prediction error is shown in Table 2. It can be seen that the quantitative error is higher compared with that in Table 1, which demonstrates the proposed DQTL as an effective method to improve prediction accuracy of DRL network.

5.2 Model Validation

To verify generality of the method, two kinds of experiments are extended. One kind is utilizing a new type of tool under same cutting conditions, in which the diameter of original tool is 6 mm and the diameter of new type is 8 mm. The other kind is under different cutting conditions, in which the spindle rotation frequency is 10000 r/min and the cutting depth in radial and axial direction was 0.25 mm.

Comparing parameters include tool geometries and cutting parameters. During the experiments, tool geometries are fixed, thus cutting parameters have greater influence on force and vibration amplitude. Cutting parameters, including spindle speed and cutting depth, may cause different dynamic ranges under similar cutting conditions. To eliminate the above effects and improve the generalization ability of the proposed model, a zero-centered step is first applied to the collected signals. Then, wavelet packet energy features are extracted from the cutting force and vibration signals of each sampling point. In this paper, 6-level wavelet packet decomposition is adopted, thus the harmonics are decomposed into 64 wavelet packet energy coefficients. Finally, energy coefficient with highest weight is input into the model instead of original signal (see Fig. 3), so the model is robust to various cutting conditions.

Table 3 shows the MAE and RMSE translated to RUL in two extended experiments. The results indicate that the DTRL method can effectively predict tool wear under various cutting conditions.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, a DTRL method is introduced to conduct deep Q-function transfer in reinforcement learning network. Two strategies, including introducing LSTM into DQN, Q-function update and transfer, is designed to realize DTRL network. Experimental results demonstrate the effectiveness
of DTRL network for tool wear monitoring and RUL prediction. Three conclusions are summarized as following:

1. Compared with traditional reinforcement learning methods, accuracy of RUL prediction can be improved by deep Q-function transfer learning.

2. The energy features decomposed by WPD from original signals can make DTRL network robust to different cutting conditions.

3. The proposed DTRL is trained by a set of historical failure data and transferred to various tool diameter and cutting conditions. Therefore, DTRL is able to promote successful applications of RUL prediction of new tools with limited historical failure data.

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Figure 1

Architecture of the deep transfer reinforcement learning network
Figure 2

CNC machine monitoring systems for tool wear data acquisition. (a) CNC machine tool. (b) Tool wear monitoring system.
Figure 3

Cutting force signals, vibration signals and their energy the wavelet packet
Figure 4

Predicted features of tool2 learned by the DTRL network
Figure 5

RUL Prediction result for tool2

Figure 6

RUL Prediction result for tool2 without deep Q transfer learning