Gate Design in Injection Molding of Microfluidic Components Using Process Simulations - DTU Orbit (08/11/2017)

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Just as in conventional injection molding of plastics, process simulationsare an effective and interesting tool in the area of microinjection molding. They can be applied in order to optimize and assist the design of the microplastic part, the mold, and the actual process. Available simulation software is however actually made for macroscopic injection molding. By means of the correct implementation and careful modeling strategy though, it can also be applied to microplastic parts, as it is shown in the present work. Process simulations were applied to two microfluidic devices (amicrofluidic distributor and a mixer). The paper describes how the two devices were meshed in the simulations software to obtain a proper simulation model and where the challenges arose. One of the main goals of the simulations was the investigation of the filling of the parts. Great emphasis was also on the optimization of selected gate designs for both plastic parts. Subsequently, the simulation results were used to answer the question which gate design was the most appropriate with regard to the process window, polymer flow, and part quality. This finally led to an optimization of the design and the realization of this design in practiceas actual steel mold. Additionally, the simulation results were critically discussed and possible improvements and limitations of the gained results and the deployed software were described. Ultimately,the simulation results were validated by cross-checking the flow front behavior of the polymer flow predicted by the simulation with the actual flow front at different time steps. These were realized by molding short shots with the realized molds and were compared to the simulations at the global, i.e., part leveland at the local, i.e. feature level.

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