

Finite Element solution of the fiber/matrix interface crack problem: convergence properties and mode mixity of the Virtual Crack Closure Technique

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

Bi-material interfaces represent the basic load transfer mechanism at the heart of Fiber Reinforced Polymer Composite (FRPC) materials. They are present at the macroscale, in the form of adhesive joints; at the mesoscale, as
5 interfaces between layers with different orientations; at the microscale, as fiber-matrix interfaces. Bi-material interfaces have for long attracted the attention of researchers in Fracture Mechanics [1, 2], due to their hidden complexity. The problem was first addressed in the 1950's by Williams [3], who derived through a linear elastic asymptotic analysis the stress distribution around an
10 *open* crack (with crack faces nowhere in contact for any size of the crack) between two infinite half-planes of dissimilar materials and found the existence of a strong oscillatory behavior in the stress singularity at the crack tip of the form

$$r^{-\frac{1}{2}} \sin(\varepsilon \log r) \quad \text{with} \quad \varepsilon = \frac{1}{2\pi} \log \left(\frac{1 - \beta}{1 + \beta} \right); \quad (1)$$

in which β is one of the two parameters introduced by Dundurs [4] to characterize bi-material interfaces:

$$\beta = \frac{\mu_2 (\kappa_1 - 1) - \mu_1 (\kappa_2 - 1)}{\mu_2 (\kappa_1 + 1) + \mu_1 (\kappa_2 + 1)} \quad (2)$$

15 where $\kappa = 3 - 4\nu$ in plane strain and $\kappa = \frac{3-4\nu}{1+\nu}$ in plane stress, μ is the shear modulus, ν Poisson's coefficient, and indexes 1, 2 refer to the two bulk materials joined at the interface. Defining a as the length of the crack, it was found that the size of the oscillatory region is in the order of $10^{-6}a$ [5]. Given the oscillatory behaviour of the crack tip singularity of the stress field of Eq. 1,
20 the definition of Stress Intensity Factor (SIF) $\lim_{r \rightarrow 0} \sqrt{2\pi r} \sigma$ ceases to be valid as it returns logarithmically infinite terms [1]. Furthermore, it implies that the Mode mixity problem at the crack tip is ill-posed.

It was furthermore observed, always in the context of Linear Elastic Fracture Mechanics (LEFM), that an interpenetration zone exists close to the crack
25 tip [6, 7] with a length in the order of 10^{-4} [6]. Following conclusions firstly proposed in [7], the presence of a *contact zone* in the crack tip neighborhood, of a length to be determined from the solution of the elastic problem, was introduced in [8] and shown to provide a physically consistent solution to the straight bi-material interface crack problem.

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2. Vectorial formulation of the Virtual Crack Closure Technique (VCCT)

3. Formulation of the ERR with respect to the FEM solution's variables

4. Convergence analysis

35 4.1. *Analytical considerations*

4.2. *Numerical results*

5. Conclusions & Outlook

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