

# **Multi-scale analysis of wrinkling during consolidation of thermoset composites**

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## Declaration

### **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I, Vu An Le declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Technology Sydney.

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## Table of content

<b>Title Page</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Declaration</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of publications</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of content</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of figures</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of tables</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. Laminated composites</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2. Textile composites</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3. Overview of composite manufacturing techniques</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4. Applications and challenges</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.5. Knowledge gaps</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6. Research objectives</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>1.7. Thesis structure</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Literature review</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1. Micro-mechanical modelling of circular fibre composites</b> .....	<b>17</b>
2.1.1. Analytical micromechanics equations for predicting properties of solid unidirectional composites.....	17
2.1.2. Predicting the viscoelastic properties of composites during cure .....	20
<b>2.2. Meso-mechanical modelling of textile composites</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>2.3. Buckling behaviour of laminated viscoelastic composites</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>2.4. Bending behaviour of woven composites during forming processes</b> .....	<b>32</b>
2.4.1. Bending properties of uncured thin laminates .....	33
<b>Chapter 3. Research methodology</b> .....	<b>39</b>

<b>3.1. Micro- and meso-scale model.....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.1.1. Micro-mechanical modelling of UD composites .....	41
3.1.2. Analytical procedure for predicting elastic engineering constants of woven composites at the meso-scale .....	41
3.1.2.1. Geometric modelling of 5HS satin weave .....	42
3.1.2.2. Discretisation technique of yarns and determination of three-dimensional effective stiffnesses.....	44
<b>3.2. Macro-scale (structural) modelling of viscoelastic composites .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.2.1. Numerical approach using Abaqus built-in viscoelastic model (IF).....	46
3.2.2. Numerical approach using orthotropic viscoelastic user material model (UMAT) .....	47
<b>Chapter 4. Buckling analysis of multilayered elastic beams with soft and rigid interfaces .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.2. Method.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>4.3. Multilayered cantilever beam under bending (Case I) .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>4.4. Flat laminate under compressive load (Case II) .....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.4.1. Two pinned ends .....	54
4.4.2. Four fixed edges.....	57
<b>4.5. Summary and conclusions .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Buckling behaviour of laminated viscoelastic composites under axial loads.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>5.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>5.2. Method.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>5.3. Model verification .....</b>	<b>62</b>
5.3.1. Geometry and input parameters .....	62
5.3.2. FE analysis.....	64
<b>5.4. Model validation and comparison with experiments .....</b>	<b>68</b>
5.4.1. Isotropic viscoelastic material .....	69
5.4.2. Orthotropic viscoelastic material .....	76
<b>5.5. Summary and conclusions .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Bending behaviour of viscoelastic woven composite plates .....</b>	<b>84</b>

<b>6.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>6.2. Method.....</b>	<b>84</b>
6.2.1. Micro- and meso-scale properties .....	85
6.2.2. Macro-scale analysis .....	86
6.2.2.1. Analytical method .....	87
6.2.2.2. Numerical method .....	89
<b>6.3. Results and model validation .....</b>	<b>91</b>
6.3.1. Elastic material.....	91
6.3.1.1. Micro-scale results .....	91
6.3.1.2. Meso-scale properties.....	93
6.3.2. Viscoelastic material .....	94
<b>6.4. Discussion .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>6.5. Summary and conclusions .....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Bending behaviour of multilayered viscoelastic plates with thin and soft interfaces .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>7.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>7.2. Method.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>7.3. Macro-scale model .....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>7.4. Results and model validation .....</b>	<b>117</b>
7.4.1. Elastic material.....	117
7.4.2. Viscoelastic material .....	119
<b>7.5. Summary and conclusions .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Chapter 8. Conclusions and recommendations .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>8.1. Summary .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>8.2. Contributions and Key findings .....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>8.3. Limitations and recommendations for future studies.....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>A.1. Transformation matrix used in Eq. (3.7).....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>A.2. Differential approach to modelling generally orthotropic materials.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>A.3. Implementation .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>134</b>

## List of figures

Figure 1.1: Typical reinforcement types .....	2
Figure 1.2: Arrangement of plies in (a) a unidirectional (UD) layup (b) a quasi-isotropic layup.....	3
Figure 1.3: Classification of textile composites. ....	4
(Dixit & Singh 2013) .....	4
Figure 1.4: Schematic of the common weaves. (a) Plain weave. (b) Twill weave. (c) 5-harness (5HS) satin weave .....	5
Figure 1.5: Principle of autoclave curing.....	6
Figure 1.6: Buckling of the plies due to the excess length with fixed ends during consolidation (Adapted from Belnoue et al. (2018)) .....	8
Figure 1.7: Thesis structure.....	16
Figure 2.1: Composite Cylindrical Assemblage (Malek 2014).....	18
Figure 2.2: Fibre bed deforms under shear stress. (a) Fibre bed deforms together with resin. (b) Fibre deforms under the overall shear stress. (c) Analog representation .....	21
(Malek, Thorpe & Poursartip 2011).....	21
Figure 2.3: Schematic of (a) mosaic model; (b) undulation model and (c) bridging model proposed by Ishikawa & Chou (1982).....	24
Figure 2.4: Unit cell of plain weave composite improved by Naik & Shembekar (1992) .....	25
Figure 2.5: Schematic of (a) “X model”; (b) “Y model” and (c) “Z model” developed by Tan, Tong & Steven (1999).....	26
Figure 2.6: Schematic of (a) the representative unit cell in a 3D orthotropic laminated composite; (b) the discretised stripes of layer $l$ ; (c) global and local coordinate systems for stripe 1 (Wu, Brown & Davies 2002).....	27
Figure 2.7: Schematic of 3 Stage Homogenisation Method (3SHM) developed by Hallal et al. (2012).....	28
Figure 3.1: Schematic of the multi-scale modelling framework for viscoelastic modelling of orthotropic composites (Adopted from Malek (2014)).....	40
Figure 3.2: (a) The RUC geometry and notation for a 5-harness satin weave composite; (b) Yarn cross-sectional shape (c) Orientation angles .....	44
Figure 4.1: Two types of analysis model employed for this study. ....	49
Figure 4.2: Composite layup .....	50
Figure 4.3: The role of interface stiffness and ply anisotropy on the multilayered cantilever beam rigidity.....	53



Figure 4.4: Comparisons of FE results with Euler predictions for isotropic plies ( $E_p = 100$ GPa) bonded with a range of interfaces. ....	54
Figure 4.5: Buckling mode shape for flat laminates with stiff interfaces ( $E_i = 100$ GPa) using PML approach. The beam cross section is depicted on the right side. ....	55
Figure 4.6: Buckling mode shape for flat laminates with stiff interfaces ( $E_i = 100$ GPa) using Abaqus CE. The laminate layup is depicted on the right side for clarity. ....	55
Figure 4.7: Buckling mode shape for flat laminates with soft interfaces ( $E_i = 100$ kPa) using PML approach. ....	56
Figure 4.8: The influence of ply elastic constants on the buckling response of flat laminates using PML approach. ....	57
Figure 4.9: Magnitude displacement (in mm) at critical buckling load – Composite element model – $E_i = 100$ GPa. ....	58
Figure 4.10: Internal buckling wavelength along the beam length – Physically modelling layers. ....	59
Figure 5.1: Detail of the 3D model under axial displacement. ....	64
(According to Wang, Long & Clifford (2009)). ....	64
Figure 5.2: FE mesh of the buckled laminated composite under axial loading ....	66
Figure 5.3: Comparison of deformed shape and Mises effective stress (in MPa) at ultimate state for cured isotropic laminates with different mesh sizes: (a) Mesh 1 (b) Mesh 2 (c) Mesh 3 (d) Mesh 4 under uniform axial displacement. ....	67
Figure 5.4: Comparison of the deformed shape (mode shape 1) obtained from the eigenvalue for the cured composite assuming: (a) isotropic (b) transversely isotropic material behaviour under uniform axial displacement. ....	68
Figure 5.5: Effect of loading rate on force vs displacement relationship using IF (Case 2a). The resin viscoelastic properties are taken from Section 3.1.1 in Abaqus Benchmarks Guide. The material properties are listed in Table 5.5. ....	72
Figure 5.6: Comparison between IF (Case 2a) and DF (Case 2b) approaches for two presentative cases. The viscoelastic properties of the resin are provided in Section 3.1.1 in Abaqus Benchmarks Guide. ....	73
Figure 5.7: Effect of Prony series constants on force vs displacement relationship using IF (Case 2a and 3a) and DF (Case 2b and 3b) viscoelastic model compare to isotropic model (Case 1). The same loading rate of 4.4 mm/min has been used in all cases. ....	74
Figure 5.8: Stress relaxation response under tensile load calculated using: (a) a single-term Prony series (b) twelve-term Prony series. ....	75
Figure 5.9: Effect of $E_0$ on the buckling behaviour of the isotropic viscoelastic laminates using IF. The resin viscoelastic properties are taken from Section 3.1.1 in Abaqus Benchmarks Guide (Case 2a) at rate of 10 mm/min. ....	76

Figure 5.10: Effect of ply anisotropy on the buckling response of viscoelastic composites. Various resin viscoelastic properties are assumed as listed in Table 5.5 and the same loading rate of 4.4 mm/min is considered for all cases.....	79
Figure 5.11: Results of parametric studies: Effect of (a) increasing $E_o$ (Case 5), (b) increasing $E_\infty$ (Case 6) and (c) higher $E_o$ and $E_\infty$ (Case 7) on the buckling behaviour of the uncured orthotropic viscoelastic laminates using DF. The resin viscoelastic properties are provided in Table 5.4 ( $w_i$ and $\tau_i$ ) and Table 5.10 ( $E_o$ and $E_\infty$ ). The loading rate is 4.4 mm/min in all cases. ....	81
Figure 6.1: (a) Schematic of the multi-scale modelling approach for bending behaviour of 5-harness satin weave composites from micro-scale to macro-scale; (b) Flow chart depicting the analytical and numerical models utilized in the multi-scale analysis.....	85
Figure 6.2: Bending of a cantilever beam: (a) beam with load; (b) deflection curve; (c) cross-section of beam showing the x-axis as the neutral axis of the cross-section .....	89
Figure 6.3: (a) Bending profile with tip displacement of 10 mm.....	90
(b) Bending moment – curvature relation in the isotropic elastic beam ( $E = 500$ MPa, $\nu = 0.2$ )..	90
Figure 6.4: Detail of the 3D model under bending.....	97
(According to Alshahrani & Hojjati (2017b)).....	97
Figure 6.5: Deformed sample at tip displacement of 50 mm ( $U_3$ in mm).....	97
Figure 6.6: Bending moment versus curvature based on isotropic elastic material assumption. .	98
Figure 6.7: Bending moment versus curvature of uncured 5HS prepreg with different values of fibre stiffness ( $E_1$ ). A loading rate of 3 mm/s is considered for all cases. ....	107
Figure 6.8: Effect of loading rate on bending moment versus curvature of 5HS prepreg. Fibre stiffness is assumed to be $E_1 = 1.5$ GPa in all cases. ....	107
Figure 6.9: Comparison between IF and DF approaches for the validation case (effective fibre modulus $E_1 = 1.5$ GPa). The viscoelastic properties of the resin are provided in Table 6.9. ....	108
Figure 6.10: Comparison between prepreg and dry 5HS behaviour according to different assumed values for fibre stiffness, $E_1$ . ....	110
Figure 7.1: Schematic of the multi-scale modelling approach for bending behaviour of 5-harness satin weave multilayered composites from micro-scale to macro-scale. ....	115
Figure 7.2: Bending model of a three-layer plate. Each layer is separated by a thin interface of 0.01 mm (According to Alshahrani & Hojjati (2017a)).....	116
Figure 7.3: FE mesh of the three-layer plate used in this study. Numbers of mesh are $30 \times 75 \times 24$ in X, Y and Z respectively.....	117
Figure 7.4: Deformed sample at tip displacement of 30 mm ( $U_3$ in mm) under bending. The top end is is restrained from all displacements in a length of 30 mm. ....	117

Figure 7.5: The effect of interface properties on the bending loads. Required loads to reach a tip displacement of 30 mm at room temperature are compared using various material models. Resin viscoelastic properties selected for the orthotropic viscoelastic material model are provided in (Thorpe 2012). The model has the length of 150 mm, the width of 50 mm and the thickness of 1.67 mm. ....	121
Figure 7.6: The effect of interface properties on the bending loads in a thick laminate. Required loads to reach a tip displacement of 30 mm at room temperature are compared using various material models. The model has the length of 80 mm, the width of 50 mm and the thickness of 3.91 mm. ....	122
Figure 7.7: Stacking sequences of three-layer plate (a) Stacking 1 [0°/0°/0°]; (b) Stacking 2 [0°/45°/0°]; (c) Stacking 3 [0°/45°/45°]; (d) Stacking 4 [45°/45°/0°]. ....	123
Figure 7.8: Moment vs curvature for all selected stacking sequences at room temperature. A loading rate of 3 mm/s is considered and the interface modulus, $E_i$ , is assumed 7 MPa for all cases. Resin viscoelastic properties selected for the orthotropic viscoelastic material model are provided in (Thorpe 2012). ....	124

## List of tables

Table 2.1: List of experimental studies on deformation of uncured composites and calibrated material properties for the corresponding FE simulations. ....	37
Table 4.1: Comparisons between current FE predictions, Dodwell (2015)'s FE results, and the analytical model based on Euler-Bernoulli kinematics (Eq. 4.1) for a multilayered cantilever beam (Case I).....	52
Table 4.2: Input properties of the transversely isotropic plies. ....	52
Table 4.3: Input properties of the transversely isotropic plies. ....	56
Table 4.4: Comparisons of FE results between composite element models and models layered physically – $E_p = 100$ GPa for all cases .....	57
Table 5.1: Input properties according to Wang, Long & Clifford (2009) for the cured sample .....	64
Table 5.2: Mesh convergence study results .....	66
Table 5.3: Comparisons of critical buckling loads between theoretical result and eigenvalue and large deformation analyses for the cured composite assuming isotropic and transversely isotropic input parameters. ....	68
Table 5.4: Prony series parameters for MTM45-1 epoxy as reported in Thorpe (2012) 70	
Table 5.5: Summary of case studies considered in Section 5.3.....	70
Table 5.6: The shear moduli $G_i$ associated with the specific relaxation time, $\tau_i$ used for Case 3b.....	73
Table 5.7: Material properties of fibre, resin and fibre bed used in the buckling simulation of composite laminates.....	77
Table 5.8: Relaxed and unrelaxed values of components of the composite relaxation matrix. ....	78
Table 5.9: Prony series parameters for each component of the relaxation matrix of the composite material obtained from micromechanics equations following the approach presented in Malek (2014).....	79
Table 5.10: Parametric case studies conducted for determining the effect of resin properties on the post buckling response of uncured laminates. ....	80
Table 6.1: Constituent material properties used for cured and uncured UD thermoset composite according to Ersoy et al. (2010).....	92
Table 6.2: Comparison of the UD composite material properties obtained by the present analysis (Malek 2014) and data available in the literature (Ersoy et al. (2010))......	93
Table 6.3: Yarn and resin properties used in validation model for woven composite properties according to Naik (1994). ....	94
Table 6.4: Comparison of results for cured woven composites. ....	94

Table 6.5: Mesh convergence study results (isotropic elastic case ( $E = 700$ MPa, $\nu = 0.4$ )). .....	98
Table 6.6a: Input material properties of fibre, resin and fibre bed used in the bending simulation of textile prepregs. The compressive properties have been assigned to the bending model. ....	99
Table 6.6b: Input material properties of fibre, resin and fibre bed used in the bending simulation of textile prepregs. The tensile properties have been assigned to the bending model.....	100
Table 6.6c: Input material properties of fibre, resin and fibre bed used in the bending simulation of textile prepregs. The effective bending properties have been assigned to the model.....	100
Table 6.7a: Micro-scale predictions of UD mechanical properties using micromechanics equations with fibre-bed effect (Malek 2014) under compressive load. ....	101
Table 6.7b: Micro-scale predictions of UD mechanical properties using micromechanics equations with fibre-bed effect (Malek 2014) under tensile load.....	102
Table 6.7c: Micro-scale predictions of UD mechanical properties using micromechanics equations with fibre-bed effect (Malek 2014) under bending load. ....	102
Table 6.8a: Meso-scale predictions of 5HS prepreg mechanical properties under compression using the analytical technique of Naik (1994). ....	103
Table 6.8b: Meso-scale predictions of 5HS prepreg mechanical properties under tension using the analytical technique of Naik (1994).....	103
Table 6.8c: Meso-scale predictions of 5HS prepreg mechanical properties under bending using the analytical technique of Naik (1994).....	103
Table 6.9: Prony series parameters for MTM45-1 epoxy as reported in Thorpe’s thesis (Thorpe 2012). ....	104
Table 6.10: Relaxed and unrelaxed values of components of the composite relaxation matrix. The effective bending properties have been assigned to the model at micro-scale. ....	105
Table 6.11: Prony series parameters for each component of the relaxation matrix of the composite material obtained from micromechanics equations following the approach presented in Malek et al. (2018). The effective bending properties have been assigned to the model at micro-scale. ....	105
Table 6.12: Summary of composite properties for UD and 5HS prepregs, as well as dry UD and 5HS according to different values of fibre stiffness, $E_1$ .....	109
Table 7.1: Comparisons between current FE predictions and the analytical model (Warren & Richard 2002) .....	118
Table 7.2: Input properties of the plies .....	119

Table 7.3: Input material properties of fibre, resin and fibre bed used in the bending simulation of textile prepregs (Le et al. 2022). .....	120
Table 7.4: Meso-scale predictions of 5HS prepreg mechanical properties under bending using the analytical technique of Naik (1994).....	120

## Abstract

Carbon fibre is known for its high strength, light weight and durability. The aerospace and automotive industries have demonstrated a strong interest in utilising carbon fibre when designing their structural parts. However, there are still barriers preventing other industries from realising the full potential of such advanced laminated composites. Among these challenges are the formation of wrinkles and defects throughout the manufacturing process. Currently, manufacturing composite parts with mitigation of defects greatly relies on the designers' experience and the outcomes of trial-and-error procedures. Due to the high cost of experiments and a large number of process parameters involved in composite manufacturing, an improved understanding of wrinkle formation is desirable for industries. Therefore, predictive modelling to aid design engineers in their understanding of the wrinkling phenomenon has become vital over the past two decades.

According to a few recent studies, fibre waviness, misalignment and the complex viscoelastic behaviour of a composite's layered structure during cure are the primary causes of defects, wrinkle formation, and eventual rejection of large composite components. However, the relationship between these factors and the wrinkling of plies caused by micro-buckling has not been investigated quantitatively. Furthermore, these effects are not fully captured in current process models. This research aims to develop an efficient strategy for analysing the multi-scale mechanisms of wrinkling due to buckling of plies during the composite consolidation process. A multi-scale approach that can be incorporated into current process models is proposed for this purpose. Using the suggested approach, the wrinkling response of plies under compressive and bending loads are predicted numerically. Wrinkling wavelengths and critical buckling strength of flat laminates are compared with wrinkling profiles and the strength values reported in the literature. Unlike previous studies, the viscoelastic contribution of resin as well as fibre stiffness and fabric architecture (for woven composites) are taken into account. The effect of these parameters on the buckling behaviour of fibres and the orthotropic nature of plies are also investigated at different scales, quantitatively. Results highlight that the viscoelastic properties of the resin have a considerable effect on the buckling response of woven composites and thus on wrinkle formation during the early stage of cure. Experimental studies are suggested for characterizing the viscoelastic behaviour of resins and its effect on the micro-buckling response of fibres during cure.