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A review of thermophysical research at the NLR space division

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ABSTRACT

A review of thermophysical research carried out at the NLR Space Division is presented. The review focuses mainly on aerospace-related activities and investigations. The review lists all relevant publications that contain detailed descriptions of the research topics and results.

Contents

(11 pages in total)

A review of thermophysical research at the NLR Space Division

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Summary - A review of thermophysical research carried out at the NLR Space Division is presented. The review focuses mainly on aerospace-related activities and investigations. The review lists all relevant publications that contain detailed descriptions of the research topics and results.

Résumé - L'article est une synthèse des activités thermophysiques de la Division Spatiale du NLR. Elle concerne principalement des activités aerospatiales, et contient toutes les références, qui presentent les détails et résultats des investigations.

(Keywords: Thermophysics, Heat Transfer, Conduction, Radiation, Two-Phase Flow, Thermal Control, Modelling, Scaling, Microgravity, Evaporation, Condensation, Capillary Pumped Loop, Heat Pipe, Loop Heat Pipe, Propellants, Gauging, Flow Metering, Sensors, Insulation, Joints, Dimensionless Numbers, MHD, Space Mechanisms)

OVERVIEW

Including the information published earlier [1], the thermophysical research carried out by the NLR Space Division can be summarised by:

- Thermal conductivity investigations.
- Design and manufacture of a test rig for measuring the thermal conductance of axially loaded rotating bearings in a vacuum environment.
- Thermal modelling of various rotating space mechanisms and the compilation of a handbook to model such mechanisms.
- Thermal performance of multilayer insulation blankets.
- Constant and Variable Conductance Heat Pipes, Electro-Osmotic Heat Pipe.
- Radiation heat transfer.
- Movable thermal joints and flexible thermal links.
- Thermal analysis and design.
- Two-Phase Heat Transport Systems, including their thermal gravitational modelling and scaling, control methods and algorithms. Two-phase test rigs development and two-phase components testing and calibration.
- Thermal modelling of the ATLID Two-Phase Laser Head Thermal Control System Breadboard. Thermal modelling of the ESA Capillary-pumped Loop Engineering Model.
- Development of a High-Efficiency Low Pressure Drop two-phase condenser.
- Spatialisation of liquid Flow Metering Assemblies.
- Development of a very accurate ultrasonic flow meter for propellants.
- TPX: in-orbit Two-Phase eXperiment and TPX II, a reflight of a modified TPX (parallel thermally imbalanced condensers configuration, high pumping power sintered nickel evaporators, upgraded controllable valve).
- Loop Heat Pipe Flight eXperiment.
- FEI Blanket permeability.
- Self Regulating Heaters.
- ESATAN/FHTS modelling upgrade.
- Thermal modelling of laser heads, gloveboxes, PHARUS structure, EUCLID SAR antennae and avionics racks and components.
- MSG propellants gauging. Experimental determination of dielectric properties of propellants.
- FESTIP and Sänger aerospace plane thermal design activities.
- Wetsat and Sloshsat.
- Instrumentation for microgravity research.

DETAILING

Thermal conductivity

Equipment has been built to measure the thermal conductivity of anisotropic materials. Measurements, carried out in the NLR thermal vacuum chamber, confirm the model developed at NLR for the thermal conductivity of metallic honeycomb sandwich panels for space applications [2, 3]. Carbon fibre reinforced plastic sheet containing materials were investigated also [4, 5].

Under contract with Fokker Aircraft Industry, the equipment was used to determine the thermal resistances of the hinges between the solar panels and structure of the Astronomical Netherlands Satellite [6].

Further investigations concern contact conductances (bolted joints, effects of interface filters) and the thermal resistance induced by sheet material deformation [7].

A test rig for rotating loaded bearings in vacuum

In order to obtain reliable results in the thermal design of space-borne mechanisms, it is important to know the thermal conductance and generated friction heat of rotating bearings in vacuum.
Under ESA contract, NLR designed and built a test rig to measure the above quantities. This test rig, still operational at the European Space Tribology Centre in Risley (U.K.), accommodates three different bearing sizes (90 mm OD/55 ID, 42 OD/20 ID, 16 OD/5 ID), operated with and without lubricant. The thermal conductance of the rotating bearing is obtained by measuring the heat flux through and temperature drop across the bearing. The generated friction heat is obtained from friction torque and rotation speed measurements.

Typical test rig specifications are:

- A rotation speed that can be adjusted between 1 and 2500 rpm.
- A pre-load ranging from 0 to 5 kg in 50 g steps.
- Inner and outer race temperatures can be varied between -20 and +60 °C and +20 and +70 °C respectively.

Detailed information on the rig and the measuring techniques can be found in [8, 9].

Thermal modelling of rotating space mechanisms

Also under ESA contract, a handbook has been compiled for the thermal modelling of space mechanisms [10]. The handbook presents a literature survey, step-by-step procedure, data compilations of material properties, etc. It also contains the theory basic to the thermal modelling procedure chosen. This procedure is illustrated by the results of calculations performed on a High Speed Mechanism, i.e. the reaction wheel of the Astronomical Netherlands Satellite, a Medium Speed Mechanism, i.e. the Dornier antenna despin mechanism, and a Low Speed Mechanism, i.e. the Marconi MSDS solar paddle drive.

Multilayer insulation blankets

Models describing the thermal performance of evacuated multilayer insulation blankets are usually based on the simple addition of the three mutually interacting modes of energy transfer: radiation between the shields, solid conduction via the components and their interfaces and gas conduction in the interstices, determined by residual gas pressure, outgas and the way the outgas products migrate through the blanket.

Blankets for spacecraft applications are usually made of perforated shields allowing fast depressurisation during the launch of the spacecraft. Perforations impair the insulation quality of a blanket, because the perforation holes increase the effective shield emissivity (hence the radiation transfer) and the holes allow for broadside pumping, viz. the outgas products migrate via the holes, from interstice to interstice gradually accumulating until they eventually escape at the blanket boundary.

Earlier reported models [11-13] concern either purely broadside-pumped blankets or purely edge-pumped blankets (of nonperforated shields, where the outgas products can escape only at the edges of the interstices). The pumping in most blankets for spacecraft is simultaneously edge and broadside. [13] presents the model developed at NLR to account for this hybrid pumping.

A test apparatus was built to experimentally verify the models [13, 14]. [14] reports good agreement between the experimentally and theoretically determined performances.

Heat pipes

Constant Conductance Heat Pipe work at NLR consisted of a compilation of constant conductance heat pipe (CCHP) design data [15], performance measurements, filling procedures, the influence of the filling ratio on the transport properties, and the impact of dissociation of the working fluid.

Considerable effort has been spent on the modelling and manufacture of an electro-osmotic heat pipe (EOHP), a heat pipe with a feedback controlled pumping section, based on the phenomenon of electro-osmosis [16-18]. Unfortunately the realisation of an EOHP turned out to be unsuccessful since polarisation effects and dissociation of the working fluid impair a proper long-term performance, a problem for which no proper solution could be found.

NLR also developed a transient thermal model for gas-loaded variable conductance heat pipes (VCHP). This model is easily implementable in existing general thermal analyzer computer programs. It is more generally valid than the Edwards/Marcus-model [19], commonly accepted in VCHP research, since the NLR model accounts for inertial and frictional effects of the moving vapour [20-24]. Consequently it predicts different transport and control behaviour, especially within the low vapour pressure operating range (typical for liquid metal CCHP and VCHP), startup operation, and control. [24] presents a detailed analysis of the considerable limitations of performance and control predicted by the current NLR model for a methanol VCHP built for the experimental validation of the model.

An automated heat pipe test rig has been designed and manufactured to carry out the validation experiments [25].

Radiation heat transfer

Apart from thermal emissivity and solar absorptivity measurements, NLR investigated the modelling of radiation heat transfer in a MagnetoHydroDynamic generator channel [26]. This work was carried out within the framework of the Netherlands MHD power generation project.

Movable thermal joints

Within the framework of the ESA Columbus Polar Platform development, NLR studied - as subcontractor of Fokker Space & Systems - the possibility of a thermal joint for a deployable or steerable radiator for the Polar Platform [27, 28]. Various options were traded. New ideas, the rotatable radial heat pipe and the movable oscillating hydrodynamic thermal joint, were proposed.

A continuously rotatable thermal joint for steerable radiators, currently under test [29, 30], is being patented.

Thermal analysis and design

Fokker Space & Systems subcontracted to NLR thermal modelling and design work for ESA's Columbus Resources Module [31] and Polar Platform [32, 33].

Two-phase heat transport systems

Two-phase work at NLR includes:

- A trade study on Vapour Quality Sensors (VQS) for spacecraft two-phase heat transport systems, measuring the relative vapour mass content of a flowing two-phase mixture [34, 35].
- The design manufacture of VQS for the test bed developed within the ESA Two-Phase Heat Transport Systems-Critical Components study [36-41].
- The development of control algorithms, considered to be also a critical component of this ESA study. Preliminary evaluation of control methods for the ESA mechanically pumped TPHTS Engineering Model, including development and analysis of dynamic models for its vapour pressure control loop [42-44].
- The design & manufacture of a 5 kW automated mechanically pumped two-phase freon test loop to calibrate quality sensors for the ESA test bed [45].
- Thermal scaling with respect to gravity to properly predict the low-gravity performance of a two-phase heat transport system and its components using results of experiments on earth with, fluid to fluid and geometric, scale models [46-53].
- The design, manufacture and operation of an automated mechanically pumped two-phase ammonia test loop for calibration of the VQS for a capillary pumped two-phase ammonia system, which is the Dutch/Belgian Two-Phase eXperiment TPX I that has flown, within the ESA In-Orbit Technology Programme, as Get Away Special G557 aboard Space Shuttle STS60, early February 1994 [54-62].
- Two-Phase Heat Transport System components testing [63].
- TPX II: The reflight of a modified TPX (parallel condensers, high pumping power evaporators, improved liquid flowmeters and Swalve), as Get Away Special G467 on a Space Shuttle flight, mid 1998 [64-66].
- Contributing to the concept, thermal/structural design, flight senario, testing and experiment evaluation for LHPFX, the Loop Heat Pipe Flight eXperiment, a Hitch Hiker experiment on Space Shuttle flight STS87, November 1997 [67-69]. This experiment is conducted by a team led by Dynatherm, consisting of DTX, the Naval Research Laboratory, the Center for Space Power of Texas A&M, Hughes Space & Communications, the Center for Commercial Development of Space, Wright Laboratories, Phillips Laboratories Kirtland AFB, BMDO and NLR.
- The development of a High Efficiency, Low Pressure Drop (HELPD), two-phase condenser for ESA, with DASA/ERNO, Bradford Engineering, TAIS/Lavochkin and Swales as subcontractors [70-72].
- The ESA study on spatialisation of Flow Metering Assemblies, with SPPS/Bradford Engineering and SABCA as subcontractors [73].
- Thermal modelling and design of the ATLID laser head thermal control breadboard, for MMS-UK, together with Bradford Engineering [74].
- Thermal modelling and design of CLEM [75], ESA's Capillary-pumped Loop Engineering Model (CLEM), for MMS-UK together with Bradford Engineering.
- Development of a two-phase thermal control system for a phased array radar module [76].

Miscellaneous

Additional activities for ESA and other customers are:

- Sänger-related thermal research proposed for the two-stage to orbit spaceplane and the HOt Structure Test facility (HOST), within the Ramjet Technology Demonstration Programme [77].
- FEI Blanket permeability measurements [78].
- Testing of Self Regulating Heaters, designed to maintain their substrate temperature, by using their intrinsic material properties instead of external thermostats [79].
- Development of a novel flexible thermal link for ESA, as subcontractor of Dornier [80, 81].
- The Meteosat Second Generation Unified Propulsion System Gauging Sensor Unit: the NLR/Bradford Engineering development of level gauges for spin stabilised spacecraft (MSG) propellant tanks, derived

from the earlier developed NLR vapour quality sensor [29, 30, 82]. Work is done for ESA on the experimental determination of dielectric properties of propellants MON & MMH [83, 84] and, together with SPPS/Bradford Engineering, HCS and Panametrics USA, on the development of an ultrasonic flow meter for propellants.

Current investigations concern the development of propellant level sensors for 3-axis stabilised spacecraft.

Thermal modelling

These modelling activities pertain to:

- ESATAN upgrading focusing on the fluid dynamics part of FHTS: the replacement of the current homogeneous flow model by advanced, physically more realistic models for two-phase flow [85].
- Detailed thermal modelling of a laser head [86].
- Thermal modelling of glove boxes (e.g. for Space Station) and of the structure of PHARUS, the PHased ARray Universal Synthetic aperture radar [87].
- The EUropean Cooperation for Long-term In Defence (EUCLID) programme, Research and Technology Projects RTP 4, Modular Avionics Harmonisation Study, Thermal modelling of components/avionic racks, Impact of high thermal load on environmental control system [88-90] and RTP 9, Advanced space SAR sensor technology, Thermal design/model of SAR antennae.
- Thermal modelling for FESTIP, the Future European Space Transportation Investigations Programme.

Wetsat and Sloshsat Flevo

A definition study was completed on Wetsat: a small spacecraft to collect data on heat and mass transport by evaporation and condensation across an annular spherical gap. Various force fields have been introduced: an electrical radial field and centrifugal fields from spacecraft spin [91].

Because of insufficient support efforts were redirected to the definition of a spacecraft to investigate dynamics of onboard liquid. After a successful precursor, the Wet Satellite Model that flew 7 minutes following a rocket launch, work is in progress on Sloshsat, planned for STS launch, in 1999 [92].

The Sloshsat payload, a 80 litres tank with 33 litres of water. The location of the water in the tank is determined by the Coarse Sensor Array, a uniform distribution of 137 platinum ring electrodes embedded in the tank wall. The capacitance between 270 electrode pairs provides liquid height information.

Prediction of the dynamics and development of the control algorithms for the spacecraft are being generated with the Sloshsat Motion Simulator (SMS). SMS is an original development at NLR. It is operated in the EUROSIM software environment [93].

Instrumentation for microgravity research

Together with Lamf/ETSIA NLR carried out work, within the ESA High Temperature Facility Technology Study, on combustion experiment instrumentation [94], focusing on flow field mapping in opaque liquids [95, 96].

Activities within the ESA Fluid Physics Instrumentation Study [97] led to PODI, the Prototype Optical Diagnostic Instrument [98], a precursor to the ESA Fluid Science Laboratory Facility Development Study [99], being used for thermophysical and fluid physics diagnostics [100].

Other investigations concern microscopy [101], optical diagnostics of crystal growth [102] and optical detection methods for biochemical sample analysis [103].

Additional items

Currently an inventory is being produced, concerning critical items, problems, and unresolved issues in the field of aerospace heat transfer [104, 105].

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