INSTABILITIES ARE EVERYWHERE IN MECHANICS

IN FLUID MECHANICS TOO... AND IN REACTING FLOWS
Reacting flows are dominated by mechanisms which exhibit instabilities:

- hydrodynamics --> Kelvin Helmholtz in shear layers. (C. M. Ho and P. Huerre JFM 1984, 16.)

- instabilities at interfaces between liquid fuel and air

- kinetics: the existence of chemical reactions leads to additional instabilities of flame fronts --> thermodiffusive instability, formation of cells

- structures: vibration of the combustor walls can couple with the flames

A classification of instabilities in combustion (Barrere, Wiliams, Putnam) introduced in the 60s is based on the size of the components involved in the instability:

- **Intrinsic**: modes which are due only to local, short distance interactions between kinetics and flow. Ex: formation of cells (small size, high frequencies)

- **Chamber**: modes due to the whole flame where vortices, created by the instabilities of the shear layer, couple with the flame front (mid size, mid frequencies)

- **System**: modes where the whole combustor is involved: long wavelengths, low frequency
EXAMPLE OF SYSTEM INSTABILITY: THE POGO EFFECT

- Unsteady heat release
- Unsteady pressure
- Oscillation of reactant flow rate
- Vibrating rocket structure

Saturn V first stage
Soviet Union’s N1-L3 rocket

INTRINSIC INSTABILITY

Growth of a spherical laminar flame ignited by a spark.

PROPAINE / AIR:
Perfectly smooth laminar spherical front

Spark
Fuel / air laminar mixture

Time

Law et al 30th Symp. (Int.) on Comb.
HYDROGEN / AIR:
Formation of cells on the flame front

Fuel / air laminar mixture
Spark

Law et al 30th Symp. (Int.) on Comb.


Time
WHEN DO WE OBSERVE THERMODIFFUSIVE INSTABILITIES?

- Controlled by the Lewis number of the deficient reactant. For example for a lean H2/air flame, Lewis of the deficient fuel = Lewis (H2) = 0.3

- If this Lewis number is less than a critical value given by asymptotic analysis (typically 0.5), cellular instabilities can appear.

- Whether the growth rate of these instabilities is sufficiently large to play a role in real (turbulent) flames depends on the flame itself. Most turbulent combustion models do not incorporate effects of Lewis numbers but they should.

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This also happens in turbulent flames

Boughanem and Trouvé
Acoustic instability in Premixed Flames

Gravity + combustion


Computational combustion

Charles K. Westbrook\textsuperscript{a}, Yasuhiro Mizobuchi\textsuperscript{b}, Thierry J. Poinsot\textsuperscript{b}, Phillip J. Smith\textsuperscript{b}, Jürgen Wornatz\textsuperscript{b}
CYCLE TO CYCLE INSTABILITIES

- In piston engines, one cycle every 100 or 1000 cycles can fail or burn too slowly or too fast (knock, rumble)

High CCV

Low CCV

CA = -350

SGEmac project

Consecutive cycles by LES of a spark ignition engine

Unstable by dilution operating point

Compression ratio : 9.9
Engine speed : 1200 rpm
Fuel : C₃H₈
Equivalence ratio : 1
Dilution by N₂ : 32 % vol.
Mean IMEP : 3.2 bars
cov(IMEP) : 7.2 %

Granet et al., Combustion and Flame, in press, doi:10.1016/j.combustflame.2011.11.018
Enaux et al., Flow Turbulence and Combustion 86 (2), pp 153-177, 2011
A specific class of combustion instabilities: « thermoacoustics »

In combustion chambers, acoustics and combustion can couple, leading to unpleasant consequences....

There are two main classes of instabilities in flows (Monkewitz, Huerre):

- **CONVECTIVE (AMPLIFIER)**
- **ABSOLUTE (RESONATORS)**

Absolute instabilities usually are linked to ‘information’ propagating upstream
Convective instability (amplifier)

Absolute instability (resonator)

Inlet flow rate change

Acoustic feedback

Vortex formation

Vortex combustion

Pressure wave

Ch. 8 Sec. 8.5.2
In combustion chambers, we find:
• Acoustics because the flames are confined
• Recirculation zones

==> information can propagate upstream by convection or by acoustic waves

ABSOLUTE INSTABILITIES ARE EXPECTED!

Concentrate on confined flames in combustion chambers surrounded by walls:

‘Thermoacoustics’ (coupled instabilities between acoustics and combustion) become possible -> these absolute instabilities are the worst instabilities in combustors
Not a new problem: Thermoacoustics is known since Lord Rayleigh *Nature* 1878.

**Diagram:**
- **Unsteady heat release** → **Unsteady pressure**
- **Creation of vortices** OR **Oscillation of flow rates** → **Acoustic waves**

**Why acoustics and flame can couple:**
1/ Flames *make noise*...

Free flames:
- Make noise
- Are not influenced by noise
2/ In a confined domain (as in most combustors), noise travels and comes back

The acoustic waves produced by combustion can reflect on walls, inlets, outlets... and come back to the flame zone.
3/ Flames are **sensitive** to noise

When acoustic waves come back to the flame, they can create new perturbations, closing the instability loop

- Unsteady heat release → Unsteady pressure
- Creation of vortices OR Oscillation of flow rates → Acoustic waves

A specific feature of combustion chambers: **SWIRL.**

Swirl is a rotation of the flow along its axis
Swirl: why?

Flame stabilization: flames do not propagate at high speeds. Typically CxHy+Air flames move at sL=50 cm/s. CxHy/O2 flames at a few m/s.

As soon as the flow speed is larger than a few m/s, flames can be stabilized only by a recirculation zone containing burnt bases to ignite the incoming gases.

How do you create a recirculation zone?
Solution 1: dump geometry. Backward facing step
Another solution to create recirculation is SWIRL:
- Swirl creates a low velocity region in the jet axis.
- Strong swirl allows to create recirculation zones
- These zones do not touch walls.
How is swirl introduced?

PRECCINSTA EU project

- Device fully meshed
- Mesh: 3 million cells
- 3D unstructured
- Measurement performed by DLR
Have you seen swirled jets before? Yes, in the sky!

So SWIRL is good for combustion chambers!
But a swirled flow exhibits instabilities:
- the same as in jets: Kelvin Helmholtz
+ - new modes due to rotation (and since we have introduced negative velocities, absolute modes!)

Rotation axis
For a swirled flow: the rotation axis itself turns. Not necessarily in the same direction as the mean flow.
One example of swirled flow instabilities: the Crow mode.
Swirled flows have another specific instability: precessing vortex cores

PVC visualized in LES of a swirled reacting flow:

- White surface: flame surface
- Red surface: low pressure surface

The links between thermoacoustics and swirling flow instabilities such as PVC remain unclear today. We will discuss them in more details later.
HOW CAN WE STUDY THERMOACOUSTICS?

Why acoustics and combustion interact

Effects of combustion instabilities in gas turbines

Examples of studies of combustion
Instabilities in gas turbine configurations

Interaction acoustics / combustion

Not a classical topic: USUALLY, pressure waves are not important in subsonic flames. They are a by-product of combustion and produce noise (combustion noise can be important!). But there is no need to account for them in computing the flames themselves.

In thermoacoustics, when acoustics DO modify flames, we need to develop a theory able to compute reacting flows and acoustics.

Textbooks:


Williams « Combustion theory » 1985. -> theory
CLASSICAL METHODS TO STUDY RESONATORS:

Two approaches:

- **Approach 1**: take the conservation equations, linearize them, look for eigenmodes. Objective: find frequency and growth rate as well as mode structure (p'(x))
- **Approach 2**: define a proper energy of the system: assume it changes harmonically, find the frequency and growth rate. Objective (less ambitious): find instability criteria

Before looking at flames: let us do a small exercise on the pendulum...

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**The linear oscillator with no forcing:**

\[ m \ddot{x} + kx = 0 \]

**Spring force:** \( F = -kx \)

**Mass** \( m \)

**Approach 1:** just solve it!

\[ x = \hat{x}e^{i\omega t} \]

**With:** \( \omega = (k/m)^{1/2} \)
The linear oscillator with no forcing: 
energy definition

\[ m\ddot{x} + kx = 0 \]

Multiply by the velocity \( v = \frac{dx}{dt} \) and integrate:

\[ \frac{1}{2}m\dot{x}^2 + \frac{1}{2}kx^2 = E \]

\( E \) is the total energy of the system

Here \( E \) is constant.

The linear oscillator with forcing:

\[ m\ddot{x} + kx = F \]

\( \omega = (k/m)^{1/2} \)

If we do not know \( F \), cant say much

==&gt; Approach 1 is limited

BUT Approach 2 can be used:

Multiply by \( v \) and integrate:

\[ \frac{1}{2}m\dot{x}^2 + \frac{1}{2}kx^2 = E + \int F\,v\,dt \]

This is the total energy of the system
The total energy of the system will grow if:

\[ \int_0^t Fvdt > 0 \]

This is an ‘instability’ criterion: if the force \( F \) and the velocity \( v \) are such that the integral of their product is positive (i.e. if \( F \) and \( v \) are ‘in phase’), instability will grow because the total system energy grows.

If you have a swing at home, you knew this already?

The linear oscillator with forcing: comparing the two methods in a case where \( F = a \cdot v \)

**Approach 1:**

\[
\begin{align*}
x &= x_0 e^{i\omega t} \\
\omega &= \frac{-a}{2m} + \frac{\sqrt{k/m - a^2/(4m^2)}}{m}
\end{align*}
\]

Instability if \( \text{Re}(\omega) < 0 \) if \( a > 0 \)

**Approach 2:** Instability if criterion is positive:

\[
\int_0^t Fvdt = \int_0^t v^2 dt > 0 \quad \text{if} \quad a > 0
\]
Linear vs non linear. Exp. growth vs limit cycles

The previous equations are linear.

They can tell us whether:
- The system is stable: $\text{Re}(\omega) > 0$
- The system is neutral: $\text{Re}(\omega) = 0$
- The system is unstable: $\text{Re}(\omega) < 0$.

If the system is unstable, the instability will grow. Where it will stop cannot be predicted with this linear approach. After the instability starts, different outcomes can be obtained at longer times:
- The system can reach a limit cycle
- The combustor can explode
- The operator may stop combustion because of vibrations
- The system may quench on its own

\[ x = \hat{x}e^{i\omega t} \]
Limit cycles are only ONE form of final results in thermoacoustics:

If the loss term is not sufficient, the amplitude of oscillations might grow until something really unpleasant occurs:

- the combustor can explode because the structure does not resist

In industrial gas turbines, the system switches off when pressure oscillation or structure vibration levels are too high

- the flame can also quench, unable to resist to oscillations. This can happen without making any noise.

How do we know? Thanks to active control (see review on active control of combustion: McManus, Poinsot and Candel, PECS, 1993, 19).
What is active control of combustion instabilities?
Example for a laminar Bunsen flame

**PRINCIPLE:**

- **LETS:**
- **ACOUSTIC FEEDBACK**
- **PRESSURE WAVE**
- **EXTERNAL ACTUATION SYSTEM**
- **Unsteady sensor (microphone, optical)**
- **Loudspeaker**
- **INLET FLOW RATE CHANGE**
- **VOXEL FORMATION AND COMBUSTION**

When the gain is small, the instability is reduced. When the gain is larger, the instability is killed.
Active control research for thermoacoustics has been very strong in the 90s. Patents were taken in many labs (EM2C) and companies (GE). Industrial demonstrations on real engines worked:


- For aeroengines, certification issues killed the idea

But for scientific investigations, active control remains a great tool because it allows to let the instability start ‘on request’

Initiating an instability on demand with active control:
Other example: a turbulent burner. This combustor is unstable but it can be stabilized using active control:


Point A: with and without control

Active control allows not only to control unstable modes but also to extend the domain of operation of the burner (in a fuel/air flow rate diagram):

- with control, point A is unstable (limit cycle) without control and becomes stable with control

- with control, point B does not burn without active control. With control it burns and is stable

For point B: the flame starts oscillating and ... Quenches!

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE WHERE ‘FLAME QUENCHING’ IS DUE TO FLAME INSTABILITIES
In this case, ‘instability’ leads to ‘quenching’
Even though noone ‘hears’ this...