Impact of Structural Variability on Robust Flutter Optimization


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Impact of Structural Variability on Robust Flutter Optimization

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I. NOMENCLATURE

Symbols

A Jacobian matrix
f aerodynamic forces
p eigenvector
R Residual vector of the fluid and/or structural model
S Schur complement matrix
w vector of fluid and/or structural unknowns

Greek

α polynomial chaos coefficients
λ eigenvalue
γ Bifurcation parameter (altitude)
μ mean
φ normal mode shape
θ Vector containing the uncertain structural parameters
ω normal mode frequency
Ψ basis function
σ standard deviation
θ optimization design variables
ξ structural model variables

Subscripts or superscripts

f fluid model
s structural model
0 equilibrium

II. Introduction

Current standard aeroelastic and flutter analysis relies on deterministic calculations, where all required properties and parameters are defined by specific values. Wing structural optimization in the presence

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of aeroelastic instabilities in the transonic regime has been attempted despite the high computational cost required by nonlinear aerodynamics. Janardhan and Grandhi maximized the store-induced flutter speed by increasing the difference between the first two natural frequencies. Marques et al. performed structural optimization for uncertainty quantification on wings and full aircraft configurations.

Since there is an intrinsic variability in many of the components that influence aeroelastic behaviour, there has been a recent trend to apply non-deterministic methods as discussed by Pettit. Developments in computational aeroelasticity enabled researchers to perform uncertainty quantification due to structural variability for flutter in transonic regimes. Further studies also showed the impact of tip store c.g. location on the nature and development of the flutter instability boundary. Changes in tip store properties such as c.g. location and mass impact on the location of the wing’s flexural axis, natural frequencies and mode shapes. It was also shown how the mode shapes can have a dominant factor on aeroelastic damping.

A recent study incorporated stochastic outputs representing structural variability into a flutter optimization framework. This allowed the use of stochastic quantities such as means or standard deviations to be used as objective function in order to produce robust or reliable optimums. It was concluded that for the set of design variables used, the mean and standard deviations converged to very similar optimum points. This paper is a continuation of this effort by examining in more detail the structural characteristics that influence each of the two stochastic outputs. A systematic study of the Golan wing will be presented, assessing the impact of structural properties and components on the stochastic optimization results. Results applying the same techniques for a realistic transport wing are also presented and discussed.

### III. Aeroelastic Stability Formulation

The semi-discrete form of the coupled CFD-FEM system is written as

\[
\frac{dw}{dt} = R(w, \gamma) \tag{1}
\]

where

\[
w = [w_f, w_s]^T \tag{2}
\]

is a vector containing the fluid unknowns \((w_f)\) and the structural unknowns \((w_s)\), and

\[
R = [R_f, R_s]^T \tag{3}
\]

is a vector containing the fluid residual \((R_f)\) and the structural residual \((R_s)\). In this paper, the fluid model is given by the Euler equations, whereas the structural model is defined by the following scalar equations

\[
\frac{d^2 \xi_i}{dt^2} + D_i \frac{d \xi_i}{dt} + \omega_i^2 \xi_i = \frac{\rho_\infty}{\rho_w} \phi_i^T f_s \tag{4}
\]

where \(\xi_i\) are the generalized coordinates, \(\phi_i\) represents the mode shapes extracted from the finite element model, \(D_i\) are the damping coefficients, \(f_s\) is the vector of aerodynamic forces at the structural grid points and \(\rho_\infty/\rho_w\) is the density ratio between air and the wing.

As described above, the residual depends on a parameter \(\gamma\) (altitude in this paper) which is independent of \(w\). An equilibrium \(w_0\) of this system satisfies \(R(w_0, \gamma) = 0\).

The linear stability of equilibria of equation (1) is determined by eigenvalues of the Jacobian matrix \(A = \partial R/\partial w\). The calculation of the Jacobian \(A\) is most conveniently done by partitioning the matrix as:

\[
A = \begin{bmatrix}
\frac{\partial R_f}{\partial w_f} & \frac{\partial R_s}{\partial w_f} \\
\frac{\partial R_f}{\partial w_f} & \frac{\partial R_s}{\partial w_f}
\end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix}
A_{ff} & A_{fs} \\
A_{sf} & A_{ss}
\end{bmatrix} \tag{5}
\]

Details of the implementation of the Euler and structural equations and Jacobian calculation can be found in references 7 and 8. In the current work, and as is conventional in aircraft aeroelasticity, the structure is modeled by a small number of modes, therefore the number of the fluid unknowns is far higher than the structural unknowns. This means that the Jacobian matrix has a large, but sparse, block \(A_{ff}\) surrounded by thin strips for \(A_{fs}\) and \(A_{sf}\).
suggest Latin hypercube sampling to estimate $\theta_4 \leq \theta < 10$ where sampled points from the parameter found in reference. $S(x)$ where $\lambda$ is obtained by an appropriate transformation of the original variables $x$. The orthogonal polynomials used to define the basis function, $\Psi$, depend on type of the random variables, for example in the case of normal distributions, Hermite polynomials are typically used, whereas for uniformly distributed inputs Legendre polynomials are chosen. For a specified order of the polynomial, $P$, a set of $P + 1$ vectors $\xi_i$ for $i = 0, 1, 2, ..., P$ are used in the approximation. Hosder et al. suggest Latin hypercube sampling to estimate the expansion coefficients $\alpha_i$ by solving the following linear system:

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\Psi_0(\xi_0) & \Psi_1(\xi_0) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_0) \\
\Psi_0(\xi_1) & \Psi_1(\xi_1) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_1) \\
\vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\
\Psi_0(\xi_P) & \Psi_1(\xi_P) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_P)
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
\alpha_0 \\
\alpha_1 \\
\vdots \\
\alpha_P
\end{bmatrix}
= 
\begin{bmatrix}
u_0(x) \\
u_1(x) \\
\vdots \\
u_P(x)
\end{bmatrix}
$$

With the regression model built, Monte-Carlo analysis can be used with the regression model to obtain the statistic quantities of interest, usually $10^5 - 10^6$ samples are enough to obtain consistent outputs.

IV. Stochastic Modeling

The approach used in this paper is based on a non-intrusive polynomial chaos (NIPC) method. NIPC have been used successfully in different aeroelastic problems, where sampled points from the parameter space are used to reconstruct a “polynomial expansion”. The basic equation for the truncated polynomial chaos expansion (PCE) can be expressed as:

$$
u(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{n_o} \alpha_i \Psi_i(\xi(x))
$$

where $x$ represents the set of uncertain variables, $\nu$ is the response of interest, $\alpha_i$ are polynomial coefficients, the basis functions $\Psi_i$ represent orthogonal polynomials based on the random variables $\xi$. The random variable $\xi$ is obtained by an appropriate transformation of the original variables $x$. The orthogonal polynomials used to define the basis function, $\Psi$, depend on type of the random variables, for example in the case of normal distributions, Hermite polynomials are typically used, whereas for uniformly distributed inputs Legendre polynomials are chosen. For a specified order of the polynomial, $P$, a set of $P + 1$ vectors $\xi_i$ for $i = 0, 1, 2, ..., P$ are used in the approximation. Hosder et al. suggest Latin hypercube sampling to estimate the expansion coefficients $\alpha_i$ by solving the following linear system:

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\Psi_0(\xi_0) & \Psi_1(\xi_0) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_0) \\
\Psi_0(\xi_1) & \Psi_1(\xi_1) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_1) \\
\vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\
\Psi_0(\xi_P) & \Psi_1(\xi_P) & \cdots & \Psi_P(\xi_P)
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
\alpha_0 \\
\alpha_1 \\
\vdots \\
\alpha_P
\end{bmatrix}
= 
\begin{bmatrix}
u_0(x) \\
u_1(x) \\
\vdots \\
u_P(x)
\end{bmatrix}
$$

V. Optimization Framework

The aim of this paper is to investigate the possibility of minimizing the impact of variability on the structure flutter response, i.e., the objective is to find a set of parameters that maximize the robustness of the structure with respect to external stores variability. The formulation of this robust design problem makes use of the mean and standard deviation obtained by statistical methods, and can be expressed as:

find

$$
\theta \in \mathbb{R}^n
$$

to minimize

$$
[\mu(\lambda(\theta, x)), \sigma(\lambda(\theta, x))]
$$

subject to

$$
\underline{\theta} < \theta < \overline{\theta}
$$

where $x$ represents aleatory structural properties and $\theta$ are the parameters to be optimized. This robust optimization formulation resembles a multi-point optimization problem, where two outputs are required to be minimized. A common approach to solve such problems is to combine the mean and standard deviations
in the form of a weighted sum:

$$\text{minimize} \quad f(\mu, \sigma)$$

subject to

$$\bar{\theta} < \theta < \underline{\theta}$$

with

$$f(\mu, \sigma) = \beta \left( \frac{\mu(\lambda(\theta, x))}{\mu^*} \right) + (1 - \beta) \left( \frac{\sigma(\lambda(\theta, x))}{\sigma^*} \right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (12)$$

the mean and standard deviations are non-dimensionalize by $\mu^*$ and $\sigma^*$, corresponding to the mean and standard deviations of the original structure, respectively. The optimization problem can be solved by many different methods. In this work the NLOPT toolbox\textsuperscript{14} provides an adequate range of algorithms suitable to solve such problems, including gradient and gradient free methods. Although typically gradient methods converge to a local minimum faster that gradient free methods, the extra computational cost of computing gradients with respect to stochastic outputs was seen as impractical. It was therefore decided to used a derivative free algorithm known as COBYLA\textsuperscript{15}, which constructs linear polynomial approximations to the objective and constraint functions by interpolation at the vertices of simplices. The NLOPT toolbox can be set up in many different environments: Octave, Python, C++, etc. In this work an optimization framework was built in Python. NLOPT requires the user to supply the objective function, which in this case corresponds to the output of the NIPC approach; the sampling process for the NIPC is done in parallel with Python scripts driving the required aeroelastic analysis.

VI. Results

A. Goland Wing

The Goland wing, shown in figure 1(a), has a chord of 1.83m and a span of 6.1m. It is a rectangular cantilevered wing with a 4% thick parabolic section. The structural model follows the description given in reference\textsuperscript{16}. The CFD grid is block structured and uses an O-O topology. The fine grid has 250 thousand points and a coarse level was extracted from this grid, which has 40 thousand points. Grid refinement results reported previously in reference\textsuperscript{4} showed that the coarse grid gives accurate aeroelastic damping predictions. Four mode shapes were retained for the aeroelastic simulation, the first and second bending and torsion modes. The nominal conditions of this case correspond to $M=0.90$ and $\alpha = 0^\circ$, this is characterized by a strong shock-wave towards the trailing edge as illustrated by the CFD solution in figure 1(d).

The case considered in this work has a mass added to the wing tip to represent the presence of a tip store. The baseline position is 7.5cm from the wing tip. The store is offset 52.5cm from the elastic axis,
(ea), and has a total mass of 328.3kg, which represents 1/10 of the total wing mass (corresponding to the mass of one rib). The baseline location is indicated in figure 1(c). The store c.g. location and mass are considered uncertain; it is the impact of this uncertainty the optimization process aims to minimize. The uncertain parameters are modeled using uniform distributions for the c.g. and mass, described in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum Value</th>
<th>Minimum Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Mass</td>
<td>328.3kg</td>
<td>574.525kg</td>
<td>82.075kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.g. location</td>
<td>-0.292c</td>
<td>-0.125c</td>
<td>-0.459c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Golland Wing optimization parameters

![Mean Eigenvalues - Real Part](image1)
![Mean Eigenvalues - Imaginary Part](image2)
![Store location](image3)
![Store location impact on real eigenvalues](image4)

Figure 2. Golland Wing - Original Structure

Previous analysis concluded that from the complete structural model, only seven structural properties have a significant influence on the onset of flutter. When using the seven parameters as design variables in the stochastic optimization process together with the uncertain store properties, similar results are obtained regardless of eq.12 using the standard deviation or mean as objective function. It was decided to allow the original 7 parameter to vary along the span, raising the number of design variables to 25. By increasing the design space, different optiumums are found when considering only the mean or only the standard deviation as the objective function; the difference is noticeable, but small. The results of the stochastic optimization using 25 design variables is shown in fig. 3-a)-b). Figure 3-c) shows the optimization impact on the real part of the aeroelastic system eigenvalue of mode 1, a reduction of about 5000ft on the flutter altitude is achieved on this mode; the impact of the optimization on reducing the effects of the store variability is illustrated by the histogram in fig.3-d). The results indicate that some properties and their spatial

---

*a.g. location is measured with respect to the original ea location*
(a) Optimization Convergence - Mean bias

(b) Optimization Convergence - Std. Dev. bias

(c) Optimized Mean Real Eigenvalue

(d) Original (back) and Optimized (front) structure histogram

Figure 3. Optimization at 24000ft, 25 structural design variables
location, will have a greater impact on reducing the standard deviation (hence, increasing the optimum robustness), whereas others have a stronger impact on the mean value of the flutter response. The graphs in figure 4 (where lower indexes correspond to properties near the root, higher indexes indicate values towards the tip) show the different optimum values obtained when optimizing the structure with mean or standard deviation bias, respectively. The leading edge spar thickness can change at five locations along the span. In general, when the algorithm minimizes the standard deviation, the structure component thicknesses tend to be maximized. Although the different objective functions give similar results, it worth pointing out that the standard deviation optimization would originate a heavier structure, due to the increase in thicknesses of most components.

### B. MDO Wing

The MDO wing is representative of a commercial transport wing. It has a span of 36 metres, the profile is a thick supercritical section designed to operate in the transonic conditions.\textsuperscript{17,18} The CFD grid and geometry, as well as the structural model are summarized in fig. 5-a)-b). The structure is modeled as a wing box running down the central portion of the wing. The CFD grid used has 81 thousand points. The eigenvalue formulation used in this paper was applied to the MDO wing in reference.\textsuperscript{4,5} In the current work seven modes are retained and the mapped modes which participate in the aeroelastic instability.

Here we consider the case with a freestream Mach number of 0.85 and an angle of attack of 1 degree. The wing Young’s modulus for the upper and lower skin panels, and the upper and lower spar caps and skin stringers are used as design variables to optimize, their values is summarized in table 3. As in the previous case, the general objective function is given by eq. 12. An uncertain mass and respective inertial properties is added to the wing tip and is considered to be uncertain; the uncertain tip mass properties are modeled using a uniform distribution as described in table 4. The aeroelastic eigenvalues of the original model were traced with altitude and are shown in fig. 5-c)-d). Stability is lost when modes 1 and 2 become positive at about 4000m. It worth noticing that the mode tracking shows a more rapid increase in mode’s 2 real eigenvalue, thus this mode was selected to drive the optimization.

By comparison with the Goland wing test case, the optimization results for the MDO wing are more dramatic. When using the mean value of the real eigenvalue of mode 2 with respect to the uncertain tip mass, the optimization process is quite effective and stability is increase by about 5 times the original value, as illustrated by fig.6-a). However, the standard deviation increases, i.e. the structure becomes more sensitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Initial Value</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Skin thickness</td>
<td>$4.715 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Skin thickness</td>
<td>$4.715 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE Spar thickness</td>
<td>$1.825 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE Spar thickness</td>
<td>$1.825 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE Spar Cap area</td>
<td>$3.865 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Spar Cap area</td>
<td>$1.390 \times 10^{-2}$m$^2$</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE Spar Cap area</td>
<td>$3.865 \times 10^{-3}$m</td>
<td>±20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Goland Wing\textsuperscript{+} optimization parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Initial Value</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Skin Panels ($E_1$)</td>
<td>$71 \times 10^9$Pa</td>
<td>±25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Skin Panels ($E_2$)</td>
<td>$71 \times 10^9$Pa</td>
<td>±25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Spar caps / Stringers ($E_3$)</td>
<td>$71 \times 10^9$Pa</td>
<td>±25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Spar caps / Stringers ($E_4$)</td>
<td>$71 \times 10^9$Pa</td>
<td>±25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. MDO Wing optimization parameters
Figure 4. Goland Wing Optimization
to variations on the tip inertial properties.

By setting $\beta = 0$ in eq.12, the objective function becomes the standard deviation. Figure 6-c) shows a significant decrease in standard deviation, but the mean value decreases about 2.5 times the original value, significantly less then on the previous case. This also illustrates how sensitive the structure is to changes at the tip. A third optimization problem was set using using $\beta = 0.5$, the optimization impact on the mean and standard deviation are shown in fig.6-c)-f). By combining the two statistical moments an improved compromise was achieved: the mean value of the response was reduced by another factor, i.e. the mean value is now 3.5 times less than the original. Additionally, the standard deviation was still reduced to about 15% of its original value, which is very similar to the result obtained when only using the standard deviation as objective function.

It is interesting to note which parameters are driving the reductions on the objectives functions. The preliminary results presented in this paper, indicate that the stiffness of the upper spar caps and skin stringer have a strong impact on the minimization of the standard deviation, as indicated by fig.6-d)-f).

### Table 4. MDO Wing Uncertain Variables Convergence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tip Mass</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tip Mass $I_{yy}, I_{zz}$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3300kgm$^2$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![MDO CFD grid](image1)

![MDO Structural Model](image2)

**Figure 5. MDO Wing**
Figure 6. MDO Wing Optimization Convergence
VII. Conclusion & Outlook

The feasibility of performing robust flutter optimization in realistic wing structures in the transonic regime was investigated. By using modern aeroelastic stability analysis and uncertainty quantification techniques, such as the Schur Complement Method for Eigenvalue Analysis and NIPC, it was possible to optimize a wing structure taking into account tip mass and inertia variability. The wing tip’s characteristics have a strong influence on aeroelastic behaviour, nevertheless it was possible to reduce the sensitivity of the wing to significant variations in tip mass properties, even considering only Young’s modulus as a design variable. Future work should address what are the penalties in terms of structural weight of increasing the robustness and reliability of wing structures. This methodology is readily available to be used in such tasks and work is underway to address this issue.

References