EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF POOL BOILING HEAT TRANSFER ENHANCEMENT IN MICROGRAVITY IN THE PRESENCE OF ELECTRIC FIELDS

Cila Herman, Department of Mechanical Engineering, The Johns Hopkins University
3400 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218, herman@titan.me.jhu.edu

INTRODUCTION

In boiling high heat flux levels are possible driven by relatively small temperature differences, which make its use increasingly attractive in aerospace applications, such as compact evaporators in the thermal control of spacecraft environments, heat pipes, and the cooling of electronic equipment. The objective of the research is to develop ways to overcome specific problems associated with boiling in the low gravity environment. One such problem is that in low gravity the critical bubble size for detachment is much larger than under terrestrial conditions, since buoyancy is a less effective means of bubble removal (Zell (1991), Ervin et al. (1992)). In terrestrial conditions, bubble detachment is governed by the competition between body forces (e.g. buoyancy) and surface tension forces that act to anchor the bubble along the three phase contact line. In the present study the buoyancy force is substituted by the electric force to enhance bubble removal from the heated surface. Previous studies (Yabe et al. (1993)) indicate that in terrestrial applications nucleate boiling heat transfer can be increased by a factor of 50, as compared to values obtained for the same system without electric fields.

The discipline of electrohydrodynamics (EHD) deals with the interactions between electric, flow and temperature fields. The goal of our research is to experimentally explore the mechanisms responsible for EHD heat transfer enhancement in boiling in low gravity conditions, by visualizing the temperature distributions in the vicinity of the heated surface and around the bubble during boiling using real-time holographic interferometry (HI) combined with high-speed cinematography.

METHOD OF STUDY

In the first phase of the project the influence of the electric field on a single bubble is investigated. Pool boiling is simulated by injecting a single bubble through a nozzle into the subcooled liquid or into the thermal boundary layer developed along the flat heater surface. Injection of individual bubbles into the liquid has been used to simulate a physical situation similar to that in subcooled nucleate boiling by Nordmann (1980), Mayinger and Chen (1986) and Ogata and Yabe (1993). The advantage of this approach is that the experimenter can control the conditions in the vicinity of the growing bubble. Conversely to the situation on the heated surface, the conditions in the vicinity of the developing bubble are generally steady. The bubble grows in a uniformly subcooled liquid. Condensation begins immediately, and it takes place over the entire perimeter of the bubble.

Since the exact location of bubble formation is known, the optical equipment can be aligned and focused accurately, which is an essential requirement for precision measurements of bubble shape, size and deformation, as well as the visualization of temperature fields by HI. The size of the bubble and the frequency of bubble departure can be controlled by suitable selection of nozzle diameter and mass flow rate of vapor. In this approach effects due to the presence of the electric field can be separated from effects caused by the temperature gradients in the thermal boundary layer. The influence of the thermal boundary layer can be investigated after activating the heater at a later stage of the research. The described experimental approach offers the advantage of yielding clear and unambiguous results depending on a limited number of controlled process parameters.

EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

Test cell. For the visualization experiments a test cell was developed. The present design incorporates most of the features required for the microgravity experiments, without the special hardware needed to operate it in the aircraft during parabolic flights. The measurement cell is rectangular. All four vertical walls of the test cell are transparent, and they allow transillumination with laser light for visualization experiments by HI. The bottom electrode is a copper cylinder, which is electrically grounded. The copper block is heated with a resistive heater and it is equipped with 6 thermocouples that provide reference temperatures for the measurements with HI. The top electrode is a mesh electrode. Bubbles are injected with a syringe into the test cell through the bottom electrode. Visualization experiments with this test cell are currently underway in the Heat Transfer Laboratory (HTL) of the Johns Hopkins University.

Working fluid. The working fluids presently used in the interferometric visualization experiments, water and PF 5052, satisfy requirements regarding thermophysical, optical and electrical properties.
**Instrumentation.** A 30kV power supply (Glassman MJ30) equipped with a voltmeter allows to apply the electric field to the electrodes during the experiments. The magnitude of the applied voltage can be adjusted either manually or through the LabVIEW data acquisition and control system connected to a PC. Temperatures of the heated block are recorded using type-T thermocouples, whose output is read by a data acquisition system. Images of the bubbles are recorded with 35mm photographic and 16mm high-speed cameras, scanned and analyzed using various software packages.

**VISUALIZED TEMPERATURE FIELDS**

HI allows the visualization of temperature fields in the vicinity of bubbles during boiling in the form of fringes. Typical visualized temperature distributions around the air bubbles injected into the thermal boundary layer in PF5052 are shown in Figure 1. The temperature of the heated surface is 35 °C. The temperature difference for a pair of fringes is approximately 0.05 °C. The heat flux applied to the bottom surface is moderate, and the fringe patterns are regular. In the image a bubble penetrating the thermal boundary layer is visible. Because of the axial symmetry of the problem, simplified reconstruction techniques can be applied to recover the temperature field.

**MEASUREMENT OF THE TEMPERATURE DISTRIBUTION**

From the fringe pattern temperature distributions that yield important information regarding heat transfer are determined. Two algorithms that allow the quantitative evaluation of interferometric fringe patterns and the reconstruction of temperature fields during boiling have been developed at the HTL of the Johns Hopkins University.

**RECONSTRUCTION OF AXIALLY SYMMETRICAL TEMPERATURE DISTRIBUTIONS**

Data on fringe order and location, obtained by applying digital image processing to the visualization images, serves as input information for the reconstruction algorithm during the first phase of the research, when a single bubble is injected into the working fluid through a nozzle. The bubble is assumed to be axially symmetrical, which significantly reduces the computational effort for quantifying the temperature distribution around the bubble.

In an interferometric image the change of the optical path length of the light beam, caused by the phase difference between object and reference beams, is visualized. In the equation of ideal interferometry the phase change is expressed as the multiple $S$ of the wavelength of light $\lambda$,

$$S\lambda = \int_0^L (n - n_o) dz.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

In Eq. (1) $n$ is the refractive index of the measurement state, $n_o$ the refractive index of the fluid during the reference exposure, $S$ the fringe order and $L$ is the length of the path of the light beam through the phase object. This equation is used to reconstruct the temperature distribution in the fluid when the refractive index is constant along the path of the light beam, and the temperature distribution is 2D. To be able to apply the equation of ideal interferometry, apart from these two assumptions, it is necessary to avoid the deflection of the light beam in the thermal boundary layer.

In a boiling liquid a thermal boundary layer is formed around the vapor bubble. The schematic of the physical situation and the path of the light beam in the vicinity of the bubble are illustrated in Figure 4. For the thermal boundary layer around the bubble the requirements for ideal interferometry are not satisfied, i.e. the refractive index is not constant along the path.
Figure 3. Sequence of 5 interferometric images showing rising bubbles injected into the thermal boundary layer through a nozzle of the light beam in the working fluid. The refractive index $n$ is a function of the radius $r$, and the integration limits are also radius dependent. For this physical situation Eq. (1) is modified as

$$S(y)\lambda = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (n(r) - n_\infty) dz.$$  (2)  

In order to recover the temperature distribution $T(r)$ in the thermal boundary layer from the interference fringe pattern $S(y)$, it is necessary to integrate Equation (2) for the physical situation illustrated in Figure 4. For three-dimensional refractive index fields this solution can be obtained only when images are recorded for multiple directions of illumination. In the evaluation of temperature distributions in the vicinity of bubbles during boiling, axial symmetry of the refractive index field in the thermal boundary layer is often assumed to simplify the reconstruction process.

For this purpose the thermal boundary layer around the bubble is divided into equidistant concentric shells, and the refractive index is assumed to be constant in each of the shells. For this situation Eq. (2) can be rewritten as

$$S(y)\lambda = S_\lambda = 2 \sum_{k=1}^{N-1} \Delta n_k \left[ \frac{1}{(r_{k+1}^2 - r_k^2)^2} - \frac{1}{(r_{k'}^2 - r_k^2)^2} \right].$$  (3)  

An analytical solution of Eq. (3) was described by Abel (Hauf and Grigull, 1970), and the result of the inversion is

$$n(r) - n_\infty = -\frac{\lambda}{\pi} \frac{dS(y)/dy}{\sqrt{y^2 - r^2}}.$$  (4)  

Eq. (4) relates the measured fringe order $S(y)$, a function of the spatial coordinate $y$, to the change of the refractive index $n(r) - n_\infty$, which has to be determined in the evaluation procedure. For this purpose it is convenient to express the measured fringe order $S(y)$ in the form of a polynomial.

The foregoing evaluation procedure does not account for the deflection of the light beam in the thermal boundary layer around the vapor bubble. Since large temperature gradients are expected in that region, the deflection of the light beam cannot be ne-
neglected in boiling experiments. In order to incorporate
the deflection into the evaluation procedure, a tem-
perature profile \( T(r) \) is initially assumed. This allows
to determine the path of the light beam as well as the
determination of the optical path length and the phase
shift \( S(y) \) in the thermal boundary layer. In addition,
the exit angle of the light beam is known, which al-
ows to account for the deflections and phase shifts
outside the boundary layer (in the bulk fluid and in the
windows of the test cell). A computer code has been
developed at the HTL that allows to vary the assumed
temperature profile \( T(r) \) and the boundary layer thick-
ness \( \delta \) in an iterative procedure, until the calculated
values of the fringe order match the measured ones
\( S(y) \).

**OPTICAL TOMOGRAPHY**

Tomographic techniques were initially developed
for medical applications, and nowadays they are be-
coming increasingly available in engineering meas-
urements (Mewes, Herman, Renz, 1994). Medical
applications are steady, as opposed to engineering
problems where the "patient", the temperature field,
typically cannot be maintained steady for extended
periods of time. This is especially true for boiling
with typical bubble frequencies up to 1 kHz. Thus
tomographic reconstruction techniques developed for
medical applications are not suitable for the study of
high-speed, unsteady heat transfer processes.

In tomography, the measurement volume is sliced
into 2D planes. In the present study these planes are
parallel to the heated surface. The objective is to de-
termine the values of the field parameter of interest in
form of the field function \( f \) in these 2D planes. The
field parameter is the change of the refractive index of
the liquid in the measurement volume caused by tem-
perature changes. By superimposing data for many
2D planes recorded at the same time instant, the 3D
temperature distribution in the measurement volume is
recovered.

**Mathematical Model.** The schematic in Figure 5
illustrates the basic principles of measuring the field
function \( f \) in one of the 2D planes. The 2D plane is
generally irradiated from multiple directions, two of
which are indicated in Figure 5. A ray \( i \) irradiating
the measurement volume can be uniquely described by
the angle \( \theta_i \) and its distance \( \rho_i \) from the origin.
The directions of irradiation of the two rays shown in
Figure 5 are described with the angles \( \theta_m \) and \( \theta_s \).
As ray \( i \) passes through the measurement volume, changes
of physical properties, such as temperature of the fluid
in the measurement volume, change the physical prop-
erties of the ray. These changes are then measured in
form of a projection value \( \Phi_i \). In the present study
this corresponds to the change of the refractive index,
which causes a phase shift between the reference and
measurement beams of the setup for HI. The phase

\[
\Phi_i(\rho, \theta) = \int_0^1 f(x, y) ds.
\]

Eq. (5) describes the projection value \( \Phi_i \), that corre-
sponds to the average value of the field function \( f(x, y) \)
along the ray path \( s \). If the field function \( f \) is kept con-
stant along the ray path \( s \), the value of the field func-
tion \( f \) and the value of the projection value \( \Phi_i \) will be
identical. This is the case in the study 2D temperature
fields applying HI, which requires one direction of
illumination only. Consequently, in order to extend
HI to three dimensions, more directions of illumina-
tion are required, and tomographic reconstruction
techniques are needed to recover the field function \( f \)
from the measured projection values \( \Phi_i \).

A computer code for tomographic reconstruction of
unsteady 3D temperature fields from 2D projections
has been developed at the HTL in the first phase of
this study. The ART (Algebraic Reconstruction Tech-
nique)-Sample Method (Lübbecke, 1982, Ostendorf and
Mewes, 1988) was selected for this heat transfer appli-
cation based on previous positive experience with
comparable physical situations. The Sample Method
is based on a discrete Fourier transform, and as result
an underdetermined system of equations is obtained.
This system of equations can be solved in an iterative
process with the ART-Algorithm.

The discrete Fourier transform is applied to the
projection values \( \Phi_i \) obtained for one direction of
illumination. These projection values \( \Phi_i \) correspond
to a 1D function in the physical space, as shown in
Figure 5. The result of the Fourier transform will be a
1D spectrum. The same procedure can be applied to
another direction of illumination, and consequently,
two spectra in the Fourier domain are obtained. These

![Figure 5. Principles of tomographic measurement tech-
iques](image-url)
two spectra are then connected in the Fourier domain under an angle corresponding to the angle \( \Delta \theta = 6_m - 6_n \) between the two directions of illumination. The angle \( \Delta \theta \) is also shown in Figure 5. The spectra of many directions of illumination form a 2D function in the Fourier domain. After applying the inverse 2D Fourier transform to this 2D function in the Fourier domain, the field function \( f \) is recovered. As a result of these mathematical transformations, the following system of equations is obtained

\[
\Phi_i(\rho, \theta) = \sum_m \sum_n w(a_i, b_i) \cdot f(l_m, l_n, m, n). \tag{6}
\]

The system of equations (6) has \( m \times n \) unknowns corresponding to the number of grid points. In order to find a unique solution, \( m \times n \) projection values \( \Phi_i \) are necessary. In medical applications this requirement is satisfied by taking projection values using angle subdivisions of 1°. Apart from a sufficient number of projection values \( \Phi_i \), this method also ensures an accurate representation of the 2D function in the Fourier domain, since 180 spectra are available.

The Sample Method is a powerful tool to obtain a high spatial resolution in 3D tomographic measurements. However, to obtain high temporal resolution,
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points. Applying the Sample method alone would require 2500 projection values instead of 200.

The code developed at the HTL allows the reconstruction of the field function for different types of irradiation and different shapes (circular and rectangular cross section) of the measurement volume. The accuracy of reconstruction was evaluated by using analytical test functions, and the results of these tests are shown in Figure 6. The four directions of irradiation are also indicated for the first test function.

In order to apply HI to heat transfer measurements, both the investigated fluid and the vessel containing the fluid have to be transparent. Since the light beam is normally reflected at the liquid-vapor interface of the bubble, the bubble will act as an opaque obstacle in interferometric measurements. We have also applied our tomographic reconstruction algorithm to the reconstruction of the 3D field function to the situation when opaque obstacles are present in the measurement volume. The presence of an opaque obstacle prevents the probing light beams from traversing the measurement volume. As consequence, information on the average value of the field variable will be missing in regions that are in the shade of the obstacle. The reconstruction algorithm was modified to account for the presence of the obstacle and the analytical test functions used in this study as well as the corresponding tomographic reconstructions are shown in Figure 6b. Modification of illumination angles and beam numbers may be necessary to achieve the desired measurement accuracy in the study of boiling.

In order to obtain information necessary for tomographic measurements, the basic optical arrangement for in-line HI has to be modified to allow different transillumination directions. Fiber optics will be used to generate the four ray bundles needed for tomographic measurements instead of bench optics used by Ostendorf and Mewes (1988).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Holographic interferometry was applied to visualize bubbles injected into the thermal boundary layer to simulate boiling. The initial experiments indicate that temperature distributions around the bubble are generally three dimensional. Two reconstruction algorithms, one assuming axially symmetrical temperature distributions and one for 3D temperature fields, were developed. Currently visualization experiments are being conducted in the heat transfer laboratory of the Johns Hopkins University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is supported by the NASA research grant NAG3-1815.

The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the graduate students Janelle Vorreiter, Eric Kang and Martin Wetzel.

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