The Constrained Vapor Bubble Experiment – Interfacial Flow Region
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Introduction

- A bubble constrained by the walls of a solid.
- A transparent wickless heat pipe flown in the ISS
- 3mm x 3mm ~ 20 - 40 mm long (inside dimensions), size developed to have low Bond number.
- Study the fluid physics and determine the liquid and vapor distribution.
- Completely modular design.

Experimental Results

- Heat pipes are predicted to dry-out as power is increased. [1-2]
- Opposite behavior of dry-out i.e. flooding observed at heater end from 0.7W onwards in microgravity [3].
- Formation of a thick layer of liquid near heater starts from 0.7 W – 3 W called Interfacial flow region
- Beyond 2.2 W, the interfacial region reaches a constant length, arresting further penetration of liquid down the axis of the heat pipe.

Mathematical Analysis

\[ q_{\text{in}} = q_{\text{cond}} + q_{\text{outrad}} \]

- Extra heat input is compensated by back flow and then evaporation of liquid in the vapor region.

Experimental Results

- The Marangoni stress forces liquid from the heater end to the cooler end.
- Capillary pumping forces liquid from the cooler end to the heater end.
- The flow combination leads to a pinch point and a central drop that collects the excess liquid.
- Increase in vapor space at 3 W hints at a new operation regime.

Conclusions

- The internal heat transfer coefficient of the CVB can be correlated to the presence of the Interfacial flow region.
- The competition between capillary and Marangoni flows causes ‘Flooding’ near the heater and not a ‘Dry-out’ region.
- The growth of the interfacial flow region growth is arrested at higher power inputs.
- 1D heat model confirms the presence of ‘Interfacial flow region’ and its growth.
- Visual observations are essential to understanding the heat pipe’s performance.

References


Future Work

- Understand the role of cooler temperature on the growth of the interfacial flow region and the magnitude of the interfacial forces
- Develop higher dimension model to predict the interface temperature gradient and the velocity profile in the interfacial flow region.
- Improve theoretical models [1,2] to predict the flooding behavior observed in CVB experiments.

Final goal is to cool critical space craft components to enable long-term manned missions.

Applications

- LED lamps, Desktops, laptops.
- Hubble Space Telescope, Mars Rovers.
- Very important for space applications.

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