Towards designing graceful degradation into trajectory based operations:

A human-machine system integration approach

Dr. Tamsyn Edwards and Dr. Paul Lee
Agenda

• Wider sub-project
• Research motivation
• Literature review: Aims
• Framework of graceful degradation
• Literature review: Detailed findings
• The operational envelope?
• Conclusions & Implications
• Next steps
Initial TBO / Integrated demand management sub-project

• Project Objective
  – Develop requirements and procedures to enable unimpeded gate-to-gate TBO that
    • Improves throughput, predictability, reduce delays, enables user-preferred trajectories by
      – Coordinating and managing traffic demand to available capacity across the NAS and
      – Synchronizing access to airspace, airport, and weather constraint bottlenecks across the NAS while
      – Maintaining safe, flexible and resilient operation

• Supports ARMD Strategic Thrust 1
  – Safe, Efficient Growth in Global Operations

• Key Barrier / Technical Challenge
  – Poorly coordinated constraint management across multiple facilities, systems, and different phases of flight
  – Gate-to-gate TBO that rely heavily on automation systems will be fragile to degradations in infrastructure or operational disruptions unless
    • they are designed properly upfront to handle the degraded state with reduced capability and then quickly and efficiently recover to full capacity
• Trajectory based operations (TBO) is an instrumental concept in the NextGen initiative

• In order for the TBO concept to be realized, there will be a “fundamental shift in ATM” (FAA, 2014):
  – Narrower tolerances (FAA, 2014)
  – More precise trajectories
  – Strategic vs tactical

• System resilience is critical
  – TBO system must be able to gracefully degrade to maintain safe operations

• Knowledge of the causes and mitigations of degradation in TBO must be understood
Literature review

• Aims:
  – Identify causes of degradation in ATC and associated solutions
  – Identify the role of ATCOs in a gracefully degrading system
  – Develop a framework of graceful degradation from the literature

• Expected outcomes
  – Identify causes of degradation and associated solutions applicable to TBO
  – Identify literature gaps and inform future research
  – Implications for ecologically valid understanding of graceful degradation of TBO systems
Framework of graceful degradation

Degradation cause:
- System fault or failure
- Environment events
- Human Operator (Air traffic controller)

Identification:

Prevention and mitigation of degradation:
- Preventative measures to generate graceful degradation
- Active at different stages

System design e.g.:
- Fault tolerance
- Redundancy
- Automation

Environment e.g.:
- Airspace design
- Traffic flows
- CONOPS
- Procedures

Human Operator e.g.:
- Training
- Human-centered interface design
- Decision support tools

Post-degradation: Recovery

Predominantly human operator

Can be supported by all previous pre-degradation measures

Output
Graceful degradation
Causes: System fault/failure

• Widest range of literature
• Primarily focuses on CNS
  – Failure can be full system or partial, such as specific algorithms
• Several categorizations documented, although no consistent agreement
• Causes of hardware failure
  – Physical damage
  – Aging
  – Accidental/malicious interference
• Software failure
  – Modelling errors
  – Integration of independent ATC software
    • Legacy technology and new technology
    • Technology with competing goals
Causes: Off-nominals

• Airspace design
  – Number and type of conflict points
  – Size of available airspace
  – Complexity can increase ATCO demand, which may put performance at greater risk

• Imprecision/uncertainty

• Off nominal events
  – Aircraft emergencies
  – Medical emergencies
  – Unexpected pilot actions

• Weather
  – Widely researched
  – Leading cause of aircraft delay
  – Weather avoidance routes are pre-planned but real time updates limited
  – Consequences include manual vectoring, re-routing, delay and cancellations
  – Controllers responsible for maintaining safe operations during these demanding situations
Causes: Human operators (ATCOs)

• Least researched in graceful degradation domain
  – Human error literature in Human Factors domain
• Human performance influencing factors
  – Task demand and high workload
  – Attention and perception errors
  – Communication errors
  – Procedural error
• Human performance influencing factors resulting from use of automation (human-system interaction)
  – Underload
  – Trust
  – Design of automation – transparency and reliability
Identification

- Required prior to prevention or mitigation
- Techniques can be separated into:
  - Identifying potential causes prior to degradation
  - Identifying causes during live operations
- Techniques prior to degradation include:
  - Incident and accident analysis
  - Causal modelling
- Techniques of identification during live operations include:
  - System self-monitoring and self-identification
  - System communication to human operator
  - Human operator
Achieving graceful degradation: System-related solutions

- Well-documented in the literature
  - Bertish et al. (2013) - 18 identified mitigations
    - 14/18 related to technology design and regulation
- Hardware/software solutions
  - Failure paths
  - Back up systems
  - Redundancy
- Requirements-based solutions
  - Quality standards
  - Verification and validation
- Technological solutions for environmental and human causes of degradation
  - Decision support systems
  - Automation
  - Tools to reduce uncertainty, such as enhanced weather prediction
Achieving graceful degradation: Environmental solutions

- Literature primarily focuses on reducing complexity for ATCOs
- Solutions are usually complex
- Airspace redesign
  - Standard traffic flows
  - Flight follow features
  - More efficient reroutes
  - Reduction in complexity – reduction of risk of human error
- Solutions to reduce uncertainty
  - CONOPS
  - Procedures
Achieving graceful degradation: Controller

- Contribution of ATCO to graceful degradation is under-researched
- ATCOs maintain safe operations through a high standard of performance
- Dominant contribution post-degradation—recovery
  - Role is an on-line defense between safe and unsafe operations
- Significant implications for TBO
  - System fault/failure when ATCOs are controlling more aircraft than they could without automation?
  - Framework supports breakdown of this issue
- Need for human—systems integration to support graceful degradation in TBO
  - When do ATCOs reach safe limits of performance?
The operational envelope

Normal operations: ATC is working effectively within this workload and scenario space.

At edges, due to difficulty, complexity, overload etc. performance/safety may be temporarily compromised; but situation normally recovered before loss of separation event.

Here a loss of separation will occur.
The operational envelope

Normal operations: ATC is working effectively within this workload and scenario space.

At edges, due to difficulty, complexity, overload etc, performance/safety may be temporarily compromised; but situation normally recovered before loss of separation event.

Here a loss of separation will occur.

Individual envelopes that interact to determine the overall system envelope.

Operational maximum

Operational optimum

Tolerance

System

Environment

ATCO
Conclusions & Implications

• Findings
  – Causes of degradation and solutions categorized by systems, environment and human operators (ATCOs)
  – Solutions to degradation can be applied pre- or post-degradation
  – Most research on systems, least on role of the ATCO
  – Research dominantly considers ATCO to be responsible for maintenance of safe operations during degradation
  – No consideration in current literature of interactions between causes and solutions

• Development of graceful degradation framework can be used to:
  – Identify research gaps
  – Identify causes of degradation and solutions
  – Identify interactions
  – Guide requirements for future research

• Human-system interaction approach essential to achieve graceful degradation in TBO

• Need to understand limits of system performance AND human performance
Next Steps

• Literature review completed
  – Paper submitted and accepted to Aviation 2017
• Aims of future work
  Identify causes of degradation in TBO
  Identify the limits of recovery for the human operator

Cognitive walk-through

Human in the loop simulations

Future goal

Re-design of the system

• Down selection of assumptions
  • Selection of use cases
    • Initial understanding of recovery strategies
    • Initial understanding of limits of recovery

• Identification of human envelope ‘limits’
  • Investigation of human and system performance envelope interaction
  • Development of solutions to specific TBO issue to create graceful degradation

• Propose potential re–design of the system, airspace, or human tasks/procedures
  • Monitoring the situation prior to full breakdown
  • Support the recovery phase
Thank you!

t.e.edwards@nasa.gov