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Effect of dents in laminated carbon composite beams on modified anisotropic electric potential analysis

Akira Todoroki[a,*], Takuya Yamane[b]

[a] Tokyo Institute of Technology, 2-12-1, Ookayama, Meguro, Tokyo 1528500, Japan
[b] Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo Institute of Technology, 2-12-1, Ookayama, Meguro, Tokyo 1528500, Japan

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ABSTRACT

Because carbon fiber reinforced polymer (CFRP) laminated composites have electric conductivity, damage monitoring was performed using electrical resistance changes. The authors previously proposed an anisotropic electric-potential function method to calculate the electric-potential field of laminated CFRP composites. The method, however, did not deal with the effects of dents. The present study deals with the effects of dents on the anisotropic electric-potential function method. The dent causes an electric conductivity increase in the through-thickness direction. The increase was modeled and applied to a beam-type specimen. The results were compared with the finite-element method results, and the method using equivalent conductivity in the through-thickness direction was confirmed to be effective.

1. Introduction

Carbon fiber reinforced polymer (CFRP) laminated composites are widely used for aerospace structures and automobile components. For CFRP laminates, it is difficult to detect defects visually. Carbon fibers have electrical conductivity. When CFRP laminates are damaged, the damage results in carbon fiber breakage and fiber contact cuts. These cause electrical resistance changes. Therefore, measuring electrical resistance makes it possible to monitor damage to CFRP laminates [1–14].

When a CFRP laminate is subjected to a load in the through-thickness direction, a dent is generated on the surface of the CFRP laminate. The dent causes plastic deformation of resin in the through-thickness direction, and this brings fiber contact in the though-thickness direction. The increase of contact causes a significant increase in electrical conductivity in the through-thickness direction [15]. In-plane shear loading is a well-known cause of plastic deformation, and this shear plastic deformation has been reported to increase electrical conductivity in the through-thickness direction [16]. The significant increase of conductivity in the thickness direction is equal to the significant increase of cross sectional area for electric current. This effect, therefore, is very important when plastic deformation occurs for CFRP laminates.

Todoroki et al. showed a new analytical method to calculate the electric current density and electric voltage change at the surface of the CFRP laminate using anisotropic electric potential analysis [17,18]. Yamane et al. experimentally showed the effectiveness of the method [19], and the method was extended to practical CFRP laminates that include angle plies [20]. Matsuzaki et al. showed that it is possible to identify multiple delamination cracks from the measurement of the surface electric potential using the analysis method [21]. Although the anisotropic electric potential function can be applied to the damage monitoring of the CFRP laminate, there was no approach to estimate the effect of a dent caused by out-of-plane loading, such as impact loads.

In this study, therefore, the anisotropic electric potential function is extended to calculate the effect of a dent that caused a local increase in the electrical conductivity in the through-thickness direction. The calculated results are compared with the finite-element method (FEM) results. As shown in [19,20], the effectiveness of the anisotropic electric potential function has been demonstrated experimentally, and the results agreed well with the FEM results. In the present study, therefore, the calculated results are compared with FEM results. The FEM results depend on mesh division. Three-dimensional FEM requires several mesh divisions to obtain reliable results. Here, two-dimensional analysis is performed using a beam-type specimen configuration. Moreover, a comparison of electric current distributions between a specimen without a dent and one with a dent is performed to confirm the effect of a dent.

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[*] Corresponding author.
E-mail address: todoroki.a.aa@m.titech.ac.jp (A. Todoroki).

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2. Dent analysis using equivalent electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction

2.1. Unidirectional laminate

Let us consider the two-dimensional model. The horizontal x-axis is defined as the fiber direction, and the perpendicular z-axis is defined as to the through-thickness direction. The electric current density of i_x and i_z can be expressed with electric potential ϕ and conductivity σ_x and σ_z as follows.

$$i_x = -\sigma_x \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial x}, \quad i_z = -\sigma_z \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial z} \tag{1}$$

From the equation of continuity of electricity, the following equation is obtained.

$$\sigma_x \frac{\partial^2 \phi}{\partial x^2} + \sigma_z \frac{\partial^2 \phi}{\partial z^2} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The coordinate transformation to the isotropic space shown below is adopted.

$$\xi = \frac{x}{\sqrt{\sigma_x}}, \quad \zeta = \frac{z}{\sqrt{\sigma_z}} \tag{3}$$

Using this coordinate transformation, Eq. (2) changes to the following:

$$\frac{\partial^2 \phi}{\partial \xi^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \phi}{\partial \zeta^2} = 0 \tag{4}$$

Consider the current applying locates $(-a, 0)$ and the ground locates $(a, 0)$ as the source and sink points, respectively, in potential flow analysis. Let the applied total electric current be I to the two-dimensional beam shown in Fig. 1. The anisotropic electric potential function is given as follows [17]:

$$\phi = -\frac{I}{2\pi\sqrt{\sigma_x \sigma_z}} \ln \frac{\frac{(x+a)^2}{\sigma_x} + \frac{z^2}{\sigma_z}}{\frac{(x-a)^2}{\sigma_x} + \frac{z^2}{\sigma_z}} \tag{5}$$

Substituting Eq. (5) into Eq. (1) with the electric conductivity of fiber direction σ_0 $(=\sigma_x)$ and the conductivity of the through-thickness direction σ_t $(=\sigma_z)$ gives the electric current density. When the laminate includes angle plies, the modification is shown in [20].

2.2. Analysis of effect of dent

As mentioned in Section 2.1, let us consider the case where the fiber direction is along the x-axis (horizontal direction) and the through-thickness direction is the z direction of the unidirectional beam-type specimen, as shown in Fig. 1. In [15], the experimental results for dents showed a local decrease in cross-sectional area and a significant increase in the electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction.

Even for a large dent, the decrease of thickness was only 1%, and the decrease comes from the plastic deformation of the epoxy resin. Because the epoxy resin is an electric insulator, the decrease of thickness has a negligible effect on the electrical resistance of the specimen, because the plastic deformation of the resin has little effect on the electric current path. As shown in [15], the dent causes an increase in the fiber volume fraction, and this causes an increase in electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction. This study addresses the local increase in conductivity in the through-thickness direction.

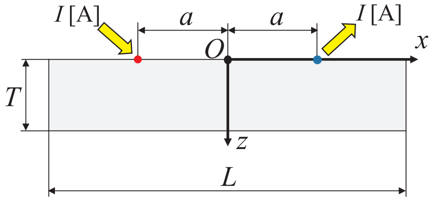

Fig. 1. Schematic representation of unidirectional CFRP laminate with electric current source and sink points.

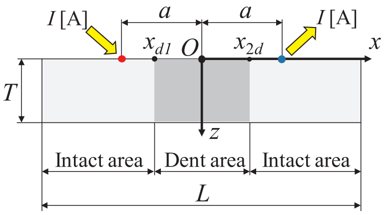

Fig. 2. Schematic representation of the laminate with dent at the area $x_{1d} \le x \le x_{2d}$ throughout the thickness.

The present modification assumes that the dent is equal to the local electric conductivity increase in the through-thickness direction, as shown in Fig. 2. The decrease in the thickness is neglected. In the present study, as shown in Fig. 2, a dent area is located from $x_{1d} \le x \le x_{2d}$, almost at the center of the beam-type specimen. The dent area has higher electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction, but the electric conductivity in the fiber direction is the same as that of the intact area. This means that σ_z in Eq. (3) varies depending on x.

Let us assume that the anisotropic electric potential function is differentiable, even if the beam has a dent. Because the anisotropic electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction is not uniform in the entire specimen, the anisotropic electric potential with a dent is different from that without a dent. To express this difference, an equivalent electric conductivity is adopted here. This means the function is assumed to be Eq. (5), but the electric conductivity in the through-thickness direction is different from the unidirectional CFRP beam.

As σ_z differs depending on the x coordinate, we define a new contribution function F_z that expresses the contribution of the local dent area. The contribution function F_z is defined as follows.

$$F_z(\beta) = \frac{\left.\frac{\partial \phi}{\partial z}\right|_{\substack{x=\beta L \\ z=t}}}{\max \left.\frac{\partial \phi}{\partial z}\right|_{z=t}} \tag{6}$$

where t is an arbitrary location of the z coordinate within the beam specimen, and β is the normalized location in the x coordinate $(-1/2 \le \beta \le 1/2)$. The denominator of Eq. (6) means the maximum value of the partial differential of ϕ with respect to z at the depth $z = t$. Using the normalized contribution function F_z, the equivalent electric conductivity is defined as follows.

$$C_z = \frac{\int_{-1/2}^{1/2} \sigma_z F_z(\beta) d\beta}{\int_{-1/2}^{1/2} F_z(\beta) d\beta} \tag{7}$$

To calculate the equivalent conductivity in the through-thickness direction C_z, iterative calculations are required using Eq. (7).

1. Calculate the contribution function F_z using Eq. (6), substituting σ_0 and σ_t with σ_x and σ_z, respectively.
2. Using the calculated contribution function F_z, calculate the equivalent electric conductivity C_z using Eq. (7).
3. Calculate the contribution function F_z again, using Eq. (6) and substituting σ_0 and C_z with σ_x and σ_z, respectively.
4. Using the calculated contribution function F_z, calculate the equivalent electric conductivity C_z again, using Eq. (7).
5. Perform steps 3 and 4 repeatedly until convergence is obtained. (In the present study, the threshold value is set to 10^{-2} of σ_t.)
6. Use the converged value as the equivalent electric conductivity.

Using the obtained equivalent conductivity in the through-thickness