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APPLICATION OF THE ACOUSTIC EMISSION METHOD IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE CRACK INITIATION MOMENT IN TIMBER

Abstract

Wooden structural elements frequently develop cracks, which can be dangerous if the elements are under service conditions. Cracks usually propagate parallel to the element axis, and their depth of several centimeters is frequently the same as the thickness of the element. Almost all timber cracks are classified as serious defects. They are responsible for lower strength parameters and lower biocorrosion resistance.

The acoustic emission (AE) method, which is commonly used for testing objects or structures made of steel or reinforced concrete, can now be applied to analyze the fracture toughness of timber structures and then diagnose and monitor their safety. This refers to both statically and dynamically loaded elements, e.g. timber support structures in mine galleries.

Keywords: acoustic emission, crack in timber, crack initiation

1. Introduction

An example of wooden cracks is presented in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. View of the cracks in the angle brace, the purlin and the rafter

The load capacity of an element with a crack is dependent on the element fracture toughness. It is determined in accordance with the principles of fracture mechanics.

The following parameters are used for timber: the critical energy release rate G_{ac} , and the critical stress intensity factor K_{ac} , where α denotes the loading mode (I, II or III). The first case ($\alpha = I$) is the cleavage. It is also called the crack opening. Cleavage occurs when the load is applied normal to the crack plane. The second case is the in-plane shear ($\alpha = II$). It occurs, when the load is applied parallel to the crack and acts

normal to the crack edge. The third case, the so-called out-of-plane shear ($\alpha = III$). It occurs when the load is in the crack plane but it is parallel to the crack edge.

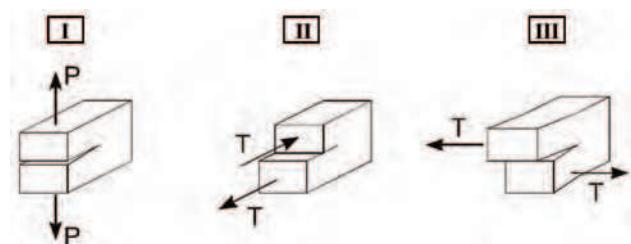


Fig. 2. Three basic loading modes of an element with a crack: mode I – cleavage, mode II – in-plane shear, mode III – out-of-plane shear

The fracture toughness of a material is determined by measuring the critical load, P_c . This corresponds to the moment of crack initiation. It is essential to analyze the phenomenon of crack initiation, because it has a direct effect on the values of G_{ac} and K_{ac} . It is important to apply the method which is justified, simple and precise.

2. The methods used for determining the moment of crack initiation in timber

Timber is regarded as anisotropic material. The crack initiation moment and the value of the critical load, P_c , can be determined with various methods and

standards. The most common techniques discussed in Refs. [1] and [2] are shown in Fig. 3. The first one is the non-linearity (*NL*) method. It is based on a change in the element compliance. The crack initiation moment coincides with the non-linearity point on the load-displacement (*P*- δ) curve. This point corresponds to the value of the critical load $P_{c(NL)}$. In practice, it is impossible to determine this point precisely.

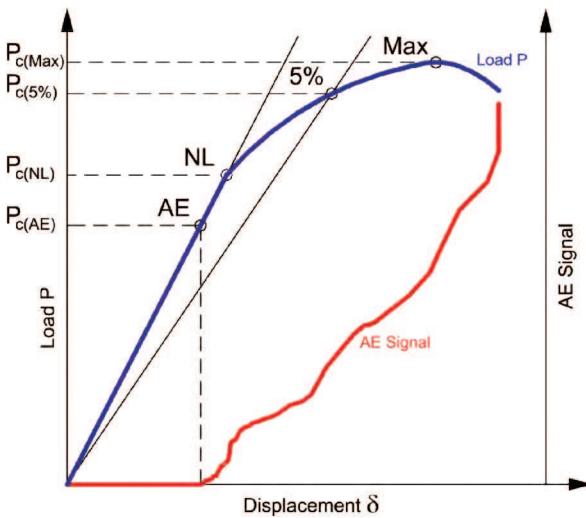


Fig. 3. Methods used for determining the critical load P_c

The second method assumes that the crack initiation moment coincides with the point of intersection of the *P*- δ curve with a straight line. The tangent of slope is 5% less as compared to slope of the straight line with a linear section of the *P*- δ curve. This method was originally derived for metals. It assumes that in the case of a slowly propagating crack, the critical load corresponds to a 2% increase in the crack length. It is important to consider the deviation of the *P*- δ curve from the straight line with a linear section resulting from the plastic strain. This increases the departure from the linear part of the curve by additional 2%. The influence of the specimen geometry causes a deviation from linearity by 1%. A change in the specimen geometry results in a deviation from the straight line with the linear section of the *P*- δ curve and is assumed to be 5%. The load corresponding to the point designated as 5% is assumed to be the critical load $P_{c(5\%)}$. This method is also suitable for composites. The critical load is frequently assumed to be the same as the maximum value of the force applied in a test. This corresponds to the point designated as *Max*. In this case, the value of the critical load corresponds to $P_{c(\text{Max})}$.

For timber, however, the approach based on the acoustic emission (*AE*) method seems to be the most

suitable [3-8]. The load at which acoustic signals occur is assumed to be the crack initiation moment. The value of the critical load $P_{c(AE)}$ corresponds to the *AE* point shown in Fig. 3 [2].

3. The Acoustic Emission (*AE*) method

The numerous applications of the *AE* method include: testing materials and their strength, monitoring the safety of structural elements and whole buildings, testing the tightness of elements of engineering systems, geological and seismic tests, and finally, detecting and locating discharges in high-voltage transformers. Crack initiation is accompanied by the emission of acoustic impulses. The acoustic emission method is one of few non-destructive method. It can be used to detect a defect propagating in a solid which is subjected to load. One of the main advantages of the *AE* method over the traditional methods of engineering control is that it permits detecting early changes in the material microstructure. It also allows monitoring the slowly propagating defects in elements of engineering structures on the basis of acoustic signals.

An acoustic emission signal is generated by a change in the energetic state of the material or release of its internal energy. If the material with stored inner energy is subjected to an external stimulus, or the material state changes, then the state of its energy stored will change as well, and part of it will be released. The released energy is used to produce mechanical work or heat. Only a relatively small part of this energy is converted to elastic waves in the form of acoustic emission signals. An *AE* signal generated in the volume of the material as elastic waves reaches the material surface. This can be registered with receiving instrument. An *AE* signal contains lots of information. Most of it, however does not characterize the sources or the existing phenomena. An analysis of the acoustic signal can be done with the choice of selected parameters (Fig. 4). The most important of them are:

- the number of *AE* events, i.e. the number of envelopes of *AE* impulses for which the amplitude exceeds a certain arbitrarily selected level of reference or level of discrimination;
- the number of *AE* counts, i.e. the number of areas for which the amplitude exceeds the level of discrimination.

The form of a single *AE* impulse and some of its parameters are shown in Fig. 4.

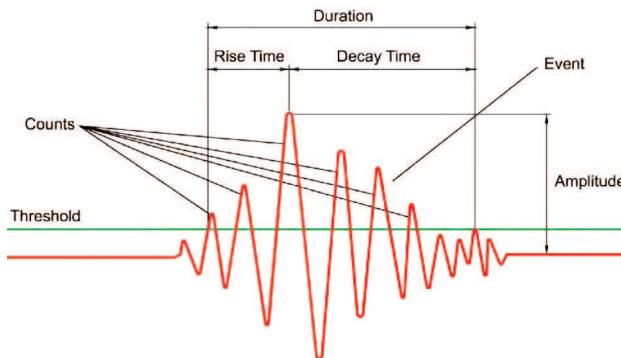


Fig. 4. Parameters characterising an acoustic impulse

The level of discrimination has little influence on the value of the sum of counts. This implies good correlation with the actual number of *AE* events [9]. The number of *AE* counts is an important parameter frequently used in practice.

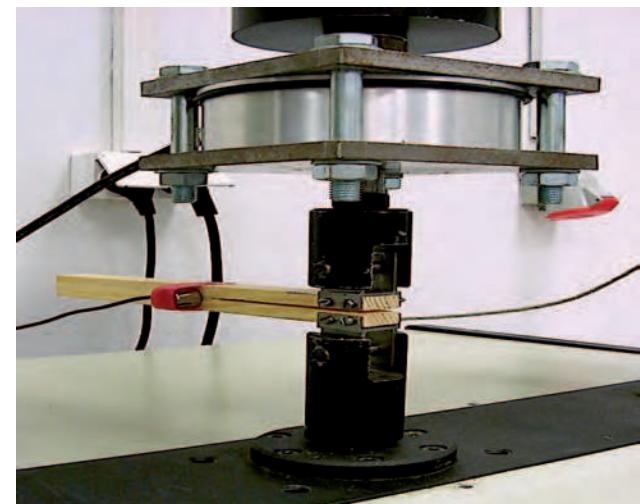
4. Applying the *AE* method to detect the crack initiation moment in timber

The crack initiation moment and the critical load P_c of timber elements under analysis were determined with the *AE*, *NL*, 5% and *Max* methods.

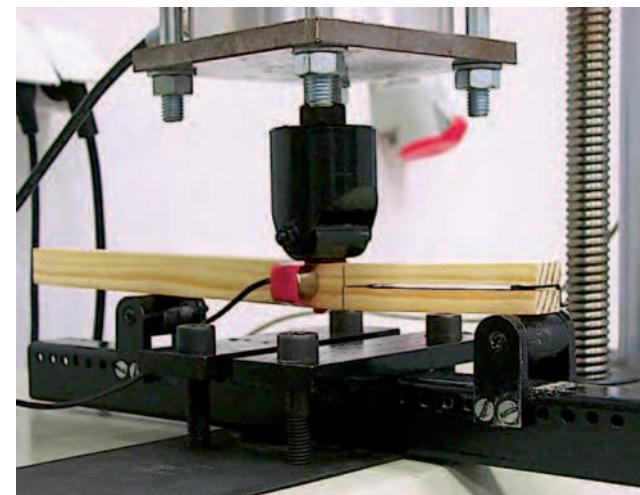
The tests were conducted for pinewood specimens (*Pinus silvestris*) modeling beam timber elements. *TL* stands for the load applied tangentially and *RL* stands for the load applied radially, with respect to arrangement of fibers and growth rings. *L*, *T*, and *R* stand for the longitudinal, tangential, and radial directions, respectively. Two types of specimens ($B \times 2h = 18 \times 18$ mm), were used for modeling the beam elements with longitudinal cracks. The *DCB* (*Double Cantilever Beam*) specimens were subjected to cleavage ($\alpha = I$, Fig. 5a) and the *ENF* (*End Notched Flexure*) specimens, which were subjected to longitudinal shear ($\alpha = II$, Fig. 5b).

The facility for testing consisted of a strength testing machine, a strain-gauge bridge, an acoustic emission processor and a PC with an analog-digital card. All measurements were conducted with strength testing machine (UTS System 209) with a load capacity of 20 kN. During strength tests were measured: load P , displacement δ of the point of application of force, and an acoustic emission signal. The *AE* signals were registered with *AE* system processor 204A, made by Acoustic Emission Technology Corp. (USA). *AE* signals were measured using a resonance sensor with a frequency of 175 kHz coupled to an *AE* signal preamplifier. The sensor was mounted on the side surface of the specimens, just behind the crack tip

(Fig. 5a and b). After a signal was amplified, the number of *AE* counts was registered. During the strength tests, the force for which acoustic emission signals appeared was assumed to be the critical load, P_c , [i.e. the load under which a crack was initiated].



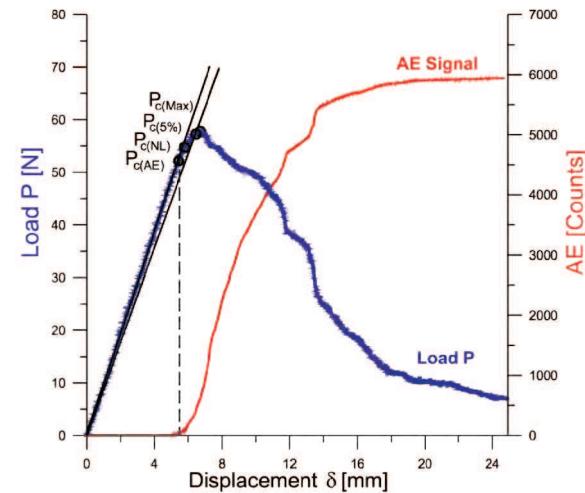
a)



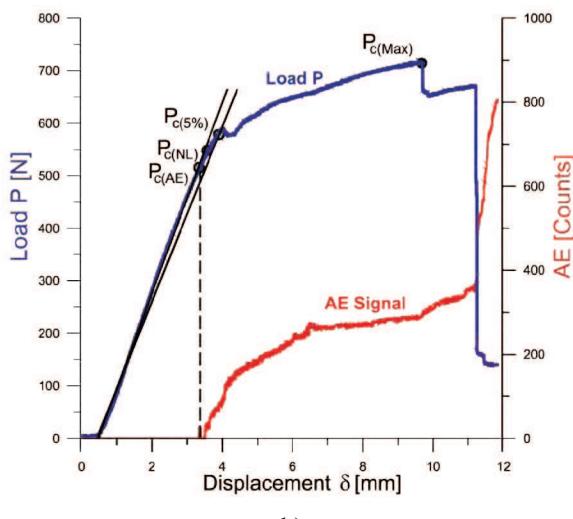
b)

Fig. 5. Specimens under test: a) *DCB* ($\alpha = I$ loading mode); b) *ENF* ($\alpha = II$ loading mode)

For loading modes I and II (Fig. 6a, b), there is the relation between the values of the critical load determined with the *AE*, *NL*, 5% and *Max* methods: $P_{c(AE)} < P_{c(NL)} < P_{c(5\%)} < P_{c(Max)}$. The difference between $P_{c(AE)}$ and $P_{c(NL)}$ is 4% and between $P_{c(AE)}$ and $P_{c(5\%)}$ 8%



a)



b)

Fig. 6. Determining P_c for pinewood: a) the DCB specimen ($\alpha = I$); b) the ENF specimen ($\alpha = II$)

As can be seen (Fig. 6. above) the choice of the method to determine the crack initiation moment is very important. This affects the value of the factor defining the fracture toughness (K_{ac} , G_{ac}). The 5% and *Max* methods cause that the value of P_c is too high, and so is the value of fracture toughness. If we assume that $P_c = P_{c(\text{Max})}$ the critical values of G_{ac} are 8% and as much as 38% higher for loading modes I and II, respectively, than the values of G_{ac} determined with the *AE* method. In the case of non-uniform materials, the 5% and *Max* methods are not justified. Therefore their application to timber analysis is limited.

The *AE* and *NL* methods are justifiable. In the case of the *NL* method it is the change in the element compliance that is related to the critical value of G_{ac} . The load values obtained using the two methods are

similar. This implies, that the crack initiation moment can be determined with either one. Determining the exact non-linearity point in the *NL* method may be difficult because its value is always subjective. The value of the corresponding load is also a certain approximation. When the *AE* method is applied, no such difficulties or uncertainties are reported. This method seems to be optimal for numerous reasons. It can be used for analyzing the fracture dynamics of timber, determining the crack initiation moment, and, accordingly, determining the fracture toughness of this material. Determining the crack initiation moment based on the analysis of acoustic signals is not complicated. The measurement procedure is simple.

6. Conclusion

The acoustic emission (*AE*) method, which is commonly used for testing objects or structures made of steel or reinforced concrete, can also be applied to analyze the fracture toughness of timber structures and to diagnose and monitor their safety. This refers to both statically and dynamically loaded elements, e.g. timber support structures in mine galleries. By applying the *AE* method one is able to determine the moment of crack initiation, and accordingly, the moment of failure.

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Zastosowanie emisji akustycznej do wyznaczania inicjacji pękania drewna

1. Wprowadzenie

Pękanie jest zjawiskiem często występującym w drewnianych elementach konstrukcji budowlanych. O nośności elementu zawierającego pęknięcie decyduje odporność na pękanie, określana zgodnie z zasadami mechaniki pękania, za pomocą jednego z kilku parametrów. W przypadku drewna są to krytyczne wartości współczynnika uwalniania energii G_{ac} oraz współczynnika intensywności naprężzeń K_{ac} ($\alpha = I, II, III$ oznacza sposób obciążenia). Podstawową wielkością mierzoną przy wyznaczaniu odporności na pękanie, jest tzw. obciążenie krytyczne P_c . Obciążenie to odpowiada momentowi inicjacji procesu pękania materiału oraz bezpośrednio wpływa na wielkość G_{ac} i K_{ac} (rys. 3).

Spośród obecnie stosowanych metod wyznaczania obciążenia krytycznego [1, 2] należy wymienić metodę spadku podatności NL , obciążenia maksymalnego Max i metodę 5% (rys. 3). Jak wykazano poniżej, w odniesieniu do drewna najbardziej uzasadnione wydaje się być podejście bazujące na metodzie emisji akustycznej EA . Jest to jedna z niewielu metod nieniszczących pozwalających wykryć wady, które w ciele stałym poddanym obciążeniu rozwijają się, powstaniu pęknięcia towarzyszy emisja impulsu akustycznego. Za moment inicjacji pękania drewna przyjmowane jest obciążenie, przy którym pojawiają się sygnały akustyczne. Wartość obciążenia krytycznego $P_{c(EA)}$ odpowiada punktowi oznaczonemu na rys. 3 jako EA . Poniżej przedstawiono wyniki badań dotyczących wyznaczania obciążenia krytycznego P_c elementów drewnianych przy zastosowaniu metody emisji akustycznej EA oraz metod NL i 5%.

2. Detekcja inicjacji pękania drewna za pomocą emisji akustycznej EA

Badania przeprowadzono na próbkach modelujących drewniane elementy belkowe z drewna sosnowego (*Pinus silvestris*) z pęknięciami podłużnymi względem włókien. Użyto próbek o przekroju 18x18 mm dwóch typów: *DCB (Double Cantilever Beam)*, próbki rozrywane ($\alpha = I$ sposób obciążenia) i *ENF (End Notched Flexure)* próbki poddane ścinaniu wzdłużnemu ($\alpha = II$ sposób obciążenia). Podczas prób wytrzymałościowych rejestrowano obciążenie P , przemieszczenie δ oraz ilość zliczeń EA (*counts*). Czujnik EA umieszczany był na bocznej powierzchni próbek, bezpośrednio za wierzchołkiem pęknięcia.

Dla obydwu analizowanych sposobów obciążenia (rys. 6a, b) pomiędzy wartościami obciążenia krytycznego wyznaczonymi na podstawie metod NL , 5% i EA zachodzi relacja $P_{c(EA)} < P_{c(NL)} < P_{c(5\%)}$. Różnice w wielkości obciążień wynoszą 4% pomiędzy $P_{c(EA)}$ i $P_{c(NL)}$ oraz 8% pomiędzy $P_{c(EA)}$ i $P_{c(5\%)}$.

Analizując uzyskane wyniki należy stwierdzić, że zastosowanie metody 5% i obciążenia maksymalnego powoduje zawyżanie wartości P_c , co bezpośrednio przekłada się na odporność na pękanie drewna. W przypadku przyjęcia $P_c = P_{c(Max)}$ krytyczne wartości G_{ac} są o 8% i 38% wyższe odpowiednio dla I i II sposobu obciążenia w porównaniu do wartości G_{ac} wyznaczonych przy użyciu metody EA . Uwzględniając również, że metody 5% i obciążenia maksymalnego nie mają fizycznego uzasadnienia w odniesieniu do materiałów niejednorodnych,

ich zastosowanie w analizie pękania drewna jest ograniczone.

Metody *EA* i *NL* są fizycznie uzasadnione (w przypadku metody *NL* jest to spadek podatności elementu), a uzyskane wartości P_c są do siebie zbliżone. Niestety dokładne ustalenie punktu nieliniowości *NL* może nastręczać pewne trudności i jest zawsze subiektywne, a wartość obciążenia jemu odpowiadającego $P_{c(NL)}$ jest pewnym przybliżeniem. Zastosowanie metody emisji akustycznej *EA* nie nastręcza takich trudności i niejasności, dlatego też metoda ta wydaje się być z wielu względów optymalną. Umożliwia ona analizę dynamiki procesu pękania drewna, pozwala na ścisłe ustalenie momentu inicjacji procesu pękania oraz odpowiadającego mu obciążenia krytycznego

P_c . Analiza sygnału akustycznego *EA* nie jest zbyt skomplikowana, a pomiar nie nastręcza w zasadzie żadnych trudności.

3. Podsumowanie

Metoda emisji akustycznej *EA*, która jest coraz powszechniej stosowana w badaniach obiektów i konstrukcji wykonanych ze stali czy żelbetu, może z powodzeniem znaleźć zastosowanie w badaniach odporności na pękanie drewna jak również diagnostyce i monitoringu bezpieczeństwa pracy konstrukcji drewnianych. Dzięki zastosowaniu metody *EA* możliwe jest natychmiastowe wykrycie inicjacji pękania drewna informując użytkownika o nadchodzący za- grożeniu – możliwości zniszczenia konstrukcji.