

Identification of Transient Nonlinear Aeroelastic Phenomena

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Engineering Mechanics

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March 5, 2007

Blacksburg, Virginia

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Abstract

Complex nonlinear aspects of aeroelastic phenomena include unsteady nonlinear aerodynamic loads, structural nonlinearities, as well as nonlinear couplings between the flow and the structural response. Nonlinearities in aerodynamic loads originate from unsteady shocks and/or flow separation. Structural nonlinearities are geometric, or a result of free play. Nonlinear fluid structure couplings result from nonlinear resonance between the aerodynamic load and structural modes. Under different conditions, one or a combination of these aspects could yield flutter or Limit Cycle Oscillations (LCO).

The overall goal of this work is to develop the capabilities to quantify the role that these different nonlinear mechanisms could play in observed flutter and LCO. The realization of such a goal would help in providing a benchmark for the detection of nonlinear aeroelastic instabilities and possibly effective means for obtaining improved performance and reduced uncertainties through operation beyond conventional boundaries that are based on linear analysis. Additionally, this effort will provide a benchmark for the validation of computational methodologies.

In this thesis, wavelet-based higher order spectra are applied to identify different nonlinear aeroelastic phenomena as encountered in two experiments. First, the analysis is applied to a set of experiments involving a flexible semispan model (FSM) of a High Speed Civil Transport (HSCT) wing configuration conducted by Silva et al. (Experimental Steady and Unsteady Aerodynamic and Flutter Results for HSCT Semispan Models *AIAA/ASME/ASCE/AHS/ASC 41st Structures, Structural Dynamics, and Materials Conference*, 2000). The interest is in the identification of nonlinear aeroelastic phenomena associated with a high dynamic response region which was measured over a large range of dynamic pressures around Mach number 0.98. At the top of this region is a “hard” flutter point that resulted in the loss of the model. The results show that “hard” flutter is related to intermittent nonlinear coupling between the shock motion and large amplitude structural motions. Second, the analysis is applied to identify nonlinear aspects of LCO encountered

during test flights of an F-16 aircraft. The results show quadratic and cubic couplings in the acceleration signals of the under-wing launchers and high quadratic coupling levels between flaperon motions and wing oscillations. The implications of applying these techniques in the capacity of a “flutterometer” are also discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Muhammad R. Hajj, for his dedication and the time he spent passing on the knowledge that formed the basis of this work. I would like to also thank Dr. Walter A. Silva (NASA LaRC) and Drs. Charles M. Denegri and Daniel L. Maxwell (AFRL-Eglin) for providing the data analyzed in this work. My thanks also go to the faculty members who served on my committee for their contributions to my academic development; Dr. Ragab for his patience and encouragement in and outside the classroom, especially when explaining the intricacies of hydrodynamic instability, Dr. Mook for the development of my knowledge in the field of fluid/structure interaction and our many discussions of nonlinear dynamics and aircraft stability, Dr. Duke for involving me in his research on nondestructive evaluation, and Dr. Hagedorn for formalizing my mathematical knowledge. Other professors who influenced my knowledge are Dr. Ali H. Nayfeh in the fields of nonlinear dynamics and perturbation techniques and Dr. Henry W. Tieleman in the field of wind engineering, and for that I am thankful. I should also thank Dr. Edmund G. Henneke, previous ESM department head, for his encouragement and support over the many years I spent in ESM. My thanks also go to Dr. Philip S. Beran for taking the time to advise me on the future applications of the knowledge developed in this work.

I would also like to acknowledge the many students I have taught over the years for adding variety to a somewhat routine schedule, and to Bob Simonds for his support in conducting experiments beyond what was required by the lab course manual.

I would like to thank my parents, brother, and sister for their encouragement and support throughout the many years I spent at Virginia Tech.

The support of the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research through Grant F49620-03-1-0206 and of the National Institute of Aerospace through Grant VT-03-01, Subnumber 3044-VT Supplement 7 is also acknowledged.

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