

Siegfried Schmauder  
Leon Mishnaevsky Jr.

# Micromechanics and Nanosimulation of Metals and Composites

Advanced Methods and  
Theoretical Concepts

 Springer

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Advanced Methods and Theoretical Concepts

 Springer

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ISBN: 978-3-540-78677-1

e-ISBN: 978-3-540-78678-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008936029

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# Preface

The strength of metallic materials determines the usability and reliability of all the machines, tools and equipment around us. Yet, the question about which mechanisms control the strength and damage resistance of materials and how they can be optimised remains largely unanswered. How do real, heterogeneous materials deform and fail? Why can a small modification of the microstructure increase the strength and damage resistance of materials manifold? How can the strength of heterogeneous materials be predicted?

The purpose of this book is to present different experimental and computational analysis methods of micromechanics of damage and strength of materials and to demonstrate their applications to various micromechanical problems. This book summarizes at a glance some of the publications of the Computational Mechanics Group at the IMWF/MPA Stuttgart, dealing with atomistic, micro- and mesomechanical modelling and experimental analysis of strength and damage of metallic materials.

In chapter 1, the micromechanisms of damage and fracture in different groups of materials are investigated experimentally, using direct observations and inverse analysis. The interaction of microstructural elements with the evolving damage is studied in these experiments. Chapter 2 presents different approaches to the micromechanical simulation of composite materials: embedded unit cells, multiphase finite elements and multiparticle unit cells. Examples of the application of these models to the analysis of deformation and damage in different materials are given. Chapter 3 deals with the methods of numerical modelling of damage evolution and crack growth in heterogeneous materials. Different methods of damage evolution modelling, in particular in materials with ductile (aluminium, cobalt) and brittle matrices, are applied to investigate the interrelations between microstructures and strength of these materials. Chapter 4 provides an insight into several methods of micromechanical computational modelling of materials with interpenetrating phases using graded materials. It defines the matrixity model and demonstrates its application to the analysis of different materials. Multilayer models of graded materials, functionally graded finite elements, multiparticle unit cells with graded particle distribution and voxel based method of the 3D FE mesh generation are described in this chapter as well as models of graded materials used for milling applications.

Chapter 5 deals with methods of atomistics and dislocation modelling of the material behaviour and damage.

Siegfried Schmauder

Leon Mishnaevsky Jr.

Stuttgart, 13 August 2008

Roskilde, 13 August 2008



# Acknowledgements

The investigations, described in this book, have been carried out in the framework of many research projects, funded by EU, ECSC (European Commission of Coal and Steel), DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), Humboldt Foundation, and other funding bodies. In particular, the support by the German Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Technologie (BMBF) under grant No 1501029 and in connection with the COST-512 Program through contract 03K8004, by the European Commission via the Brite-Euram Project 8109 “Design of new tool materials with a structural gradient for milling application” and ECSC-Project 8834 “Influence of micromechanical mechanisms on strength and damage of tool steels under static and cyclic loading”, from Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft through the Sonderforschungsbereich 381 “Charakterisierung des Schädigungsverlaufes in Faserverbundwerkstoffen mittels zerstörungsfreier Prüfung”, through the projects 436RUS 17/68/04, Schm 746/16-1, Schm 746/25-1, Schm 746/12-1 and Schm 746/12-2 (Schwerpunktprogramm Gradientenwerkstoffe), RI 339/15-1, FI 686/1-1, Heisenberg fellowship “Werkstoffoptimierung auf dem Mesoniveau mittels numerischer Experimente unter Berücksichtigung von Effekten heterogener, komplexer und hierarchischer Phasenarrangements” (MI 666-4/1) and other projects are gratefully acknowledged.

Some materials from previous publications of the authors, and other publications are reproduced here with kind permissions from Elsevier, Institute of Physics (IOP), Annual Reviews, EDP Sciences, Kluwer/Springer, Hanser and Sage publishers.

The authors want to express their gratitude to Dr. R. Balokhonov (Tomsk, ISPMS), Dr. P. Binkele (IMWF), Dr. M. Dong (Eberspächer), Dr. S. Hönle (Bosch), Dr. P. Kizler (MPA), Dr. C. Kohnle, Dr. C. Kohler (IMWF), Dr. N. Lippmann (Bosch), Dr. W. Lutz (Bosch), Dr. O. Minchev, Dr. J. Rohde, Dr. V. Romanova (Tomsk, ISPMS), Dr. E. Soppa (MPA), and Dr. U. Weber (MPA/IMWF), as well as all their colleagues and former colleagues who contributed to our works.

The author L.M. gratefully acknowledges the valuable comments and suggestions by Lennart Mischnaewski.

The authors are grateful to Mrs. G. Amberg for her help during the preparation of the manuscript.

Siegfried Schmauder

Leon Mishnaevsky Jr.

Stuttgart, 13 August 2008

Roskilde, 13 August 2008

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# Chapter 1: Micromechanical Experiments

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the micromechanisms of damage and fracture in heterogeneous materials, metals and composites, using direct observations of the damage evolution at the microlevel, combined with the macroscopic and/or computational analysis of the damage evolution.

In section 1.1, a SEM study of the micromechanism of fracture in SiC particle-reinforced 6061 aluminium composites is presented. The results lead to a better understanding of the micromechanism of particle breakage and interface debonding, and the special role of the particle effects in these composites.

In section 1.2, the mechanisms of damage initiation, evolution and crack growth in AlSi cast alloys are studied by in-situ tensile testing in a scanning electron microscope. It is shown that microcracks in these alloys are predominantly formed in the Si particles. Shear bands are seen to precede the breaking of the Si particles and the dislocation pile-up mechanism can thus be confirmed as the dominant damage initiating process in the matrix. Both micro- and macrocrack coalescence have been observed in the course of the experiments. The effect of the microstructure of the AlSi7Mg cast alloys on damage nucleation, crack formation and compliance reduction is analysed.

In section 1.3, micromechanisms of damage initiation and crack growth in high speed and cold work steels are investigated using scanning electron microscopy *in situ* experiments. The role of primary carbides in initiation and growth of cracks in tool steels is clarified. It is shown that initial microcracks in the steels are formed in primary carbides and then join together. A hierarchical finite element model of damage initiation, which included a macroscopic model of the deformation of the specimen under real experimental conditions and a mesomechanical model of damage in real microstructures of steels, was developed. Using the hierarchical model, the conditions of local failure in the steels have been obtained.

## 1.1 Micromechanisms of fracture in Al/SiC composites<sup>1</sup>

Engineering materials with a discontinuous second phase as a toughener [1] or reinforcement [2] have been widely studied in materials science and engineering. Investigations of the fracture characteristics of SiC particle-reinforced aluminium have shown that particle addition usually lowers the fracture toughness [3-5]. Reported fracture toughness' values for unreinforced aluminium alloys are in the range of 25-75 MPa m<sup>1/2</sup>, while the composites have plane strain toughness values of 7-25 MPa m<sup>1/2</sup> [6, 7]. Many researchers have shown that the effect of microstructure on the fracture toughness is significantly affected by the details of the matrix microstructure, interface characteristics, and degree of clustering in the materials [8-9]. However, SEM fractography has revealed that the fracture surface consists of microvoids, corresponding to ductile fracture with dimples [10]. The sources of these dimples have been attributed to fracture of SiC particles [11], inclusions and precipitates or decohesion from the matrix as well as matrix failure [12, 13]. An attempt to explain these special failure characteristics of Al/SiC composite materials, which behave macroscopically brittle, but microscopically ductile, were the main purpose of this work. The fracture toughness tests on the composites were carefully designed with single-edge notched sheet (SENS) [14] specimens in the SEM. Both qualitative observations of void nucleation and quantitative measurements of crack profiles were made to assess the specific role of the particle-reinforcement mechanism in the composites. The microstructure analysis is proposed to understand and explain the particle effects during the crack initiation and propagation in these composites.

### 1.1.1 Experimental procedure

The composites used consisted of particle-reinforced aluminium alloy 6061 manufactured by extruding mixtures of aluminium powder and SiC particles. The volume fractions of particles in the composites were 0%, 10% and 20%. The mechanical properties of these composites are shown in Table 1.1. Distributions of measured SiC particle diameters are shown in Fig. 1.1a and b.

The SENS sample was designed according to the requirements of the SEM machine. The dimensions of the sample are shown in Fig. 1.2. The test was carried out in a Jeol JSM-35 scanning microscope. The machine automatically records the applied load versus displacement curves, and the monitor is used to examine the tip of the notch to understand the notch deformation, as well as nucleation, growth and coalescence of voids during loading. A record of the process is made by a video recorder.

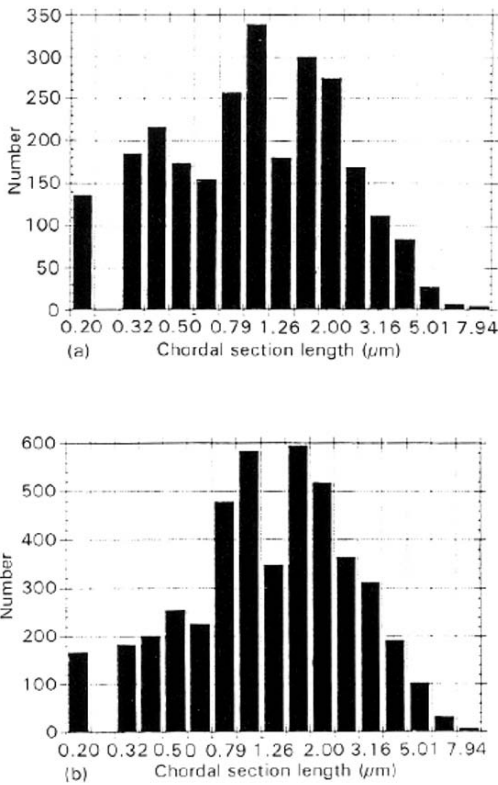
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## 1.1.2 Results of Experiments and Analysis

### Qualitative observations of void nucleation

General observations were made on the tip and root of the notch during the loading process. Voids nucleated in the middle of the notch root, as observed in the SEM, at  $K_0/K_I$  equal to 0.68, 0.784, and 0.85 for 0%, 10% and 20% SiC volume fraction composites, respectively, where  $K_I$  is the stress intensity factor of the sample calculated according to Brown and Srawley [15] and  $K_0$  is the fracture toughness. Measured data of  $K_0$  and  $K_I$  are shown in Table 1.2.



**Fig. 1.1** Distributions of particle diameters. (a) 10% Al/SiC, (b) 20% Al/SiC (courtesy J. Wulf).