

Homogeneous Charge Compression Ignition of Methane

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Introduction

Homogeneous Charge Compression Ignition (HCCI) engines are being considered as an alternative to traditional spark- and compression-ignition engines. As the name implies, a homogeneous fuel/oxidant mixture is auto-ignited by compression with simultaneous combustion occurring throughout the cylinder volume. Combustion temperatures under lean burn operation are relatively low, resulting in low levels of NOx emission. Furthermore, the fuel's homogeneous nature, as well as the combustion process itself, lead to low levels of particulate matter being produced.

Although HCCI combustion shows promise, the method has several recurring problems: an important one to be addressed is ignition timing. This example examines the HCCI of methane, investigating ignition trends as a function of initial temperature, initial pressure, and fuel additives.

This example solves the mass and energy balances describing the detailed combustion of methane in a variable-volume system. The large amount of kinetic and thermodynamic data required to set up the problem is easily available by importing the relevant files into the Reaction Engineering interface.

Model Definition

It is difficult to form the uniform mixtures required for HCCI with conventional diesel fuel. Natural gas fuels, on the other hand, readily produce homogeneous mixtures and have the potential to serve as HCCI fuels. This example considers the combustion of methane, as described by the GRI-3.0 mechanism, incorporating a detailed reaction mechanism of 53 species taking part in 325 reactions. The files describing the reaction kinetics and thermodynamics of the GRI-3.0 mechanism are available on the Internet (Ref. 1), and you can import the files into the Reaction Engineering interface.

VARIABLE VOLUME REACTOR

This model represents the combustion cylinder with a perfectly mixed batch system of variable volume, a predefined reactor type available with the Reaction Engineering interface. Figure 1 shows an engine cylinder and it includes the relevant parameters to

calculate the instantaneous cylinder volume.



Figure 1: The volume of a combustion cylinder can be expressed as a function of time with the slider-crank relationship. The diagram shows the key geometric parameters. La is the length of the crank arm, Lc is the length of the connecting rod, D equals the cylinder diameter, and α is the crank angle.

The volume change as a function of time is described by the slider-crank equation:

$$\frac{V}{V_c} = 1 + \frac{(CR - 1)}{2} [R + 1 - \cos \alpha - \sqrt{R^2 - (\sin \alpha)^2}]$$

where *V* is the cylinder volume (SI unit: m^3), V_c is the clearance volume (SI unit: m^3), CR equals the compression ratio, and *R* denotes the ratio of the connecting rod to the crank arm (*Lc/La*). Further, α is the crank angle (SI unit: rad), which is also a function of time

$$\alpha = \frac{2\pi N}{60}t$$

where N is the engine speed in rpm, and t is the time (SI unit: s).

The engine specifications are:

ENGINE SPECIFICATION	VARIABLE NAME	VALUE
Bore	D	I3 cm
Stroke	S	I6 cm
Connecting rod	Lc	26.93 cm
Crank arm	La	8 cm
Engine speed	Ν	1500 rpm
Compression ratio	CR	15

Equation 1 includes the clearance volume V_c which is calculated from

$$V_c = \frac{V_s}{(CR-1)} \tag{1}$$

 V_s is the volume swept by the piston during a cycle from the equation

$$V_s = \frac{\pi D^2}{4}S$$

Figure 2 shows the calculated cylinder volume as a function of the crank angle. The piston is initially at bottom dead center (BDC), corresponding to a crank angle of –180 degrees.



Figure 2: Cylinder volume as a function of crank angle. The crank angle is defined as being zero at top dead center (TDC).

METHANE COMBUSTION REACTION

The kinetic and thermodynamic data for methane combustion is available in the form of CHEMKIN data input files. The files are imported into the Reaction Engineering interface within the Reversible Reaction Group and Species Thermodynamics (belongs to Species Group) features. This automatically sets up the mass and energy balances for a batch reactor of constant volume.

In this example methane is combusted under lean conditions, that is, supplying more than the stoichiometric amount of oxidizer. The stoichiometric requirement of the oxidizer (air) to combust methane is found from the overall reaction:

$$\mathrm{CH}_4 \ + \ 2(\mathrm{O}_2 + 3.76\,\mathrm{N}_2) \longrightarrow \mathrm{CO}_2 \ + \ 2\mathrm{H}_2\mathrm{O} \ + \ 7.52\,\mathrm{N}_2$$

Assuming that the composition of air is 21% oxygen and 79% nitrogen, the stoichiometric air-fuel ratio is

$$(A/F)_{\text{stoic}} = \left(\frac{m_{\text{air}}}{m_{\text{fuel}}}\right)_{\text{stoic}} = \frac{4.76 \cdot 2 \cdot M_{\text{air}}}{1 \cdot M_{\text{fuel}}}$$
(2)

The equivalence ratio relates the actual air-fuel ratio to the stoichiometric requirements

$$\Phi = \frac{(A/F)_{\text{stoic}}}{(A/F)} \tag{3}$$

This model sets the equivalence ratio to $\Phi = 0.5$.

From Equation 2 and Equation 3 it is possible to calculate the molar fraction of fuel in the reacting mixture as

$$x_{\rm fuel} = \frac{1}{4.76 \cdot 2/\Phi + 1}$$

and subsequently the initial concentration is

$$c_{\text{fuel}} = \frac{x_{\text{fuel}} p_{\text{init}}}{\text{Rg}T_{\text{init}}}$$

Results and Discussion

Figure 3 shows the cylinder pressure as a function of time when a methane-air mixture is compressed and ignites. The piston starts at bottom dead center (BDC) and reaches top



dead center (TDC) after 0.02 s. At BDC the pressure is set to 1.5×10^5 Pa, Φ is 0.5, and the compression ratio is CR = 15. The initial temperature is varied from 400 K to 800 K.

Figure 3: Pressure traces illustrating the compression and ignition of fuel in an engine cylinder. The initial temperature varies between 400 K and 800 K.

Consistent with literature results, methane does not ignite at an initial temperature of 400 K (Ref. 2). Furthermore, the induction delay decreases with increasing initial temperature. The induction delay time can be evaluated from the pressure gradient. For instance, the induction delay is 0.0193 s when $T_{init} = 500$ K.

Figure 4 illustrates the pressure traces as the initial pressure varies from 1×10^5 Pa to 3×10^5 Pa. The initial temperature is 500 K. An increase in pressure means an increase in



the species concentrations in the fuel-air mixture, resulting in the expected advance in ignition times.

Figure 4: Increased initial gas pressure advances ignition times.

As mentioned, a significant challenge to the realization of HCCI engines is ignition control. In this regard, combustion at TDC is suggested as the optimum timing (Ref. 3). These results show that the inlet temperature of the fuel-air mixture is a potential tuning parameter for ignition. However, relatively high inlet temperatures are often required for proper timing. This adversely affects engine performance because the trapped mass as well as the volumetric efficiency decreases. An alternative that facilitates ignition is to mix small amounts of additives into the fuel-air mixture (Ref. 4). These additives chemically activate the reaction mixture even at relatively low temperatures. This approach alleviates the requirements of high intake temperatures. Figure 5 shows how small amounts of



formaldehyde (CH_2O) cause ignition at an initial temperature of 400 K, which is a temperature insufficient to induce combustion with a pure methane fuel.

Figure 5: Small amounts of formaldehyde stimulate ignition of the fuel-air mixture.

The increased reactivity observed in the presence of CH_2O is explained by the opening of a new chemical pathway leading to the formation of hydroxyl radicals. Specifically, CH_2O reacts with O_2 to produce H_2O_2 :

$$CH_2O + O_2 \implies HO_2 + CHO$$

 $HO_2 + CH_2O \implies H_2O_2 + CHO$

 H_2O_2 , in turn, decomposes to reactive OH radicals, which subsequently react violently with the fuel molecules to cause ignition:

$$H_2O_2 + M \implies 2OH + M$$

The results in the following figures show the species molar fractions of CH_2O , HO_2 , H_2O_2 , and OH during the combustion of methane. Figure 6 shows molar fraction plots for the case when 0.13% CH_2O is added to the fuel; Figure 7 is the equivalent species plots for the case when pure methane is combusted. In each case conditions are tuned to



produce ignition near TDC, thus providing a reference point for comparing the species concentrations.

Figure 6: Selected species molar fractions as a function of crank angle. 0.13 molar percent CH_2O is added to the reacting mixture, which is initially at 400 K and 1.5 bar.



Figure 7: Selected species molar fraction as a function of crank angle. Only methane is combusted. The initial temperature is 469 K and the initial pressure is1.5 bar.

The implications of the CH_2O reaction path are apparent by comparing Figure 6 and Figure 7: CH_2O stimulates the production of HO_2 and H_2O_2 , which in turn produce OH radicals in amounts critical to fuel ignition.

References

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2. S.B. Fiveland and D.N. Assanis, "A four-stroke homogeneous charge compression ignition engine simulation for combustion and performance studies, "*SAE Paper 2000-01-0332*, 2000.

3. D.L. Flowers, S.M. Aceves, C.K. Westbrook, J.R. Smith, and R.W. Dibble, "Detailed Chemical Kinetic Simulation of Natural Gas HCCI Combustion: Gas Composition Effects

and Investigation of Control Strategies," J. Eng. Gas Turbine Power, vol. 123, no. 2, pp. 433–439, 2001.

4. M.H. Morsy, "Ignition control of methane fueled homogeneous charge compression ignition engines using additives," *Fuel*, vol. 86, no. 4, pp. 533–540, 2007.

Application Library path: Chemical_Reaction_Engineering_Module/ Ideal_Tank_Reactors/compression_ignition

Notes about the COMSOL Implementation

The kinetic and thermodynamic data required for this model are available on the Internet. Find the GRI-Mech 3.0 input files at (Ref. 1):

http://www.me.berkeley.edu/gri_mech/version30/text30.html.

Download the reaction mechanism and rate coefficient file (grimech30.dat), as well as thermodynamic data file (thermo30.dat) and store them on your computer so you can import these into the Reaction Engineering interface.

Modeling Instructions

From the File menu, choose New.

NEW

In the New window, click Model Wizard.

MODEL WIZARD

- I In the Model Wizard window, click OD.
- 2 In the Select Physics tree, select Chemical Species Transport>Reaction Engineering (re).
- 3 Click Add.
- 4 Click Study.
- 5 In the Select Study tree, select Preset Studies>Time Dependent.
- 6 Click Done.

REACTION ENGINEERING (RE)

In the **Model Builder** window's toolbar, click the **Show** button and select **Discretization** in the menu.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Import the model parameters from a text file.

Parameters

- I On the Home toolbar, click Parameters.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- **3** Click Load from File.
- **4** Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file compression_ignition_parameters.txt.

Import also some necessary variables, amongst these the cylinder volume function, from a text file.

DEFINITIONS

Variables I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (comp1) right-click Definitions and choose Variables.
- 2 In the Settings window for Variables, locate the Variables section.
- **3** Click Load from File.
- **4** Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file compression_ignition_variables.txt.

REACTION ENGINEERING (RE)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Reaction Engineering (re).
- 2 In the Settings window for Reaction Engineering, locate the Reactor section.
- 3 From the Reactor type list, choose Batch.
- 4 Locate the Energy Balance section. From the list, choose Include.

Use uniform scaling of the concentration variables to improve the computational performance.

5 Click to expand the Discretization section. Select the Uniform scaling of concentration variables check box.

6 Locate the Mass Balance section. In the V_r text field, type Vol.

Import the reaction kinetics data, available as a CHEMKIN file (grimech30.dat).

Reversible Reaction Group 1

- I Right-click Component I (comp1)>Reaction Engineering (re) and choose Reversible Reaction Group.
- **2** In the Settings window for Reversible Reaction Group, click to expand the CHEMKIN import for kinetics section.
- **3** Locate the **CHEMKIN Import for Kinetics** section. Select the **Import CHEMKIN data** check box.
- 4 Click Browse.
- 5 Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file grimech30.dat.
- 6 Click Import.

Species Thermodynamics 1

Import also the thermodynamic data, available as a CHEMKIN file (thermo30.dat).

- In the Model Builder window, expand the Component I (compl)>
 Reaction Engineering (re)>Species Group I node, then click Species Thermodynamics I.
- **2** In the **Settings** window for **Species Thermodynamics**, click to expand the **CHEMKIN import for thermodynamic data** section.
- 3 Locate the CHEMKIN Import for Thermodynamic Data section. Click Browse.
- **4** Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file thermo30.dat.
- 5 Click Import.

Initial Values 1

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Reaction Engineering (re) click Initial Values I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Initial Values, locate the General Parameters section.
- **3** In the T_0 text field, type T_init.

4 Locate the **Volumetric Species Initial Value** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Species	Concentration (mol/m^3)
CH2O	c_CH20_0
CH4	c_CH4_0
N2	c_N2_0
O2	c_02_0

STUDY I

Step 1: Time Dependent

Set up the time dependent study, modify the default tolerance settings to improve the accuracy of the solution.

- I In the Model Builder window, under Study I click Step I: Time Dependent.
- 2 In the Settings window for Time Dependent, locate the Study Settings section.
- 3 In the Times text field, type 0 0.026.
- **4** From the **Tolerance** list, choose **User controlled**.
- 5 In the **Relative tolerance** text field, type 1e-6.

Solution I (soll)

- I On the Study toolbar, click Show Default Solver.
- 2 In the Model Builder window, expand the Solution I (soll) node, then click Time-Dependent Solver I.
- **3** In the **Settings** window for **Time-Dependent Solver**, click to expand the **Absolute tolerance** section.
- 4 Locate the Absolute Tolerance section. From the Tolerance method list, choose Manual.
- **5** In the **Absolute tolerance** text field, type **1.0E-7**.
- 6 Clear the Update scaled absolute tolerance check box.
- 7 On the Study toolbar, click Compute.

RESULTS

Global I

I In the Model Builder window, expand the Concentration (re) node, then click Global I.

- 2 In the Settings window for Global, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component I> Reaction Engineering>compl.re.c_N2 Concentration.
- 3 Click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component l>Reaction Engineering>compl.re.c_CH4 Concentration.
- 4 Click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component l>Reaction Engineering>compl.re.c_02 Concentration.
- 5 Click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component l>Reaction Engineering>compl.re.c_CH20 Concentration.
- 6 Click to expand the **Coloring and style** section. Locate the **Coloring and Style** section. In the **Width** text field, type 2.
- 7 Click to expand the Legends section. From the Legends list, choose Manual.
- 8 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legend	ls
N2	
CH4	
02	
CH20	

9 On the Concentration (re) toolbar, click Plot.

IO Click the **Zoom Extents** button on the **Graphics** toolbar.

The following steps create a plot of the pressure versus time.

I D Plot Group 3

- I On the Home toolbar, click Add Plot Group and choose ID Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, click to expand the Title section.
- **3** From the **Title type** list, choose **None**.

Global I

- I Right-click ID Plot Group 3 and choose Global.
- In the Settings window for Global, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component I>
 Reaction Engineering>compl.re.p Pressure.

3 On the ID Plot Group 3 toolbar, click Plot.

The following steps reproduce Figure 6.

ID Plot Group 4

- I On the Home toolbar, click Add Plot Group and choose ID Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Mole fraction in the Label text field.
- **3** Locate the **Title** section. From the **Title type** list, choose **None**.
- 4 Locate the Plot Settings section. Select the x-axis label check box.
- 5 In the associated text field, type Crank angle (deg).
- 6 Select the y-axis label check box.
- 7 In the associated text field, type Molar fraction.

Global I

- I Right-click Mole fraction and choose Global.
- In the Settings window for Global, click Replace Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-axis data section. From the menu, choose Model>Component I>
 Reaction Engineering>compl.re.c_OH Concentration.
- 3 Locate the y-Axis Data section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
<pre>comp1.re.c_OH/(comp1.re.p/(R_const*comp1.re.T))</pre>	1	хOH

- 4 Locate the x-Axis Data section. From the Parameter list, choose Expression.
- 5 In the **Expression** text field, type comp1.crank_angle.
- 6 Click to expand the **Coloring and style** section. Locate the **Coloring and Style** section. In the **Width** text field, type 2.
- 7 Click to expand the Legends section. From the Legends list, choose Manual.
- 8 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

хОН

Mole fraction

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Mole fraction.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Axis section.
- 3 Select the y-axis log scale check box.

4 On the Mole fraction toolbar, click Plot.

Global 2

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results>Mole fraction right-click Global I and choose Duplicate.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the y-Axis Data section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
<pre>comp1.re.c_H202/(comp1.re.p/(R_const*comp1.re.T))</pre>	1	xH202

4 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends xH202

Global 3

I Right-click Results>Mole fraction>Global 2 and choose Duplicate.

2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the y-Axis Data section.

3 In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
<pre>comp1.re.c_H02/(comp1.re.p/(R_const*comp1.re.T))</pre>	1	xH02

4 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

xH02

Global 4

I Right-click Results>Mole fraction>Global 3 and choose Duplicate.

2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the y-Axis Data section.

3 In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
<pre>comp1.re.c_CH20/(comp1.re.p/(R_const*comp1.re.T))</pre>	1	xCH20

4 In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

xCH20

5 On the **Mole fraction** toolbar, click **Plot**.

Mole fraction

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Mole fraction.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Axis section.
- 3 Select the Manual axis limits check box.
- 4 In the **x minimum** text field, type 30.
- 5 In the **x maximum** text field, type 30.
- 6 In the y minimum text field, type 1e-8.
- 7 In the **y maximum** text field, type 1e-2.
- 8 Click to expand the Legend section. From the Position list, choose Lower right.
- 9 On the Mole fraction toolbar, click Plot.

The following steps reproduce Figure 7. First change the temperature and the initial CH2O concentration, then resolve.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Parameters

- I In the Model Builder window, expand the Global Definitions node, then click Parameters.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Value	Description
T_init	469[K]	469 K	Initial temperature at BDC
x_CH20	0	0	Initial CH20 mole fraction

STUDY I

On the Home toolbar, click Compute.

RESULTS

Mole fraction

I In the Model Builder window, under Results click Mole fraction.

2 On the Mole fraction toolbar, click Plot.

To reproduce Figure 3, create a parametric sweep over the intial temperature parameter.

STUDY I

Parametric Sweep

- I On the Study toolbar, click Parametric Sweep.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parametric Sweep, locate the Study Settings section.
- 3 Click Add.
- **4** In the table, enter the following settings:

Parameter name	Parameter value list	Parameter unit
T_init	400 450 500 600 800	

- 5 In the Model Builder window, click Study I.
- 6 In the Settings window for Study, locate the Study Settings section.
- 7 Clear the **Generate default plots** check box.
- 8 On the Study toolbar, click Compute.

RESULTS

I D Plot Group 3

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click ID Plot Group 3.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Data set list, choose Study I/Parametric Solutions I (sol2).
- 4 On the ID Plot Group 3 toolbar, click Plot.
- **5** Click to expand the **Legend** section. Locate the **Axis** section. Select the **Manual axis limits** check box.
- 6 In the **x minimum** text field, type 0.012.
- 7 In the **x maximum** text field, type 0.026.
- **8** In the **y minimum** text field, type **0**.
- 9 In the y maximum text field, type 1.2e7.

IO Locate the **Legend** section. From the **Position** list, choose **Upper left**.

Global I

I In the Model Builder window, under Results>ID Plot Group 3 click Global I.

- 2 In the Settings window for Global, click to expand the Coloring and style section.
- 3 Locate the Coloring and Style section. In the Width text field, type 2.
- 4 Click to expand the Legends section. From the Legends list, choose Manual.
- **5** In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

T_init=400	к
T_init=450	Κ
T_init=500	Κ
T_init=600	Κ
T init=800	к

6 On the ID Plot Group 3 toolbar, click Plot.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Parameters

To reproduce Figure 4, sweep instead over the initial pressure parameter. Set the initial temperature to 500 K first.

I In the Model Builder window, under Global Definitions click Parameters.

2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.

3 In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Value	Description
T_init	500[K]	500 K	Initial temperature at BDC

STUDY I

Parametric Sweep

I In the Model Builder window, under Study I click Parametric Sweep.

2 In the Settings window for Parametric Sweep, locate the Study Settings section.

3 In the table, enter the following settings:

Parameter name	Parameter value list	Parameter unit
p_init	{1 1.5 2 3}*1e5	

4 On the **Home** toolbar, click **Compute**.

RESULTS

ID Plot Group 3

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click ID Plot Group 3.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Axis section.
- 3 In the y maximum text field, type 2.5e7.

Global I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results>ID Plot Group 3 click Global I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the Legends section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

p_init=1E5 Pa
p_init=1.5E5 Pa
p_init=2E5 Pa
p_init=3E5 Pa

4 On the ID Plot Group 3 toolbar, click Plot.

GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Parameters

To reproduce Figure 5, sweep instead over the initial CH2O mole fraction. Set the initial temperature to 400 K first.

- I In the Model Builder window, under Global Definitions click Parameters.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Name	Expression	Value	Description
T_init	400[K]	400 K	Initial temperature at BDC

STUDY I

Parametric Sweep

- I In the Model Builder window, under Study I click Parametric Sweep.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parametric Sweep, locate the Study Settings section.

3 In the table, enter the following settings:

Parameter name	Parameter value list	Parameter unit
x_CH2O	0 0.001 0.01 0.05	

4 On the **Home** toolbar, click **Compute**.

RESULTS

- ID Plot Group 3
- I In the Model Builder window, under Results click ID Plot Group 3.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, type Reactor pressure in the Label text field.
- 3 Locate the Axis section. In the y maximum text field, type 1.8e7.

Global I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results>Reactor pressure click Global I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the Legends section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Legends

x_CH20=0

x_CH20=0.001

x_CH20=0.01

- x_CH20=0.05
- 4 On the **Reactor pressure** toolbar, click **Plot**.