

# Acoustic Levitator

## Introduction

An ultrasonic standing wave levitator, also called acoustic levitator, is a device used for levitating fluid and solid particles in an acoustic field. The standing acoustic waves exert an acoustic radiation force on the particles. The force is a second order effect and stems from a combination of the time-averaged pressure and inertial interaction between the particles and the acoustic field.

By levitating a particle, it is possible to study, for example, its drying kinetics under different external conditions as temperature and humidity (see [Ref. 1](#)). The levitator has also been used to study combustion processes, the formation of ice particles and snow flakes, and is also used as an acoustic tweezer in microgravity in space missions, for example.

The model is that of a simplified 2D acoustic levitator geometry driven at a constant frequency. Small elastic particles are released uniformly in the standing acoustic field and their path is determined when influenced by the acoustic radiation force, viscous drag, and gravity.

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**Note:** This application requires the Particle Tracing module.

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## Model Definition

The levitator consists of a transducer of width  $D_t$  and a concave reflector of width  $D_r$  and curvature  $1/R$ . The distance between the reflector and the transducer is  $H$ . The driving frequency of the system is  $f_0 = 58$  kHz and the system is filled with air at  $20^\circ\text{C}$ . The geometry is shown in [Figure 1](#). Standard values for the dimensions of the levitator are given in [Ref. 2](#) and are as follows in the model:

TABLE 1: STANDARD DIMENSIONS AND PHYSICAL VALUES.

SYMBOL	VALUE	DESCRIPTION
$c_0$	343 m/s	Speed of sound
$f_0$	58 kHz	Driving frequency
$\lambda_0$	5.9 mm	Wavelength
$D_t = 2\lambda_0$	11.8 mm	Transducer diameter
$D_r = 3\lambda_0$	17.7 mm	Reflector diameter

TABLE 1: STANDARD DIMENSIONS AND PHYSICAL VALUES.

SYMBOL	VALUE	DESCRIPTION
$H = 5\lambda_0/2$	14.8 mm	Reflector-transducer distance
$R = H$	14.8 mm	Radius of curvature of reflector

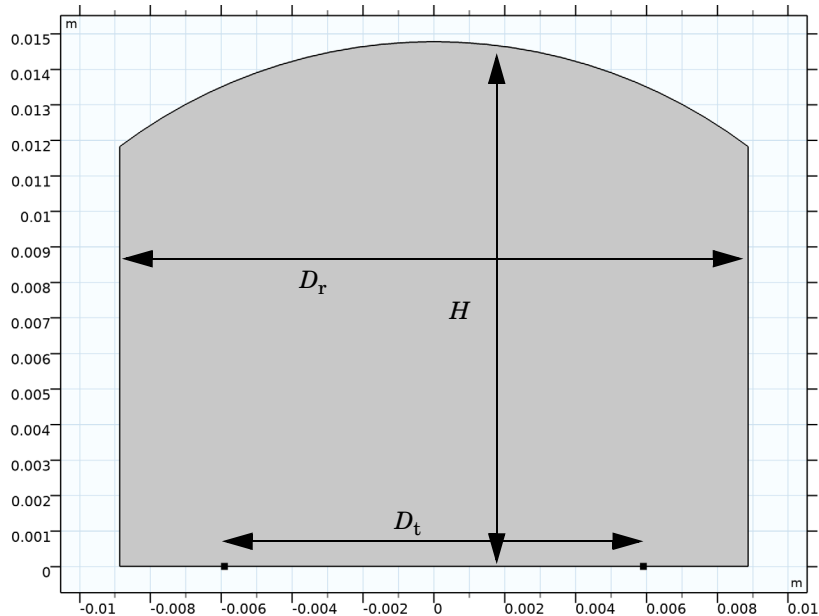


Figure 1: Levitator geometry.

In this model, the particle diameter  $d_p$  is assumed to be small compared to the wavelength  $\lambda_0$  as they are modeled as point particles. The condition  $d_p \ll \lambda_0$  is also necessary for the acoustic radiation force term to be physically correct. The second condition is that the particle diameter  $d_p$  should be larger than the acoustic viscous boundary layer thickness  $\delta_v$ . In the present system  $\delta_v$  is of the order 10  $\mu\text{m}$ . [Table 2](#) lists the particle properties uses in this model.

TABLE 2: PARTICLE PROPERTIES.

SYMBOL	VALUE	DESCRIPTION
$d_p$	0.6 mm	Particle diameter
$\rho_p$	500 kg/m <sup>3</sup>	Particle density
$K_p$	2.2 GPa	Particle bulk modulus

## Results and Discussion

The particles are released in the standing acoustic wave field in the levitator. The pressure field is shown in Figure 2, with plane wave radiation conditions at the open boundaries. The corresponding sound pressure level in the system is shown in Figure 3.

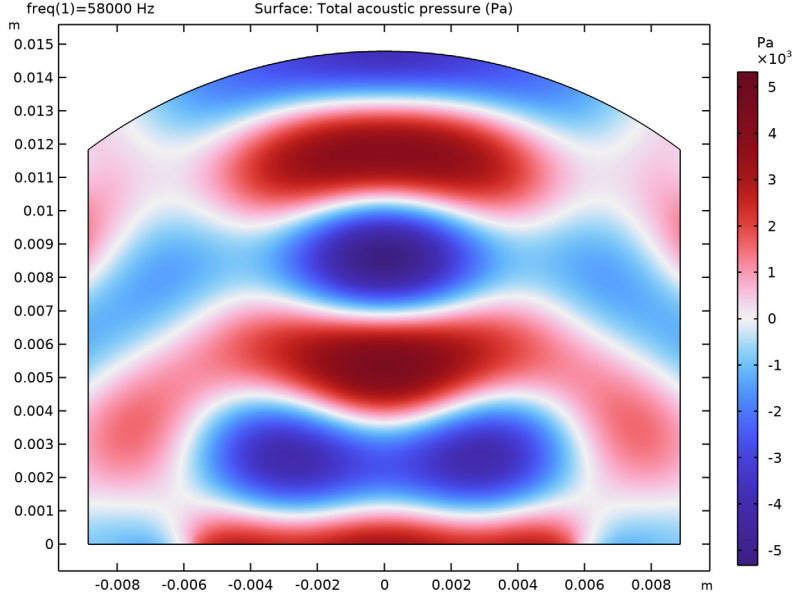
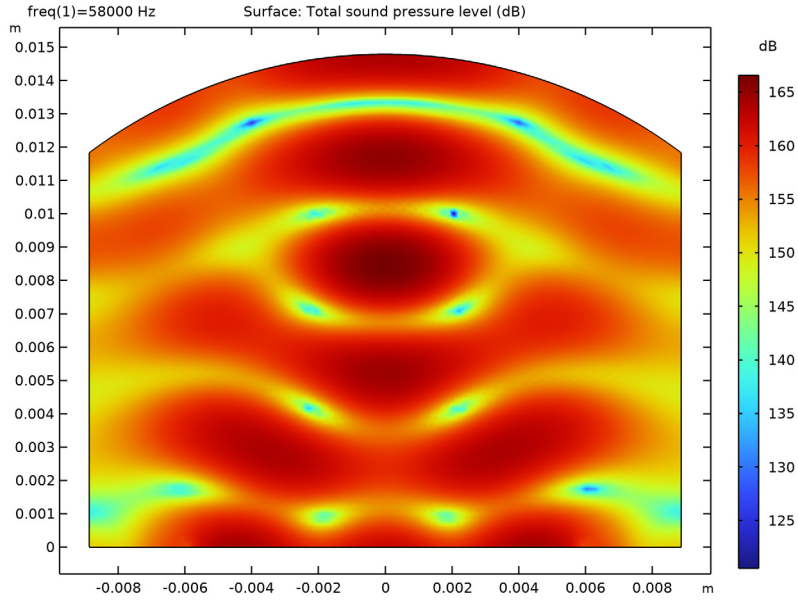


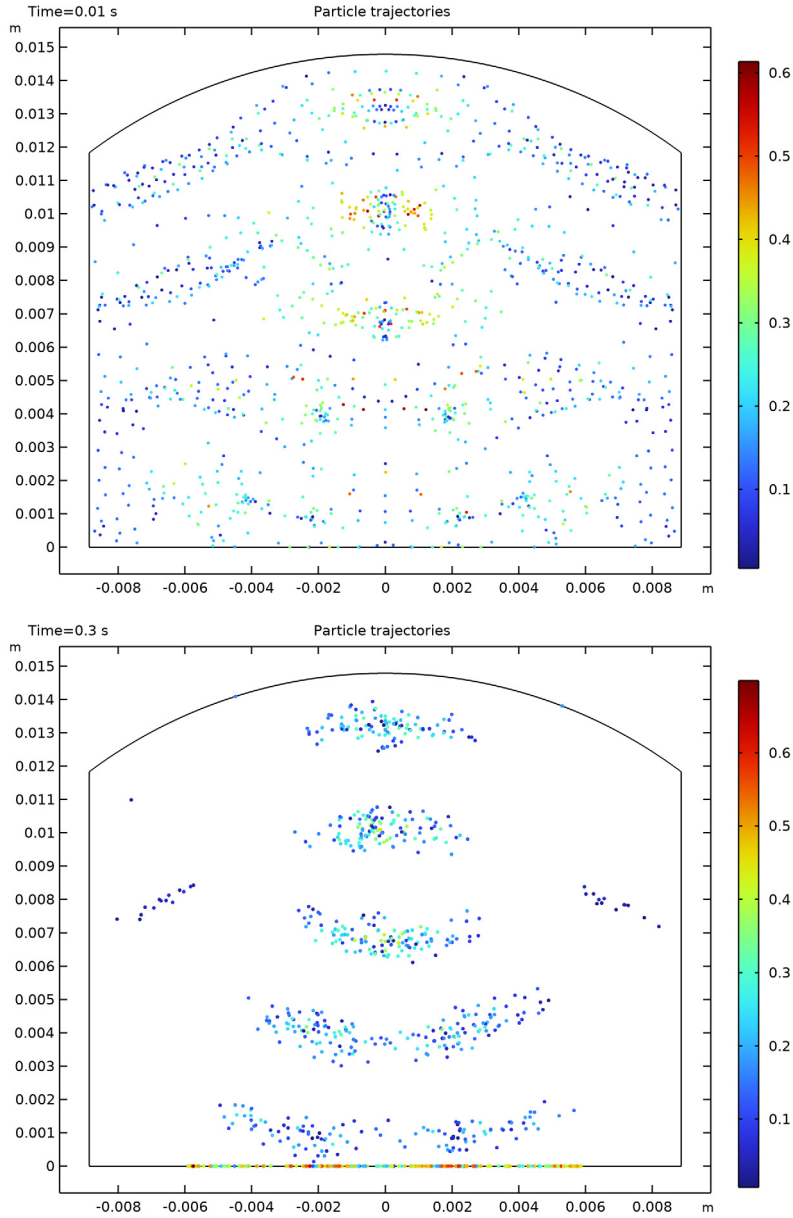
Figure 2: Real part of the pressure field,  $Re(p)$ .

Note that the sound pressure level reaches as much as 166 dB SPL. Fortunately for the practical application of this device, this is outside the human auditory range. By tuning the amplitude of the normal acceleration of the transducer  $a_0$  (under parameters in the model tree), it is possible to determine the value at which the radiation force is no longer large enough to levitate the particles.



*Figure 3: Sound pressure levels in the levitator.*

The positions of the particles at  $t = 0.01$  s and  $t = 0.3$  s are shown in [Figure 4](#).



*Figure 4: Positions of the particles at  $t = 0.01$  s (top) and  $t = 0.3$  s (bottom). The colors refer to the instantaneous particle velocities.*

Finally, the particle position and their trajectories is shown in Figure 5 using the magnitude of the radiation potential as color legend. Since the radiation force is defined as the gradient of the radiation potential, it is clear that the particles tend toward the lowest potential value.

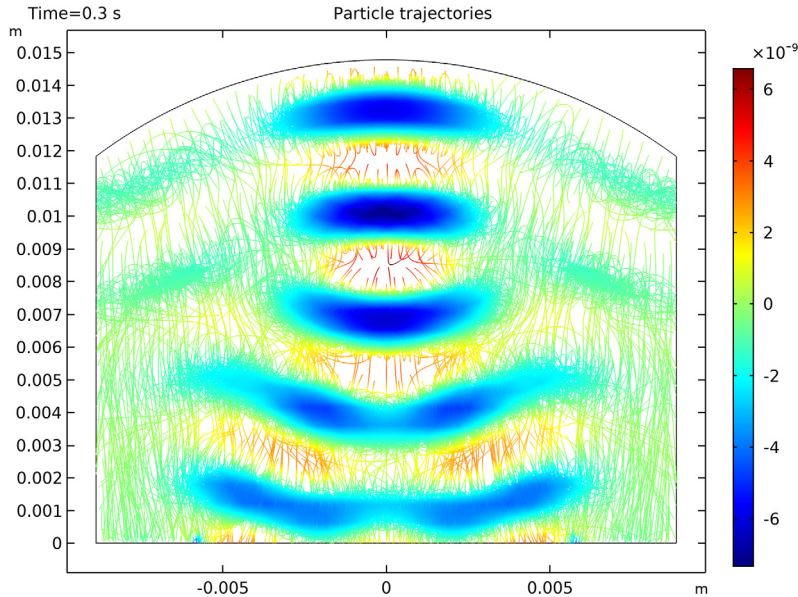


Figure 5: Particle position and trajectories plotted using the radiation potential as coloring.

## References

1. A. Brask, T. Ullum, P. Thybo, and M. Wahlberg, "High-Temperature Ultrasonic Levitator for Investigating Drying Kinetics of Single Droplets", *6th Int. Conf. on Multiphase Flow, ICMF 2007, (Leipzig, July 9-13)*, paper 789, 2007.
2. E.G. Lierke and L. Holitzner, "Perspectives of an Acoustic-Electrostatic/Electrodynamic Hybrid Levitator for Small Fluid and Solid Samples", *Meas. Sci. Technol.*, vol. 19, p. 115803, 2008.

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**Application Library path:** Acoustics\_Module/Nonlinear\_Acoustics/  
acoustic\_levitator


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## Modeling Instructions




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From the **File** menu, choose **New**.

### NEW

In the **New** window, click  **Model Wizard**.

### MODEL WIZARD

- 1 In the **Model Wizard** window, click  **2D**.
- 2 In the **Select Physics** tree, select **Acoustics>Pressure Acoustics>Pressure Acoustics, Frequency Domain (acpr)**.
- 3 Click **Add**.
- 4 In the **Select Physics** tree, select **Fluid Flow>Particle Tracing>Particle Tracing for Fluid Flow (fpt)**.
- 5 Click **Add**.
- 6 Click  **Study**.
- 7 In the **Select Study** tree, select **Preset Studies for Some Physics Interfaces>Frequency Domain**.
- 8 Click  **Done**.

### STUDY I


In this model, you first solve for the acoustic field in the frequency domain. Therefore, deselect the Particle Tracing for Fluid Flow physics.


#### Step 1: Frequency Domain

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Study I** click **Step 1: Frequency Domain**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Frequency Domain**, locate the **Physics and Variables Selection** section.
- 3 In the table, clear the **Solve for** check box for **Particle Tracing for Fluid Flow (fpt)**.

As a second step, you solve for the particle movement in the time domain.


### ADD STUDY

- 1 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Add Study** to open the **Add Study** window.
- 2 Go to the **Add Study** window.
- 3 Find the **Physics interfaces in study** subsection. In the table, clear the **Solve** check box for **Pressure Acoustics, Frequency Domain (acpr)**.

- 4 Find the **Studies** subsection. In the **Select Study** tree, select **General Studies>Time Dependent**.
- 5 Click **Add Study** in the window toolbar.
- 6 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Add Study** to close the **Add Study** window.

## GLOBAL DEFINITIONS


### *Parameters I*

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Global Definitions** click **Parameters I**.
- 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 `acoustic_levitator_parameters.txt`.



The parameters loaded here define the geometrical dimensions, the driving frequency, typical wavelength, and particle properties. Because the geometry is now parameterized, changing the dimensions in the parameters list will update the geometry automatically.

## GEOMETRY I

### *Circle I (c1)*


- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, expand the **Component I (comp1)>Geometry I** node.
- 2 Right-click **Geometry I** and choose **Circle**.
- 3 In the **Settings** window for **Circle**, locate the **Size and Shape** section.
- 4 In the **Radius** text field, type `H`.
- 5 In the **Sector angle** text field, type `180`.
- 6 Click  **Build Selected**.

### *Rectangle I (r1)*



- 1 In the **Geometry** toolbar, click  **Rectangle**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Rectangle**, locate the **Size and Shape** section.
- 3 In the **Width** text field, type `Dr`.
- 4 In the **Height** text field, type `H`.
- 5 Locate the **Position** section. In the **x** text field, type `-Dr/2`.
- 6 Click  **Build Selected**.

### *Intersection I (int1)*



- 1 In the **Geometry** toolbar, click  **Booleans and Partitions** and choose **Intersection**.

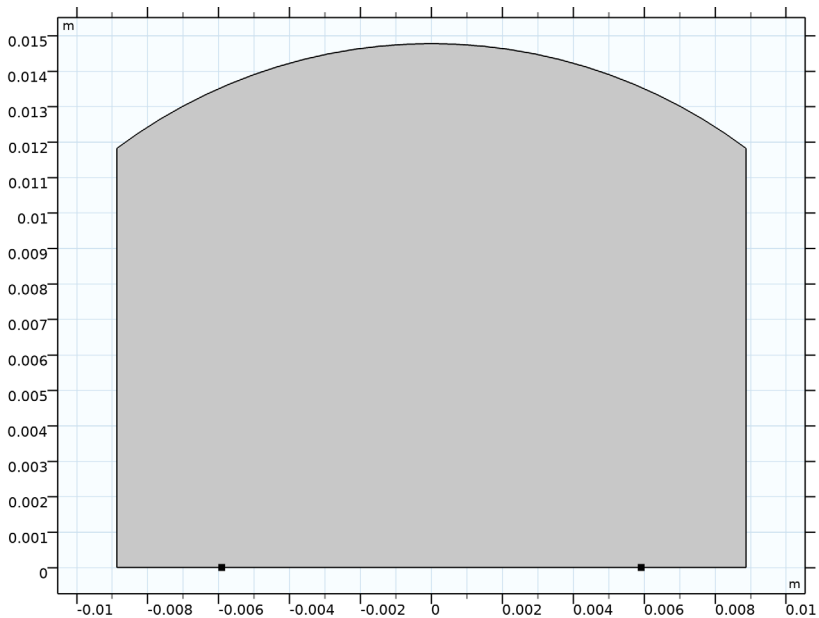
- 2 Click in the **Graphics** window and then press Ctrl+A to select both objects.
- 3 In the **Settings** window for **Intersection**, click  **Build Selected**.

#### Point 1 (pt1)


- 1 In the **Geometry** toolbar, click  **Point**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Point**, locate the **Point** section.
- 3 In the **x** text field, type  $-Dt/2$ .
- 4 Click  **Build Selected**.


#### Point 2 (pt2)

- 1 In the **Geometry** toolbar, click  **Point**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Point**, locate the **Point** section.
- 3 In the **x** text field, type  $Dt/2$ .
- 4 Click  **Build Selected**.



### ADD MATERIAL

- 1 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Add Material** to open the **Add Material** window.
- 2 Go to the **Add Material** window.
- 3 In the tree, select **Built-in>Air**.


- 4 Click **Add to Component** in the window toolbar.
- 5 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Add Material** to close the **Add Material** window.

## PRESSURE ACOUSTICS, FREQUENCY DOMAIN (ACPR)

### *Normal Acceleration 1*

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Component 1 (comp1)** right-click **Pressure Acoustics, Frequency Domain (acpr)** and choose **Normal Acceleration**.
- 2 Select Boundaries 3 and 4 only.
- 3 In the **Settings** window for **Normal Acceleration**, locate the **Normal Acceleration** section.
- 4 In the  $a_n$  text field, type  $a_0$ .

### *Plane Wave Radiation 1*


- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Boundaries** and choose **Plane Wave Radiation**.
- 2 Select Boundaries 1, 2, 5, and 6 only.

## PARTICLE TRACING FOR FLUID FLOW (FPT)

### *Particle Properties 1*

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Component 1 (comp1)> Particle Tracing for Fluid Flow (fpt)** click **Particle Properties 1**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Particle Properties**, locate the **Particle Properties** section.
- 3 From the  $\rho_p$  list, choose **User defined**. In the associated text field, type  $\rho_{0p}$ .
- 4 In the  $d_p$  text field, type  $d_{0p}$ .

### *Wall 2*


- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Boundaries** and choose **Wall**.
- 2 Select Boundaries 1, 2, 5, and 6 only.
- 3 In the **Settings** window for **Wall**, locate the **Wall Condition** section.
- 4 From the **Wall condition** list, choose **Disappear**.

Particles are set to freeze on the solid walls but they disappear where the system is open (at the radiation boundaries).

### *Release 1*

- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Domains** and choose **Release**.
- 2 Select Domain 1 only.

#### *Acoustophoretic Radiation Force I*

- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Domains** and choose **Acoustophoretic Radiation Force**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Acoustophoretic Radiation Force**, locate the **Acoustic Fields** section.
- 3 From the *p* list, choose **Pressure (acpr)**.
- 4 From the *u* list, choose **Total acoustic velocity (acpr/fpam1)**.
- 5 Locate the **Advanced Settings** section. Select the **Use piecewise polynomial recovery on field** check box.
- 6 Select Domain 1 only.

#### *Gravity Force I*

- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Domains** and choose **Gravity Force**.
- 2 Select Domain 1 only.

#### *Drag Force I*

- 1 In the **Physics** toolbar, click  **Domains** and choose **Drag Force**.
- 2 Select Domain 1 only.

### **MESH**

Proceed and generate the mesh using the **Physics-controlled mesh** functionality. The frequency controlling the maximum element size is per default taken **From study**. Set the desired **Frequencies** in the study step. In general, 5 to 6 second-order elements per wavelength are needed to resolve the waves. For more details, see *Meshing (Resolving the Waves)* in the *Acoustics Module User's Guide*. In this model, we use 8 elements per wavelength; the default **Automatic** is to have 5.


### **STUDY I**

#### *Step 1: Frequency Domain*


- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Study 1** click **Step 1: Frequency Domain**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Frequency Domain**, locate the **Study Settings** section.
- 3 In the **Frequencies** text field, type  $f_0$ .

### **MESH I**

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Component 1 (comp1)** click **Mesh 1**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Mesh**, locate the **Physics-Controlled Mesh** section.
- 3 In the table, clear the **Use** check box for **Particle Tracing for Fluid Flow (fpt)**.


- 4 Locate the **Pressure Acoustics, Frequency Domain (acpr)** section. From the **Number of mesh elements per wavelength** list, choose **User defined**.
- 5 In the text field, type 8.
- 6 Click  **Build All**.

#### STUDY 1 - ACOUSTIC FIELD

- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, click **Study 1**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Study**, type Study 1 - Acoustic Field in the **Label** text field.
- 3 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Compute**.

#### RESULTS

*Acoustic Pressure (acpr)*

- 1 Click the  **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.


This first figure should look like the one in [Figure 2](#).

*Sound Pressure Level (acpr)*

The sound pressure level plot should look like [Figure 3](#).

#### STUDY 2

*Step 1: Time Dependent*


- 1 In the **Model Builder** window, under **Study 2** click **Step 1: Time Dependent**.
- 2 In the **Settings** window for **Time Dependent**, locate the **Study Settings** section.
- 3 In the **Output times** text field, type range(0,0.0005,0.3).
- 4 Click to expand the **Values of Dependent Variables** section. Find the **Values of variables not solved for** subsection. From the **Settings** list, choose **User controlled**.
- 5 From the **Method** list, choose **Solution**.
- 6 From the **Study** list, choose **Study 1 - Acoustic Field, Frequency Domain**.
- 7 In the **Model Builder** window, click **Study 2**.
- 8 In the **Settings** window for **Study**, type Study 2 - Particle Tracing in the **Label** text field.
- 9 In the **Home** toolbar, click  **Compute**.

## RESULTS

### *Particle Trajectories (fpt)*


**1** In the **Settings** window for **2D Plot Group**, locate the **Data** section.

**2** From the **Time (s)** list, choose **0.01**.

**3** In the **Particle Trajectories (fpt)** toolbar, click  **Plot**.

The particle position at  $t = 0.01\text{s}$  is reproduced in [Figure 4](#) (top).

**4** From the **Time (s)** list, choose **0.3**.

**5** In the **Particle Trajectories (fpt)** toolbar, click  **Plot**.

The particle position at  $t = 0.3\text{s}$  is reproduced in [Figure 4](#) (bottom).

As an optional extension of the model, you can go on to the **Export** node and animate the particle plot.