

Flow Induced Morphology Development during Melt-Mixing in PP/EVA Blends

By
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THESIS SUBMITTED IN THE FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

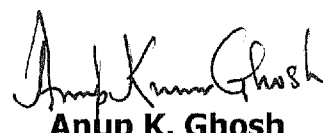
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July 2002**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitle 'Flow Induced Morphology Development during Melt-Mixing in PP/EVA Blends' being submitted by Mr. Sandeep Tyagi to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide research work carried by him. Mr. Sandeep Tyagi has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to my knowledge has reached the requisite standard. The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



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Dedicated to

My Sister

Rashmi

&

My Daughter

Tisha

Acknowledgement

It has been an exceptional journey - one that I had never dreamt of. It started with the shift of a chemist's mind to the challenges of chemical engineering led by my supervisor, Dr. Anup K. Ghosh. I am deeply indebted to him for his mentoring, able guidance, stimulating suggestions and inspiring thoughts which have been of tremendous help for me throughout my doctoral studies. I truly appreciate his patience and tolerance during my numerous misadventures. The many hours of discussions we had in which he showed his enthusiasm, and positive attitude towards this study, and topics which strayed rather far from 'melt-mixing', kept me on the right track. I appreciate his help in developing my self confidence and sense of autonomy. His overly enthusiasm and integral view on research and his mission for providing nothing short of high-quality work, has made a deep impression on me.

I convey my deepest thanks to Prof. Ashok Misra for his thought-stimulating questions, insightful and detailed comments, support, and for challenging me to improve my critical reviewing skills.

I would also like to thank other members of my Ph.D. committee Prof. S.N. Maiti, Prof. A.K. Gupta and Prof. B.L. Deopura, who provided me with valuable suggestions and advice. I am also thankful to Prof. I.K. Varma, Prof. V. Choudhary, Prof. A.R. Ray, and Dr. Harpal Singh for their support.

My sincere thanks to Prof. H.E.H. Meijer, TU/e, The Netherlands for providing me the opportunity to work at TU/e. His dynamic thinking, deep and profound knowledge, warm smile and patient instructions have given me immense help. The visions, ideas, models and results contained in part of the thesis could not have been achieved without the support of Dr. G.W.M. Peters. Special thanks are due to him for this.

This thesis is the result of four and half years of work whereby I have been accompanied and supported by many people. It gives me great pleasure to express my gratitude to all those who helped me in big and small way to complete this thesis. My colleagues and friends, Arup, Purnima, Shounak, Anantha, Joy, Anubhav, Vishal, Roopali supported me in my research work, I wish to thank them for all their constant help, support, interest and valuable hints. I would like to thank Dr. Prashant Singh, for the many fruitful discussion we had and brotherly advice that helped me in staying on the right track. A special thanks goes to Jeetendra Sarna and Sandeep Gupta, whom I have known for more than ten years now and who were kind, helpful and trustful friends. Thanks to Pramila for scanning the illustrations.

A special acknowledgement is forwarded to the staff in the laboratory facilities of the department. I am grateful to all those who have done that extra bit in one form or the other so that I could meet the deadline.

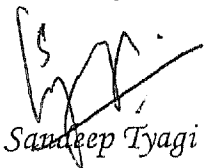
The principle, to see the good in everything and be a constructive part of the whole, made me feel responsible to participate in lot of activities other than research. I am grateful to various people who have not been directly involved in the project described in this thesis, but with whom I have been in touch during my Ph.D. study. Thanks to Dr. Shashi Motilal, for the views and discussions that helped me to keep the universal spirit that is essential for scientific research. I am particularly indebted to Dr. V.K. Saroop for many inspiring discussions, his cheerful nature and encouragement that I have received from him.

In my opinion, doing a Ph.D. is a sacred task and this was definitely one of the best decisions of my life. Additional energy and vitality for this research was provided externally by the constant backing by my parents in law, whom I always found to be standing by me and sharing my experiences and thoughts, with relevant to life, throughout the last four years. I am also thankful to Mr. Sampann Kulshreshtha, Ms. Surekha Kulshreshtha, Prachi and especially to little Tanu.

I wish to record my sincere appreciation and thanks to my parents and family for their invaluable support, patience and encouragement throughout my study years. My parents who ceaselessly and tirelessly encouraged me with all their love and support and let me freely do whatever I wanted to. Without them, there is no way in which I could possibly have accomplished this stupendous task. Their understanding of the value of education is truly beyond my comprehension. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for my father and mother who formed part of my vision and taught me the good things that really matter in life. My father still provides a role model for his hard working nature and mother for her patience and persistent inspiration for my journey in this life. They often give me valuable advice, reminders, and wisdom about life, when I had a hard time understanding. However, they always give me room to explore and make mistakes. I am very grateful for the love and support of all my cousins, especially to Atul, Neha and Samrat. My deepest gratitude to my sister Rashmi, for her understanding, encouragement, ever patient, prayerful and tireless support to finish this thesis.

Interdependence is certainly more valuable than independence. I would like to thank my wife Bhawna, whose patience, understanding, and above all love made this journey easier. She supported my decision to embark in doctoral studies and fulfill my career goals, despite the significant changes it involved in our lives. She has also endured many long hours waiting for me to come home from the lab, and has provided stability to our family by taking charge of our home and simultaneously of her own research. One of the best experiences that we lived through in this period was the birth of our daughter Tisha, who provided an additional and joyful dimension to our life mission.

The chain of my gratitude would be definitely incomplete if I were to forget to thank the First Cause of this chain, using Aristotle's words, "The Prime Mover". Most Merciful who granted me the ability and will to start and complete this thesis. My deepest and sincere gratitude to Him for inspiring and guiding this humble being in numerous encouraging ways and whose faithfulness is marvellous. I pray to the All Mighty to continue to inspire me towards the right path.


Sandeep Tyagi

ABSTRACT

The general aim of this study is to provide better understanding of the role of composition, component properties and processing conditions in morphology development during processing of polymer blends. This study reveals the development of morphology during blending of polymers in terms of domain size variation of the dispersed phase. Since the morphology influences the physical properties of polymer blends, it is important to be acquainted with the basic mechanisms of morphology evolution and the way it develops in the complex flow fields of industrially processing equipments. Though the mechanisms of droplet dispersion and coalescence are well known for Newtonian fluids, there is still a lack of fundamental understanding for the same in case of non-Newtonian polymers.

Polypropylene and ethylene vinyl acetate were used to carry out the melt-mixing studies in the extruder, in order to analyse the evolution of microstructure in the real processing operation. Processing of polymer blends was carried out to clearly understand the morphology evolution as affected by the rheological properties of the constituting components, blend compositions and processing variables from initial stage to the final stage in the extruder. Characterization of the dispersed phase (EVA) was carried out on the samples obtained from the screw channels after screw-pullout experiment. Different behaviour towards the polarised light (birefringence) of the PP and EVA phases was used to analyze the striations thickness distribution of the minor phase (EVA) in the feed zone of the

extruder whereas, droplet size distribution analysis in the metering zone was carried out using scanning electron microscopy by selectively etching out the EVA phase. For total understanding of the melt-mixing process, investigations were also made across the each channel sample by dividing the samples in terms of upper and lower layers along the channel depth.

Early stages of morphology development involve the formation of striations of the dispersed phase. Striation thickness measurements have been used in this study to express the state of mixing in terms of the dispersed phase domain size the distribution in the feed zone along the length of the extruder. The striations developed at the onset of melt-mixing have broader size distribution that is random in nature and skewed towards larger size range. As mixing proceeds, the decrease in striation size has been found to be associated with low values of variance, distribution being narrow and skewed more towards smaller size range. This decrease in the average striation size is associated with a regular decrease in standard deviation. Moreover, a critical size range has been identified as size larger than 100-125 μm for stretching to be highly effective. Striations having thickness greater than this critical value show sharp decrease in their size, both in the upper and the lower layer. The percent of reduction of size also differs in each layer. It is interesting to note that, the rate of decrease in upper and lower layer become almost equal as the striation size goes below 100-125 μm , interestingly. At the end of the feed zone, the striation reaches the critical size range of 20-40 μm before the break-up process takes place.

The comparison of evolution of morphology during melt-mixing has been made for the different compositions of the blends. It has been found that, for all the three compositions i.e., 70/30, 80/20 and 90/10 wt.% PP/EVA, the average striation size decreases with decrease in concentration of dispersed phase as well as along the length of the extruder. The effect of viscosity ratio on the melt-mixing process in terms of striation size and striation size distribution has also been studied for blends with four selected viscosity ratios. Striation thickness does depend upon the viscosity ratio and showed sharper decrease along the length of the feed zone when the viscosities of both the phases were high (PP/EVA blend with viscosity ratio of 0.37). The effect of screw rotational speed on the morphology development indicates the presence of higher average striation size at low screw rpm as well as decrease of striations at a much faster rate than that obtained by processing at relatively higher rpm. A critical size range has been found to be present irrespective of blend composition, viscosity ratio and different screw rotational speed. The total process of morphology development seems to follow a typical behaviour that has been explained on the basis of "two-zone model" considering upper layer as strong zone and lower layer as weak zone.

In the metering and die zone of the extruder, there was reduction by one order of magnitude in the domain size and then it does not decrease much over the length of the metering zone. There is, however, shift in the distribution towards the narrow size range, indicating the homogenization process as a result of break-up and coalescence. In the die zone, oscillations in the droplet size was

observed in some cases showing occurrence of emulsification process. Log normal model has been found to fit satisfactorily to the droplet distribution, both in the metering and die zone.

Finally the break-up process observed in the extruder environment as well as in the rheological experiments, has been analyzed and it was found that droplet size developed is in good agreement with the theory reported in literature. Paliarne's model was found to describe the linear viscoelastic properties of the blends satisfactorily. The model of Peters, Hansen and Meijer (PHM) was used to predict the first normal stress difference of the blends under transient flow. Morphological evolution of the blends under stepwise increase in shear rate was obtained and good predictions with PHM model were observed.

Flow induced morphology development has been successfully correlated using log-normal distribution model and the models based on rheological responses. The present study is directly applicable for the development of tailor made morphology in polymer blends.

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