Large eddy simulations of miscible Rayleigh-Taylor instability

T. W. Mattner¹, D. I. Pullin², & P. E. Dimotakis²

1. Department of Applied Mathematics, The University of Adelaide, Australia
tmattner@maths.adelaide.edu.au

2. Graduate Aeronautical Laboratories, California Institute of Technology, USA
dale@galcit.caltech.edu, dimotakis@caltech.edu

This paper describes some results from large eddy simulations (LES) of miscible Rayleigh-Taylor (RT) instability at density ratios up to 7. We consider a high-density fluid located above a low-density fluid subject to a constant downward acceleration field. The fluids are assumed to be incompressible and miscible. Fluid motion is governed by the Favre-filtered continuity, species-transport, and Navier-Stokes equations. The subgrid-scale (SGS) scalar flux and stress are estimated using the stretched-vortex mixing (Pullin 2000) and stress (Misra & Pullin 1997) models. A compact filter and a circular spectral filter are applied in the inhomogeneous direction and homogeneous directions, respectively. These filters damp wavenumbers larger than the model cut-off wavenumber.

Performance of the model is assessed by comparison of coarse-resolution (64×64×256) LES against fully resolved (256×256×1024) direct numerical simulations (DNS) at three density-ratios: 5/3, 3, and 7. The initial conditions for the LES are obtained by filtering the DNS data at a time when the mixing-zone has grown sufficiently thick to be represented on the coarse LES grid. LES mixing-zone widths, as well as scalar and kinetic energy spectra, are in satisfactory agreement with the DNS results. DNS resolution limitations limit the comparison to Reynolds numbers (based on mixing-zone width and growth-rate) of less 4000. As a result, SGS scalar and model dissipation is less than 10% of the total dissipation.

We use the stretched-vortex model to obtain predictions of RT unstable flow at Reynolds numbers as large as 0.5–2 ×10⁶, on 128×128×256 grids, at three density ratios: 5/3, 3, and 7. Mixing-zone growth is approximately quadratic in time and mean mole-fraction profiles are approximately self-similar. Resolved-scale kinetic-energy spectra exhibit an approximate $k^{-5/3}$ dependence, whereas the scalar-energy spectra decay more sharply than this approaching the cut-off wavenumber. The mole-fraction field exhibits unphysical excursions (over/undershoots of the initial scalar maximum/minimum) of up to 6%.

References
