

Network density : a key factor in macroscopic toughness?

Citation for published version (APA):

Melick, van, H., Govaert, L. E., & Meijer, H. E. H. (1999). *Network density : a key factor in macroscopic toughness?*. Poster session presented at Mate Poster Award 1999 : 4th Annual Poster Contest.

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/1999

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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/Introduction

Although amorphous polymers like Polystyrene (PS, cd-boxes) and Polycarbonate (PC, cd's) are similar materials, their macroscopic deformation behaviour in tension is quite different (**fig.1a**).

- PS: crazing → brittle, small macroscopic strains
- PC: necking → ductile, large macroscopic strains



fig.1a Brittle and tough

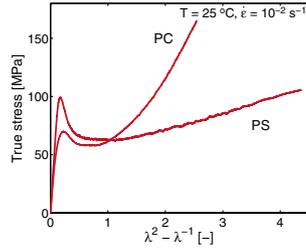


fig.1b Compression tests

PS suffers from extreme localisation due to (**fig.1b**):

- much strain softening. Elimination of strain softening inhibits localisation and brittle fracture [1, 2].
- weak strain hardening. Strain hardening: entropic contribution of entangled polymer network [3]

/Objective

Determine relation between molecular structure and post-yield behaviour. Alter molecular structure of PS:

- blending with Polyphenylene oxide (PS/PPO)
- cross-linking with DEGDMA (x-PS)

/Results and conclusions

Materials are characterised by DMTA.

- Dynamic modulus in rubbery region → molecular weight between entanglements → network density
- With increasing %PPO in PS/PPO and cross-linker in x-PS, the rubber modulus (G_{N^0}) and thus the network density (ν_e) increase (**fig.2**).

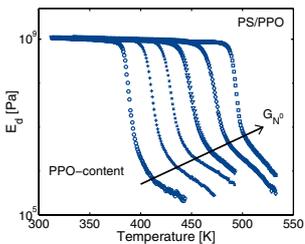
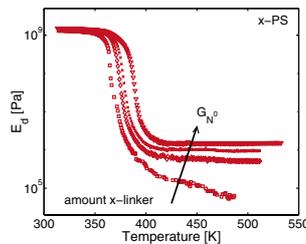


fig.2 DMTA PS/PPO (left) and x-PS



/References:

[1] TERVOORT, T.A. *Constitutive modelling of polymer glasses: finite nonlinear viscoelastic behaviour of polycarbonate*, PhD thesis, Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 1996

[2] SMIT, R.J.M *Toughness of heterogeneous polymeric systems: a modelling approach*, PhD thesis, Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 1998

[3] HAWARD, R.N.: *Strain hardening of thermoplastics*, *Macromolecules*, v26, n22, p5860-5869, 1993

Compression tests are performed to determine the intrinsic properties (strain softening and hardening).

- In Gaussian theory → true stress proportional to $\lambda^2 - \lambda^{-1}$ → strain hardening modulus (G_p)

With increasing network density in PS/PPO and x-PS the strain hardening modulus increases (**fig.3**).

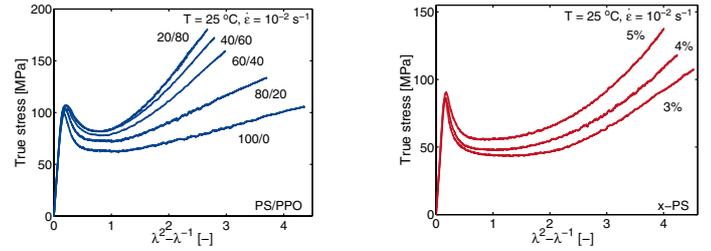


fig.3 Compression tests PS/PPO (left) and x-PS

Strain hardening modulus vs. network density gives a linear relationship for PS/PPO and x-PS (**fig.4a**).

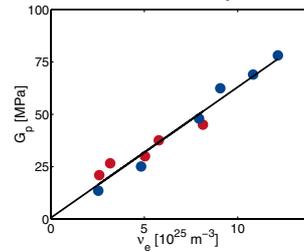


fig.4a G_p vs. ν_e

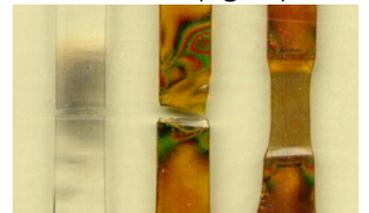


fig.4b PS/PPO 100/0 to 20/80: crazing to shear yielding

For high PPO content in the PS/PPO blends ductile macroscopic deformation behaviour is observed in tension (**fig.4b**), whereas x-PS remains brittle. The amount of softening (yield-drop) of PS/PPO in compression reduces strongly with increasing %PPO and temperature (**fig.3 & 5a**, encircled: ductile in tension).

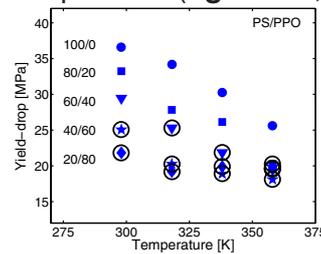


fig.5a Yield-drop in PS/PPO



fig.5b Embrittled PC

As under a certain threshold of yield-drop ductile behaviour is observed, strain softening appears to be the key factor in macroscopic toughness. This is confirmed by embrittlement of strongly annealed PC in which yield-drop has increased considerably (**fig. 5b**).