Leading Edge Thickness Impact on Drag and Lift in Hypersonic Wedge Flow

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A computational investigation was conducted on rarefied hypersonic flow past truncated wedges at incidence. Positive angle-of-attack effects on the aerodynamic surface quantities have been investigated by employing the Direct Simulation Monte Carlo Method. The results presented highlight the sensitivity of the heat transfer coefficient, the total drag coefficient, and the total lift coefficient to changes not only on the angle of attack but also on the frontal-face thickness of the leading edges. Some significant differences between sharp and blunt leading edges were noted on the surface quantities. Interesting features observed in these surface properties showed that even small leading edge thickness, compared to the freestream mean free path, still has important effects on high Mach number leading edge flows. The analysis is of great importance since it is impossible to achieve ideally sharp leading edges of airframes, such as waveriders.

Nomenclature

C_d	Drag coefficient, $2D/\rho_\infty V_\infty^2 H$
C_f	Skin friction coefficient, $2\tau_w/\rho_\infty V_\infty^2$
C_h	Heat transfer coefficient, $2q_w/\rho_\infty V_\infty^3$
C_l	Lift coefficient, $2F/\rho_\infty V_\infty^2 H$
C_p	Pressure coefficient, $2(p_w - p_\infty)/\rho_\infty V_\infty^2$
D	Drag force, N
d	Molecular diameter, m
F	Lift force, N
H	Body height at the base, m
Kn	Knudsen number, λ/l
L	Body length, m
l	Characteristic length, m
M	Mach number
m	Molecular mass, kg
N	Number flux, $\text{m}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$
N_f	Dimensionless number flux, $N/n_\infty V_\infty$
n	Density number, m^{-3}
p	Pressure, N/m^2
q	Heat flux, W/m^2
R	Circular cylinder radius, m

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Re	Reynolds number, $\rho V l / \mu$
s	Arc length, m
S	Dimensionless arc length, s / λ_{∞}
T	Temperature, K
t	Leading edge thickness, m
V	Velocity, m/s
X	Mole fraction
x, y	Cartesian axes in physical space, m
α	Angle of attack, degree
η	Coordinate normal to body surface, m
θ	Wedge half angle, degree
λ	Mean free path, m
ξ	Coordinate tangent to body surface, m
ρ	Density, kg/m ³
τ	Shear stress, N/m ²
ω	Viscosity index
<i>Subscript</i>	
w	Wall conditions
∞	Freestream conditions

I. Introduction

INTEREST in the development of various type of hypersonic vehicles has recently seen a resurgence. One type of vehicle that is promising for hypersonic flight is the waverider. A waverider, first conceived by Nonweiler¹, is a lifting body which is derived from a known analytical flowfield such as flow over a two-dimensional wedge or flow around a slender cone. A waverider is designed analytically with infinitely sharp leading edges for shock wave attachment. Because the shock wave is attached to the leading edge of the vehicle, the upper and lower surfaces of the vehicle can be designed separately. Furthermore, the shock wave acts as a barrier in order to prevent spillage of higher-pressure airflow from the lower side of the vehicle to the upper side, thus allowing the potential for a high lift-to-drag (L/D) ratio at high Mach number.

Usually, it is extremely difficult to construct a perfectly sharp leading edge. Any manufacturing error results in a significant deviation from the design contour. Even with the most efficient and careful fabrication process, the leading edges will be several microns thick. Moreover, sharp edges are difficult to maintain because they are easily damaged. It is not only due to difficulties in manufacturing technology and in the strength of the material that ideally sharp leading edges on airframes are impossible to achieve in practice. At hypersonic flight speeds, the thin leading edges would inevitably melt away because of the high heating associated with sharp edges, and the impossibility of bleeding off the large quantities of heat liberated in the flow gas adjacent to the leading edge of the body through the thin tips. Therefore, for practical hypersonic configurations, leading edges should be blunt for heat transfer, manufacturing and handling concerns. Because blunt leading edge promotes shock wave standoff, practical leading edges will have shock detachment, making leading edge blunting a major concern in the design and prediction of flowfield over hypersonic waveriders.

The sharp leading edges of waveriders are a dominant factor in their high L/D ratio compared to conventional aerospace designs. In this context, investigation of the effects of “aerodynamically” sharp leading edges or no-sharp leading edges on waverider configurations becomes important. Based on recent interest in hypersonic waveriders be considered for high-altitude/low-density applications^{2–6}, Santos⁷ has investigated the effect of the leading-edge thickness on the flowfield structure and on the aerodynamic surface quantities over truncated wedges. The thickness effect was examined for a range of Knudsen number, based on frontal-face thickness, covering from the transitional flow regime to the free molecular flow one. The emphasis of the

works was to provide a critical analysis on maximum allowable geometric bluntness, dictated by either handling or manufacturing requirements, resulting on reduced departures from ideal aerodynamic performance of the vehicle. Thus, allowing the blunted leading edge to more closely represents the original sharp leading edge flowfield. Such analysis is also important when a comparison is to be made between experimental results in the immediate vicinity of the leading edge and the theoretical results, which generally assume a zero-thickness leading edge.

The purpose of the present account is to extend further the previous analysis⁷ on truncated wedges by investigating the impact of the angle of attack on the flowfield structure. For positive angle of attack, important changes occur in the flowfield structure and in the aerodynamic surface quantities on sharp/blunt leading edges. This involves the modification of the flowfield properties and shock strength and, consequently, some effects on aerodynamic forces acting on, and on heat transfer to the body surface. Moreover, the knowledge of these properties at zero angle of attack is not sufficient to predict with certainty the flow characteristics over these shapes with incidence. The incidence increase causes an asymmetry in the flow patterns as the stagnation point moves from the axis to the lower windward side. Of particular interest in this analysis is the aerodynamic performance of the leading edges since blunt leading edges at incidence will allow leakage of the high-pressure lower surface flow into the upper surface region, causing a reduction in the lift.

In an effort to obtain further insight into the nature of the aerodynamic surface quantities of truncated wedges under hypersonic transitional flow conditions, the essential characteristics of the angle of attack effect on heat transfer, drag and lift, will be examined for positive angle of attack with 5, 10, 15 and 20 degrees of incidence.

Under hypersonic transitional flow conditions, at very high speeds and high altitudes, the flow about a given aerodynamic configuration may be sufficiently rarefied that the appropriate molecular mean free path becomes too large, compared to a characteristic length of the vehicle for the use of continuum assumptions but not large enough for the use of the free molecular theory. In such an intermediate or transition rarefied gas regime, the complete investigation of the flowfield structure would require the full formulation of kinetic theory. The governing equation in the transition regime is the Boltzmann equation⁸. Nevertheless, in order to circumvent the difficult of a direct solution of the Boltzmann equation, the Direct Simulation Monte Carlo method has been the appropriate choice for problems involving flows of rarefied hypersonic aerothermodynamics.

II. Leading Edge Geometry Definition

The geometry of the leading edges in this work is the same as that presented in the previous work (Santos⁷). The truncated wedges are modeled by assuming a sharp leading edge of half angle θ with a circular cylinder of radius R inscribed tangent to this sharp leading edge. The truncated wedges are also tangent to the sharp leading edge and the cylinder at the same common point. It was assumed a leading edge half angle of 10 degrees, a circular cylinder diameter of 10^{-2} m and frontal-face thickness t/λ_∞ of 0, 0.01, 0.1 and 1, where λ_∞ is the freestream mean free path. Figure 1 illustrates schematically this construction. It was assumed that the truncated wedges are infinitely long but only the length L is considered, since the wake region behind the truncated wedges is not of interest in this investigation.

Figure 1. Drawing illustrating the truncated wedges.

III. Methodology

The Direct Simulation Monte Carlo (DSMC) method, pioneered by Bird⁹, has become the standard technique for simulating low-density gas dynamics. For these flows, the computational fluid dynamics (CFD) methods that rely on continuum relations to compute the flowfield structure will not provide accurate results in the upper atmosphere, since the assumptions made in developing the differential equations, on which CFD methods are based, break down on rarefied conditions.

The DSMC method simulates real gas flows with various physical processes by means of a huge number of modeling particles, each of which is a typical representative of great number of real gas molecules. DSMC models the flow as being a collection of discrete particles, each one with a position, velocity and internal energy. The state of particles is stored and modified with time as the particles move, collide, and undergo boundary interactions in simulated physical space. The simulation is always calculated as unsteady flow. However, a steady flow solution is obtained as the large time state of the simulation. Therefore, the DSMC method is basically an explicit time-marching algorithm.

Collisions in the present DSMC code are modeled by using the variable hard sphere (VHS) molecular model¹⁰ and the no time counter (NTC) collision sampling technique¹¹. Repartition energy among internal and translational modes is controlled by the Borgnakke-Larsen statistical model¹². Simulations are performed using a non-reacting gas model for a constant freestream gas composition consisting of 76.3% of N_2 and 23.7% of O_2 . Energy exchanges between the translational and internal modes, rotational and vibrational, are considered. Relaxation collision numbers of 5 and 50 were used for the calculations of rotation and vibration, respectively.

In order to easily account for particle-particle collisions, the physical space is divided into a certain number of cells and each cell is also divided into subcells. The physical space network is used to facilitate the choice of molecules for collisions and for the sampling of the macroscopic flow properties such as temperature, pressure, etc. In the DSMC algorithm, the linear dimensions of the cells should be small in comparison with the scale length of the macroscopic flow gradients normal to streamwise directions, which means that the cell dimensions should be of the order of or smaller than the local mean free path^{13–14}. The time step is set such that a typical molecule moves about one third of the cell dimension at each time step. In addition, this time step is much less than the mean collision time^{15–16}, which is defined by the mean time between the successive collisions suffered by any particular molecule.

The computational domain used for the calculation is made large enough so that body disturbances do not reach the upstream and side boundaries, where freestream conditions are specified. A schematic view of the computational domain is depicted in Fig. 2. Side I is defined by the body surface. Diffuse reflection with complete surface thermal accommodation is the condition applied to this side. Side II is the freestream side through which simulated molecules enter and exit. Finally, the flow at the downstream outflow boundary, side III, is predominantly supersonic and vacuum condition is specified¹⁷. At this boundary, simulated molecules can only exit.

Application of a numerical method to solve practical problems requires a reliable way in order to estimate the accuracy of the solution. The numerical accuracy in DSMC method depends on the cell size chosen, on the time step as well as on the number of particles per computational cell. These effects were investigated

Figure 2. Schematic view of the computational domain.

in order to determine the number of cells and the number of particles required to achieve grid independence solutions. Grid independence was tested by running the calculations with half and double the number of cells in ξ and η directions (see Fig. 2) compared to a standard grid. Solutions (not shown) were near identical for all grids used and were considered fully grid independent.

IV. Flow Conditions

The freestream flow conditions used for the numerical simulation of flow past the leading edges are those given by Santos⁷ and summarized in Table 1, and the gas properties⁹ are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Freestream flow conditions

Altitude (km)	T_∞ (K)	p_∞ (N/m ²)	ρ_∞ (kg/m ³)	μ_∞ (Ns/m ²)	n_∞ (m ⁻³)	λ_∞ (m)
70	220.0	5.582	8.753×10^{-5}	1.455×10^{-5}	1.8209×10^{21}	9.03×10^{-4}

The freestream velocity V_∞ is assumed to be constant at 3.5 km/s, which corresponds to a freestream Mach number M_∞ of 12. The translational and vibrational temperatures in the freestream are in equilibrium at 220 K, and the leading edge surface has a constant wall temperature T_w of 880 K for all cases considered.

The overall Knudsen number Kn_t , defined as λ_∞/t , corresponds to ∞ , 100, 10 and 1 for thickness t/λ_∞ of 0, 0.01, 0.1 and 1, respectively. Finally, the Reynolds number Re_t covers the range from 0.193 to 19.3, based on conditions in the undisturbed stream with leading-edge thickness t as the characteristic length.

Table 2. Gas properties

	X	m (kg)	d (m)	ω
O_2	0.237	5.312×10^{-26}	4.01×10^{-10}	0.77
N_2	0.763	4.650×10^{-26}	4.11×10^{-10}	0.74

V. Computational Results and Discussion

In order to assess the overall performance of truncated wedges, this section will focus on the calculations of the aerodynamic surface quantities obtained from the DSMC results. Aerodynamic surface quantities of particular interest are number flux, heat transfer, pressure, skin friction, drag and lift. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to discuss and to compare differences in the profiles of these properties, expressed in coefficient form, due to variations not only on the angle of attack but also on the frontal-face thickness of the leading edges.

A. Number Flux

The number flux N is calculated by sampling the molecules impinging on the surface by unit time and unit area. The dependence of the number flux on the angle of attack α is shown in Figs. 3 and 4 for thickness Knudsen numbers of 100 and 1, respectively. In this set of plots, distribution of the number flux are displayed separated along the frontal face, along the leeward side, and along the windward side of the leading edges. Also, N_f is the number flux N normalized by $n_\infty V_\infty$, S is the arc length s , normalized by the freestream mean free path λ_∞ , measured from the shoulder of the leading edges, and Y is the height y along the frontal face also normalized by λ_∞ .

Referring to Figs. 3(a-c), it is observed that the number flux presents a constant value along the frontal face for the angle of attack range investigated. As would be expected, for positive angle of attack, the

Figure 3. Dimensionless number flux N_f along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100.

Figure 4. Dimensionless number flux N_f along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 1.

number flux along the afterbody surface in general decreases on leeward side, due to the flow expansion, and increases on windward side of the leading edge, due to the flow compression. Of particular interest in this set of plots is the distribution of the number flux along the frontal face, Fig. 3(a). It is seen that the dimensionless number flux approaches the limit value, $N/n_\infty V_\infty = 1$, predicted by the free molecular flow equations⁹ for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence.

According to Figs. 4(a-c), it is noted that the number flux is high near the symmetry point ($Y = 0$) and decreases along the frontal face up to the frontal-face/afterbody junction with increasing the nose thickness (decreasing Kn_t). After that, it drops off sharply along the afterbody surface for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence, in contrast to the $Kn_t = 100$ case. Therefore, number flux to the front surface relies on the leading-edge thickness in that it increases with increasing the thickness t . One possible reason for this behavior may be related to the collisions of two groups of molecules; the molecules reflecting from the nose

of the leading edge and the molecules oncoming from the freestream. The molecules that are reflected from the body surface, which have a lower kinetic energy interact with the oncoming freestream molecules, which have a higher kinetic energy. Thus, the surface-reflected molecules re-collide with the body surface, which produce an increase in the dimensionless number flux in this region. This behavior becomes important as the leading edge becomes blunt.

Interesting features may be recognized from this set of figures. In addition to the differences on the number flux along the frontal face, the number flux is significantly different on the afterbody surface for the cases shown. For the $Kn_t = 100$ case, the number flux is low at the frontal-face/afterbody junction and then increases to a peak value around a freestream mean free path downstream along the afterbody surface, around $S = 1$ for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence. Furthermore, the angle-of-attack effect is to move this peak value at stations $S > 1$ along both leeward side and windward side of the afterbody surface. In contrast, for the $Kn_t = 1$ case, the number flux presents the peak value at the frontal-face/afterbody junction for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence. Moreover, at incidence, no peak value is observed for the number flux along the leeward side of the afterbody surface. However, for angle of attack $\alpha > 15$ degrees, the number flux increases above the value observed at the frontal-face/afterbody junction on the windward side of the afterbody surface. It should be mentioned in this context that the number flux distribution for the $Kn_t = 100$ case corresponds to a sharp or “aerodynamically” sharp leading edge, while that one for the $Kn_t = 1$ case corresponds to a blunt leading edge.

B. Heat Transfer Coefficient

The heat flux q_w to the body surface is calculated by the net energy flux of the molecules impinging on the surface. The net heat flux q_w is related to the sum of the translational, rotational and vibrational energies of both incident and reflected molecules. A flux is regarded as positive if it is directed toward the body surface. The heat flux is normalized by $\rho_\infty V_\infty^3/2$ and presented in terms of heat transfer coefficient C_h .

The heat flux q_w to the body surface was defined in terms of the incident and reflected flow properties, and based upon the gas-surface interaction model of fully accommodated, complete diffuse re-emission. The diffuse model assumes that the molecules are reflected equally in all directions, quite independently of their incident speed and direction. Due to the diffuse reflection model, the reflected thermal velocity of the molecules impinging on the surface is obtained from a Maxwellian distribution that takes into account for the temperature of the body surface. In this fashion, as the wall temperature is the same for all the cases investigated, the number of molecules impinging on the surface plays the important role on the reflected contribution to the net heat flux to the body surface.

The leading-edge thickness effect on heat transfer coefficient C_h is illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6 for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100 and 1, respectively, parameterized by the angle of attack α . It is seen from these figures that the heat transfer coefficient C_h is sensitive not only to the frontal-face thickness but also to the angle of attack. For the $Kn_t = 100$ case, the heat transfer coefficient remains essentially constant over the front surface. In contrast, for the bluntest case investigated, $Kn_t = 1$ ($t/\lambda_\infty = 1$), C_h is low at the stagnation region and increases at the vicinity of the frontal-face/afterbody junction. It is clearly noticed that, along the afterbody surface, the heat transfer coefficient distribution presents a similar behavior on both leading edges in that it presents a constant value at the vicinity of the frontal-face/afterbody junction and then decreases sharply downstream along the body surface. The angle-of-attack effect on the heat transfer coefficient along the afterbody surface is similar for the flat-nose leading edges investigated in the sense that it decreases on the leeward side and increases on the windward side of the leading edges.

As would be expected, the blunter (flatter) the leading edge is the lower the heat transfer coefficient at the stagnation point. Usually, the stagnation region is generally considered as being the most thermally stressed zone in sharp/blunt bodies, as shown by the $Kn_t = 100$ ($t/\lambda_\infty = 0.01$) case. Nevertheless, as the frontal-face thickness increases, the most severe heat transfer region moves to the frontal-face/afterbody junction. As the number of molecules impinging on the frontal surface decreases at the vicinity of the frontal-face/afterbody junction (see Fig. 4), then the velocity of the molecules increases as the flow approaches the junction of the

Figure 5. Heat transfer coefficient C_h along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100.

Figure 6. Heat transfer coefficient C_h along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 1.

leading edge in order to increase the heat transfer coefficient. Moreover, the contribution of the translational energy to the net heat flux varies with the square of the velocity of the molecules.

For comparison purpose, the heat transfer coefficient at the stagnation point predicted by the free molecular equations⁹ is $C_{ho} = 0.912$ for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence. According to Fig. 5, the stagnation point heating tends to this limit value as the leading edge becomes sharp, i.e., by reducing the nose thickness of the leading edges (increasing Kn_t).

C. Pressure Coefficient

The pressure p_w on the body surface is calculated by the sum of the normal momentum fluxes of both incident and reflected molecules at each time step. Results are presented in terms of the pressure coefficient

Figure 7. Pressure coefficient C_p along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100.

Figure 8. Pressure coefficient C_p along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 1.

C_p .

Variations of the pressure coefficient C_p caused by changes on the leading-edge thickness as well as on the angle of attack is demonstrated in Figs. 7 and 8 for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100 and 1, respectively. It can be noted from this set of diagrams that the pressure coefficient is high along the front surface, basically a constant value along it, and decreases dramatically along the afterbody surface at the vicinity of the frontal-face/afterbody junction. This effect is more pronounced with decreasing Knudsen number Kn_t , i.e., as the nose becomes flatter. Along the afterbody surface, the pressure coefficient follows the trend presented by the number flux distribution (Figs. 4 and 5); it decreases along the leeward side and increases on the windward side of the body surface with the angle-of-attack rise.

As a base of comparison, the pressure coefficient C_p predicted by the free molecular flow equations on the frontal-face surface is 2.35 for the case with zero-degree angle of incidence. Therefore, for the thinnest

Figure 9. Skin friction coefficient C_f along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100.

Figure 10. Skin friction coefficient C_f along the (a) frontal face, (b) leeward side and (c) windward side as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 1.

flat leading edge investigated, $t/\lambda_\infty = 0.01$, which corresponds to $Kn_t = 100$, the flow seems to approach the free collision flow along the frontal face for small angle of attack, Fig. 7(a), as was pointed out earlier.

D. Skin Friction Coefficient

The shear stress τ_w on the body surface is calculated by averaging the tangential momentum transfer of the molecules impinging on the surface. For the diffuse reflection model imposed for the gas-surface interaction, reflected molecules have a tangential moment equal to zero, since the molecules essentially lose, on average, their tangential velocity component. The shear stress τ_w on the body surface is normalized by $\rho_\infty V_\infty^2/2$ and presented in terms of the dimensionless skin friction coefficient C_f .

The influence of the leading edge nose thickness and the angle of attack on the skin friction coefficient

is displayed in Figs. 9 and 10 for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100 and 1, respectively. According to these figures, interesting characteristics on the skin friction coefficient C_f are observed on the frontal face of the leading edges. For the $Kn_t = 100$ case, the skin friction coefficient is constant along the flat face. In addition, the constant value trend is preserved with increasing the incidence. Conversely, for the $Kn_t = 1$ case, the skin friction coefficient increases from a minimum value at the frontal-face/afterbody junction on the windward side up to a maximum value at the frontal-face/afterbody junction on the leeward side of the leading edges. It is also noted that, along the afterbody surface, the distribution for the skin friction coefficient C_f is preserved, as compared to the case of zero-degree angle of incidence, in that it presents a constant value at the vicinity of the frontal-face/afterbody junction and then decreases downstream along the body surface. The angle-of-attack effect on the skin friction coefficient along the afterbody surface is similar for the leading edges investigated in the sense that it decreases on the leeward side and increases on the windward side of the leading edges.

E. Total Drag Coefficient

The drag on a surface in a gas flow results from the interchange of momentum between the surface and the molecules colliding with the surface. The total drag is obtained by the integration of the pressure p_w and shear stress τ_w distributions in the flow direction from the stagnation point of the leading edge to the station L that corresponds to the tangent point common to all the leading edges (see Fig. 1). It is important to mention that the values for the total drag were obtained by assuming the shapes acting as leading edges. Therefore, no base pressure effects were taken into account on the calculations. Results for total drag are normalized by $\rho_\infty V_\infty^2 H/2$ and presented as total drag coefficient C_d and its components of pressure drag coefficient C_{pd} and the skin friction drag coefficient C_{fd} .

The impact of the leading-edge bluntness and of the angle of attack on the total drag coefficient C_d is demonstrated in Figs. 11(a-c) for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1, respectively. In this group of plots, the pressure drag C_{pd} , skin friction drag C_{fd} and total drag C_d for flat-face leading edges are compared to the sharp leading edge case. Therefore, full symbols stand for sharp leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$, and empty symbols for flat-face leading edges, Kn_t of 100, 10 or 1. For completeness, the results for total drag coefficient are tabulated in Table 3.

Interesting features may be seen in Figs. 11(a-c) as well as in Table 3. By considering the cases with zero-degree angle of incidence, it is clearly noticed that the major contribution to the total drag C_d is given by the skin friction drag C_{fd} . As the leading edge becomes blunter, the contribution of the pressure drag C_{pd} to the total drag increases and the contribution of the skin friction drag C_{fd} decreases. As a result of these two opposite behaviors, no appreciable changes are observed in the total drag coefficient for the nose thicknesses investigated. On

the other hand, as would be expected, appreciable changes are observed in the total drag coefficient C_d with the angle-of-attack rise. By increasing the angle of attack, the leading edges are seen from the freestream as blunt bodies. Consequently, the contribution of the pressure drag C_{pd} to the total drag C_d increases significantly while the skin friction drag contribution slightly decreases. A balance on these two contributions is observed for the cases with 15-degree angle of incidence. In addition, due to these opposite behaviors, the total drag coefficient C_d for leading edges corresponding to Kn_t of 100 and 10 is slightly smaller than that for the sharp leading edge case, $Kn_t = \infty$, as confirmed by Table 3.

Table 3. Total drag coefficient C_d for the leading edges as a function of the angle of attack α .

α	$Kn_t = \infty$	$Kn_t = 100$	$Kn_t = 10$	$Kn_t = 1$
0	0.980	0.981	0.981	0.997
5	1.013	0.989	0.991	1.029
10	1.106	1.069	1.079	1.144
15	1.267	1.212	1.236	1.336
20	1.574	1.492	1.516	1.610

Figure 11. Pressure drag C_{pd} , skin friction drag C_{fd} and total drag C_d coefficients as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of (a) 100, (b) 10 and (c) 1.

F. Total Lift Coefficient

The lift force is obtained by the integration of the pressure p_w and shear stress τ_w distributions from the stagnation point of the leading edge to the station L in the normal direction of the flow. Results for total lift are normalized by $\rho_\infty V_\infty^2 H/2$ and presented as total lift coefficient C_l and its components of pressure lift coefficient C_{pl} and the skin friction lift coefficient C_{fl} .

The extent of changes on total lift coefficient C_l due to variation on the leading-edge thickness and on the angle of attack is illustrated in Figs. 12(a-c) for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1, respectively. In a similar way, in this set of diagrams, full symbols stand for sharp leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$, and empty symbols for flat-face leading edges, Kn_t of 100, 10 or 1. For convenience, Table 4 tabulates the total lift coefficient for all of the leading edges investigated.

Referring to Figs. 12(a-c) and Table 4, it is very encouraging to observe that appreciable changes results in the total lift coefficient C_l by introducing the frontal face into the leading edges. As a base of comparison, the total lift coefficient for leading-edge thicknesses t/λ_∞ of 0.01, 0.1 and 1, which correspond to Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1, with 5-degree angle of incidence, is reduced by 8.8%, 9.6% and 20.1%, respectively, as compared to that for zero-thickness leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$. On the other hand, for 20-degree angle of incidence, the reduction on the total lift coefficient C_l for Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1 is around 5.6%, 7.1% and 18.1%, respectively, as compared to the zero-thickness leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$, at the same angle of incidence. Consequently, even a small flat face of one hundredth of the freestream mean free path λ_∞ results in an appreciable reduction in the total lift coefficient.

In what follows, it becomes instructive to consider the lift-to-drag (L/D) ratio. The L/D ratio as a function of the angle of attack is tabulated in Table 5 by assuming zero base pressure, as mentioned earlier.

Table 4. Total lift coefficient C_l for the leading edges as a function of the angle of attack α .

α	$Kn_t = \infty$	$Kn_t = 100$	$Kn_t = 10$	$Kn_t = 1$
5	0.364	0.332	0.329	0.291
10	0.740	0.692	0.682	0.588
15	1.121	1.057	1.033	0.888
20	1.440	1.359	1.338	1.180

Figure 12. Pressure lift C_{pl} , skin friction lift C_{fi} and total lift C_l coefficients as a function of the angle of attack for thickness Knudsen number Kn_t of (a) 100, (b) 10 and (c) 1.

According to Table 5, for 5-degree angle of incidence, the L/D ratio for leading-edge thickness corresponding to Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1 is reduced approximately by 6.4%, 7.5% and 21.1%, respectively, as compared to that for zero-thickness leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$. For 20-degree angle of incidence, the reduction on the L/D ratio for Kn_t of 100, 10 and 1 is around 0.4%, 3.5% and 19.9%, respectively, as compared to the zero-thickness leading edge, $Kn_t = \infty$, at the same angle of incidence.

It is firmly established from the results for lift coefficient that the effect of either “aerodynamically” sharp leading edges or no-sharp leading edges on waveriders configuration becomes important. As was pointed in the introduction section, the sharp leading edges are a dominant factor in the L/D ratio of waveriders as compared to conventional aerospace designs. Consequently, leading-edge bluntness introduced for manufacturing, handling or heating concerns will result in a reduction on the L/D ratio.

It should be emphasized in this context that although the use of blunt leading edge can dramatically reduce the aerodynamic heating on the stagnation region of the vehicle, the aerodynamic performance is penalized since blunt leading edge allows leakage of the high-pressure flow from the lower surface region into the upper surface region, causing a reduction in the lift of the waverider.

Table 5. L/D ratio for the leading edges as a function of the angle of attack α .

α	$Kn_t = \infty$	$Kn_t = 100$	$Kn_t = 10$	$Kn_t = 1$
5	0.359	0.336	0.332	0.283
10	0.669	0.648	0.632	0.514
15	0.885	0.872	0.835	0.665
20	0.915	0.911	0.883	0.733

VI. Concluding Remarks

Computations of a rarefied hypersonic flow on sharp/blunt leading edges have been performed by using the Direct Simulation Monte Carlo method. The calculations provided information concerning the nature of the aerodynamic surface quantities for a family of truncated wedges.

Positive angle-of-attack effects on pressure, skin friction, heat transfer, drag and lift coefficients for a wide range of parameters were investigated. The incidence ranged from 0 to 20 degrees. In addition, the leading-

edge thickness ranged from 0.01 to 1 of the freestream mean free path, corresponding thickness Knudsen numbers from 100 to 1. Cases considered in this study covered the hypersonic flow from the transitional flow regime to the free molecular flow regime.

The analysis showed that the total drag coefficient slightly decreased for the “aerodynamically sharp” leading edges investigated, i.e., leading-edge thickness of one hundredth and one tenth of the freestream mean free path, and increased for the “blunt” leading edge case, leading-edge thickness with one freestream mean free path. Nevertheless, at incidence, a significant increase in the total drag coefficient was observed as compared to that with zero-degree angle of incidence. However, the same trend for the total drag was observed for “aerodynamically sharp” and “blunt” leading edges. In addition, it was found that the lift coefficient decreased by increasing the frontal-face of the leading edges. Moreover, the analysis verified that even the smaller leading edge bluntness resulted in significantly reduction on the lift-to-drag ratio. In this scenario, it can be inferred that a tradeoff between performance, lift-to-drag ratio, and aerodynamic heating, heat flux, is required for an optimal waverider design, since the heat flux is inversely proportional to the “nose radius” of the leading edge.

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