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Technical Report No. 42

SACLANT ASW

RESEARCH CENTRE

A DETAILED STUDY OF SOUND REFLECTIONS

FROM

A LAYERED OCEAN BOTTOM

by

P. STANGERUP

15 MAY 1965

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TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 42

SACLANT ASW RESEARCH CENTRE Viale San Bartolomeo 92 La Spezia, Italy

A DETAILED STUDY OF SOUND REFLECTIONS FROM A LAYERED

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APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION

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ABSTRACT

The effect of layered sediments on sound reflection from the ocean bottom has been investigated theoretically and experimentally. Very detailed, systematic and computer-aided calculations of the reflection coefficient of a two-layer bottom are made, using well-known theory and varying the following parameters: (1) velocity and density contrasts; (2) layer thickness normalized with respect to wavelength; (3) absorption in the sediments (in db/wavelength); (4) shear wave velocity in the lower layer. Calculations are made both for a harmonic source and for a broadband source analysed within certain bands around the harmonic source frequency. A series of curves is obtained representing the two-layer effect for a range of parameters that encompasses typical ocean bottom values. It is shown that absorption in the upper layer is of great importance in sound reflection, especially beyond a critical angle, but that moderate shear wave velocities have little effect. An octave band analysis of experimental data using a broadband source — tends to support this theoretical two-layer model.



INTRODUCTION

Very low frequency sound has long been used to investigate the characteristics of the oceans' deep bottom sediments and has often revealed distinct layers of different materials. However, it is only during the last few years that higher frequency sound has been used for similar studies of the layering in the upper tens of metres of the sediment. This has also aroused interest in attempts to explain the ocean-bottom sound-reflection mechanism for frequencies in the kilocycle region by using coring samples.

In fact, the sound reflection loss in the ocean bottom can seldom be explained by a model in which the bottom is considered as a simple, homogeneous, semiinfinite reflector. As short-pulse echo-soundings show, the higher bottom sediments often consist of a complicated system of thin, horizontal layers believed to be produced by turbidity currents, volcanic deposits, etc. Furthermore, the acoustic parameters of these sediments can depend on their age.

Many investigators (Refs. 1, 2 & 3) have tried to explain the bottom-reflection loss by multilayered reflectors consisting of two or more horizontal layers of different acoustic impedance. The present report describes a more systematic, theoretical survey of the subject. It will be shown that rather simple models can be used in many cases, because layers that are thin with respect to the wavelength of the sound have a very small effect and because high frequency sound might not penetrate through many layers because of absorption.

The presently described survey has therefore been carried out for a two-layer reflector in which the lower layer is semi-infinite and in which the thickness of the upper layer has been normalized with respect to the wavelength. Shearwaves in the lower layer and the effects of absorption have also been taken into account.



1. THEORY

1,1 Reflection Coefficient

The amplitude-reflection coefficient for the sea-bottom can, in the plane-wave case, be calculated in a simple way: -

$$R = \frac{Z_{in} - Z_{w}}{Z_{in} + Z_{w}}$$

where Z_w is the acoustic impedance of the water and Z_{in} is the acoustic input impedance of the bottom. This is completely analogous with the reflection from an impedance $Z_L = Z_{in}$ at the end of a transmission line of characteristic impedance $Z_o = Z_w$.

For vertical incidence the acoustic impedance of water is

$$Z_w = \rho_w C_w$$

where ρ_{w} is the density of the water and C_{w} is the sound velocity in it. The input impedance of the reflector is equal to the acoustic impedance of the reflecting medium, if the latter is semi-infinite. In transmission line theory this corresponds to having the input impedance equal to the characteristic impedance for an infinitely long line.

When the angle of incidence is different from zero, the velocity used in the expressions for the impedances should be the vertical phase velocity, which is

$$\frac{C}{\cos \theta}$$

where θ is the angle of incidence. This is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The angles of incidence in the water and the reflector are connected through Snell's law

$$k_{w} \sin \theta_{w} = k_{B} \sin \theta_{B}$$

where k_w and k_B are the wave numbers in water and reflector respectively (k = $\frac{2\pi f}{C}$, f being the frequency).

A layered reflector is analogous to a series connection of transmission lines of different characteristic impedances. The input impedance of a transmission line of length ℓ and characteristic impedance Z_{o} loaded with an impedance $Z_{L'}$ is known to be

$$Z_{\text{in}} = \frac{Z_{\text{L}} + i Z_{\text{o}} \tan \phi}{Z_{\text{o}} + i Z_{\text{L}} \tan \phi} \qquad Z_{\text{o}}$$

where $\phi = \gamma l$ is the phase change along the line, γ being the phase shift per unit length.

An n-layered reflector is shown in Fig. 2, the layers being labelled from the lowest upwards. It is now easy to find the input impedance of the j^{th} layer because it can be expressed by the input impedance, $Z_{in}^{(j-1)}$, of the $(j-1)^{st}$

layer and the acoustical impedance, Z_{i} , of the jth layer (Ref. 4).

$$z_{in}^{(j)} = \frac{z_{in}^{(j-1)} - i Z_{j} \tan \phi_{j}}{Z_{j} - i Z_{in}^{(j-1)} \tan \phi_{j}} Z_{j}$$

$$\phi_j = k_j h_j \cos \theta_j$$

where k_j is the wave number in the jth layer h_j is the thickness of the jth layer, and θ_j is the angle of incidence in the jth layer.

By using this formula and the fact that the lowest layer is semi-infinite (i.e. $Z_{in}^{(1)} = Z_1$), it is now possible to find the input impedance of the whole system of layers seen from the water above. The reflection coefficient is then found from

$$R = \frac{Z_{in} - Z_{w}}{Z_{in} + Z_{w}}$$

The analogy with transmission lines shows that the problem of sound reflection can, in principle, be solved by means of a Smith chart (Ref. 5) — at least for angles of incidence smaller than the critical angle. However, the Smith chart will probably not be accurate enough and a computer should be used. As will be shown later, the computer programme turns out to be quite simple, even when absorption is present. Bottom sediments are lossy media. It is therefore natural to include the effect of absorption in the calculations.

If absorption is absent, a plane sound wave can be characterized in the following way: -

$$\Psi = A e^{-j(\omega t + kx)}$$

where k is the wave number. If absorption is present, a factor e $\propto x$ must be added, giving

$$= A e^{\alpha x} e^{-j(\omega t + kx)}$$

$$= A e^{-j[\omega t + (k + j\alpha)x]}$$

$$= A e^{-j(\omega t + \gamma x)}$$

This means that the propagation constant is now complex and that Snell's law becomes

$$\gamma_{\rm w}\sin\theta_{\rm w} = \gamma_{\rm j}\sin\theta_{\rm j}$$

where $\gamma_{w} = k_{w} + j \alpha_{w}$ and $\gamma_{j} = k_{j} + j \alpha_{j}$

are the propagation constants in the water and in the j^{th} layer respectively. Thus the angle of incidence in the j^{th} layer becomes complex, namely

$$\sin \theta_j = \frac{w_w}{w_j + j \alpha_j} \sin \theta_w$$

if absorption in the water is ignored.

The real parts of the propagation constants determine the sound velocity in the various media

$$C_w = \frac{\omega}{k_w}$$
; $C_j = \frac{\omega}{k_j}$ etc.,

while the imaginary parts, $\alpha_{i'}$ are the absorptions in Neper/unit length.

The impedances can now be defined as

$$Z_{j} = \frac{\rho_{j} \omega}{k + j\alpha}$$

for vertical incidence and

$$Z_{j} = \frac{\rho_{j} \omega}{(k + j \alpha) \cos \theta_{j}}$$

for oblique incidence, which reduces to $Z_j = \frac{\rho_j C_j}{\cos \theta_j}$ if absorption is absent.

1.3 Introduction of shearwaves in the lowest layer

The effect of shearwaves can easily be introduced if they exist only in the semiinfinite lowest layer, since this will only modify the impedance of this layer.

If shearwaves exist in other layers than the lowest, the problem becomes much more complicated and cannot be solved on a basis of impedance, since each

reflection from a boundary between two media will give rise to both a compressional wave and a shearwave. In this case the problem must be solved using the boundary conditions for the potentials at each boundary, but this will not be treated in the present report.

It can be shown (Ref. 4) that the input impedance of a semi-infinite medium with shearwaves can be written

$$Z_{in} = Z_{p} \cos^{2} 2 \theta_{s} + Z_{s} \sin^{2} 2 \theta_{s}$$

where $Z_p = \frac{\rho_{\omega}}{\gamma_p \cos \theta_p}$ and $Z_s = \frac{\rho_{\omega}}{\gamma_s \cos \theta_s}$

and where $\gamma_{\rm p}$ and $\gamma_{\rm s}$ are the propagation constants (complex if absorption is present) for the compressional waves and the shearwaves respectively. $\theta_{\rm p}$ and $\theta_{\rm s}$ are related to the angle of incidence $\Theta_{\rm w}$ in the water through Snell's law

$$k_{w} \sin \theta_{w} = \gamma_{p} \sin \theta_{p} = \gamma_{s} \sin \theta_{s}$$

2. CALCULATED RESULTS

2.1 Effect of the upper layer thickness

On the basis of the above theories, a computer programme has been written to compute the reflection loss for a reflector consisting of an arbitrary number of layers. Absorption can be included in all the layers, and shearwaves can exist in the lowest layer.

The programme exists in two forms. One which computes the reflection loss when a harmonic sound source is used, and the other which computes the reflection loss for a broadband source analyzed in arbitrary frequency bands, taking into account the bandwidth of the filter and the spectrum of the sound source.

The programme has been used to calculate the effects of varying the thickness of the upper layer, the velocity contrasts and the absorption in a theoretical study of a two-layer bottom model.

In Figs. 3 and 4 are shown the reflection loss vs. angles of incidence for different values of the thickness of the upper layer when absorption is absent. Results are computed for two examples. In the first, the velocity of the upper layer is lower than the velocity in the water, while in the second the velocity of the upper layer is slightly higher than that in the water. The velocity in the lower layer is in both cases higher than in the upper layer and higher than the velocity in the water. These two examples are believed to represent two important cases of two-layered bottoms.

The curves for zero layer thickness show the reflection loss for the case in which only the lower medium exists. When the upper layer is thin in comparison with the wave length of the sound, the reflection loss will be very close to the reflection loss for the lower layer alone, because nearly all the energy leaks through such a thin layer.

When the upper layer becomes a quarter wave length thick, there is a relatively high loss at vertical incidence. This will always be the case when the lower layer has a higher impedance than the upper one. From transmission line theory it is known that a quarter wave length line will transform an impedance Z_L to an input impedance Z_{in} , which is

$$z_{\rm in} = \frac{z_{\rm o}^2}{z_{\rm L}}$$

where Z_o is the characteristic impedance of the line. This means that the low impedance upper layer (the impedance of this is however higher than that of the water) will transform the high impedance of the lower layer into an impedance that is quite close to the impedance of the water. In other words, one is closer to an impedance-matching and more of the energy is transmitted into the bottom.

When the layer becomes half a wave length thick, the input impedance for vertical incidence is exactly the same as the impedance of the lower layer, i.e. the reflection loss is the same as if the upper layer does not exist. At about 60° angle of incidence (exactly 60° in the upper layer) the layer becomes a quarter wave length layer, since the vertical phase velocity in the upper layer becomes

$$\frac{C_{up}}{\cos \theta_{up}} = 2 C_{up}$$

This means a minimum in the curve at this angle.

Beyond the critical angle for the lower layer (this angle is reached earlier than in the upper layer because of the higher velocity) the reflection becomes total. This can be explained by the fact that beyond a critical angle the input impedance of the medium is purely imaginary. This means that the input impedance of the whole system will also be purely imaginary, since a transmission line loaded by a pure reactance impedance will always show a purely reactive input impedance, independent of the length of the line.

As the layer becomes thicker than half a wave length, a series of maxima and minima will show up. The maxima will occur for angles of incidence for which the upper layer becomes half a wave length with respect to the vertical phase velocity. The upper envelope for the curve will be the reflection loss curve for a reflector consisting of only the lower semi-infinite medium. The minima will occur for angles of incidence at which the layer thickness with respect to the vertical phase velocity becomes an odd multiple of a quarter wave length.

2.2 Effects of absorption and of source bandwidth

Figures 5 to 16 have been drawn to show the effects of absorption on the reflection loss for different layer thicknesses. Each figure is divided into three columns. In the left-hand column are shown some of the same cases as described above but, in addition, showing the effect of absorption. In most cases the absorption in the sediments seems to diminish the oscillations of the reflection loss curves, but in a few cases the opposite occurs, especially for the thinner layers and around the critical angle. It is also seen that absorption in the lower layer has much less effect than that in the upper layer.

The middle column shows computed results, using a broad band white source through a filter 1/3 of an octave broad around the frequency for which the layer thickness is normalized.

The right-hand column shows the results using a broad band source in an octave band.

It is seen that the characteristic shape of the curves for a given layer thickness is the same in the 1/3 octave band when layer thicknesses are less than one wave length as it is for a harmonic source. For the octave bands this is only the case for layers thinner than half a wave length at the centre frequency of the band. At thicker layers all interesting effects are averaged out in the broad bands. If an explosive sound source is used, the analysis should not be made in broad frequency bands — which is often the case — but by a Fourier analysis.

However, by comparing the curves for the harmonic source with the curves for the octave band it is seen that phenomena beyond the critical angles are relatively frequency-independent. It seems that the shape of the curve beyond the critical angle is primarily determined by the absorption per layer thickness and by the velocity contrast.

2.3 The effect of introducing a thin layer in the upper sediment of the twolayer model

As has already been seen, a very thin layer (with respect to the wave length) has a negligible effect — it is nearly transparent. This was illustrated in Fig. 3.1 for a thin layer overlaying the lower, semi-infinite medium.

Such layers are often found in nature, especially when turbidity currents are responsible for the deposition. As an example of this it is interesting to

analyze the case in which a thin layer is found within the upper medium of the two-layer bottom. The bottom now, in fact, is better characterized by a four-layer model.

Consider, therefore, the addition of an extra layer — $\lambda/16$ thick, for instance — and allow the location of this layer to change within the upper medium. For each position of this thin layer a certain reflection loss curve is obtained for the whole system. The envelopes of all these curves give the maximum deviation one can expect from the pure two-layer model without the extra layer.

The result of such a computation is shown in Fig. 17 — computed for two velocity contrasts — from which it is seen that, with velocity contrasts that are not too high, thin layers have little importance, no matter where they are located in the system.

This result is quite important, since from this one can often simplify the complicated models frequently obtained from cores or high frequency echo-soundings. In models that include a series of very thin layers it is possible to neglect these layers completely and thereby simplify the analysis.

2.4 The effect of the shear waves in the lower layer

The effect of shear waves on the reflection loss for a simple semi-infinite reflector is shown in Fig. 18. Two cases have been computed, one without absorption and the other one with the absorption of 1 db/ λ .

As already mentioned, the computer programme permits computation of the reflection loss for a multi-layered reflector with shear waves in the lowest layer. The effect of shear waves in the lower medium of a two-layer bottom is shown in Fig. 19 for some different thicknesses of the upper layer and for some different shear wave velocities. In these cases absorption has not been included.

The shear wave velocity is certainly a very difficult parameter to measure in practice. Velocities from 0.05 - 0.3 times the compressional wave velocity seem to be typical for marine sediments (Refs. 6, 7). It is seen from Fig. 19 that such low shear velocities have a very small effect on the reflection loss.

If, on the other hand, the shear wave velocity in the lower medium is high (as in rock) the picture becomes quite complicated, as shown in Fig. 20.

The assumption that the shear velocity should be zero — or very close to zero — in the upper layer is probably true. The upper layers are nearly always considered completely fluid.

The reflection loss for the ocean bottom has been measured over great areas of the Mediterranean Sea, using explosive sound sources and measuring the energy of the received signal reflected from the bottom. The angle of incidence was varied by varying the distance between the transmitting and receiving ships.

The energy was measured in octave bands between 75 and 4,800 cps. If the bottom can be characterized by a two-layer model, it should be possible, in one or two neighbouring filters, to observe a relatively high reflection loss if the layer thickness is about a quarter wave length. The effect should be very pronounced if the layer thickness is a quarter wave length at the centre frequency of one of the octave bands. For the above filters this means layer thicknesses in the range 10 cm - 4 m.

These effects have actually been observed in the measurements. Figure 21 shows results of a measurement where the reflection losses at vertical incidence are not very different in the different filters (Ref. 8). On the contrary, the results given in Fig. 22 show very clearly a higher reflection loss in the lowest filter (75 - 150 cps), which might mean a layering of the sediments with an upper layer thickness of some few metres. Actually, this case seems to be at least as common as the case shown in Fig. 21 where the reflection loss does not vary with frequency. It should be emphasized that the results shown in Fig. 21 and 22 are average results from quite large areas.

Some coring has been carried out, but not deep enough to verify the acoustic measurements. However, in an area with acoustic results very similar to the results shown in Fig. 22 — indicating an upper layer some few metres thick — most of the core contained fine mud, while at the bottom (at about 3.5 m) a sand layer showed up. Because of the shortness of the core it is uncertain

whether this sand layer is only thin or whether it stretches to greater depths. A core from the area that gave the results in Fig. 21 (frequency independent reflection loss) showed a much more sandy sediment extending right to the top. Deeper cores will probably be taken in the very near future.

In Fig. 23 an attempt has been made to fit some measured points to a theoretical computation of the reflection loss for a two-layer reflector. The parameters used in this computation are not measured ones, but a trial and error method has been used in which a certain relationship between density and sound velocity has been taken into account.

The well-known relationship between sound velocity and porosity (which determines the density) (Ref. 9) is shown in Fig. 24, which also shows some measured points obtained from the cores.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work has been to make a systematic, theoretical survey of the reflection loss from a two-layer reflector.

It has been seen that the shape of the curve showing the reflection loss vs. angle of incidence is very characteristic for a given layer thickness and should be easily recognizable.

Absorption alters the curves, especially around and beyond the critical angle, its effect being mostly to diminish the oscillations in the curves. Absorption in the lower layer has much less effect than that in the upper layer.

Wide angle measurements with a harmonic source should be very useful. If a broad band source is used, a Fourier analysis is to be preferred to energy measurements in broad frequency bands, since otherwise many interesting effects are averaged out. However, layers which are about a quarter wave length thick can be — and probably have been — detected using explosive sound sources analyzed in octave bands.

Shear waves in the lower layer of the two-layer model have a negligible effect on the reflection loss for the low shear wave velocities expected to exist in porous marine sediments.

Layers that are thin with respect to the wave length are practically transparent.

A useful supplement to this theoretical work would be to investigate the effect of velocity gradients in the layers.

Programmes to compute both the pulse distortion upon reflection from a layered reflector and the reflection coefficient with shear waves in all the layers are being prepared by O. Hastrup and will make a natural conclusion to the present theoretical work on layered bottoms.

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Fig. 2





Cwater=1554.3 m/sec Swater=1.044 Cupper=1523.6 m/sec Supper=1.68 Clower=1641.5 m/sec Slower=2.00 No absorption

REFLECTION LOSS VS.ANGLE OF INCIDENCE FOR 2-LAYER BOTTOM. LAYER THICKNESS IN WAVELENGTH



Fig. 3







REFLECTION LOSS VS ANGLE OF INCIDENCE FOR 2-LAYER BOTTOM. LAYER THICKNESS IN WAVELENGTH



90°

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REFLECTION LOSS VS. ANGLE OF INCIDENCE FROM A MEDIUM





Fig. 19

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REFLECTION LOSS VS. ANGLE OF INCIDENCE FOR A TWO-LAYER BOTTOM WITH SHEAR IN THE LOWEST LAYER

N/2 LAYER



Cwater=1554.3m/sec Swater=1.044 Cupper=1523.6m/sec Supper=1.68 Clower=1641.5m/sec Supper=2.00



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SURED AND COMPUTED TWO-LAYER BOTTOM	Velocity CwarER= 1554,3 m/sec CUPPER = 1518,1 m/sec CUPPER = 1518,1 m/sec CLOWER = 1780 m/sec Density 3warER = 1,044 3uPPER = 1,044 3uPPER = 1,66 3LOWER = 2,1 Absorption Absorption awarER = 0,15 db/A aupPER = 0,15 db/A alowER = 2,25 db/A alowER = 2,25 db/A	0
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