

CAVITATION: A SOLUTION

TSOGTGEREL GANTUMUR

Note: This document was originally created for internal use only. The chosen units and the wording might be different from the official version of the problem statement. For instance, we might write $1\ \mu\text{m}$ for 10^{-6} m . “Table 1” refers to the “notation table” from the statement. You are advised to double check at least the numerical computations, and not to blindly accept this solution. Feedbacks and different solutions are welcome.

A1. By performing a simple dimensional analysis, estimate the collapse time τ of a pure vapour bubble, in terms of bubble’s initial radius R_0 , water density ρ , water pressure p_∞ , and the vapour pressure p_v . Evaluate the formula when $R_0 = 1\text{ mm}$ and the quantities ρ , p_∞ and p_v take their typical values from Table 1. Assume no surface tension: $\sigma = 0$.

Note: The data in the statement overrides the data in the table. However, we do not reduce mark if the student (carelessly) used the value (10^{-5} m) of R_0 from the table.

Solution. It is reasonable to expect that the bubble would not collapse if $p_\infty \leq p_v$. Hence we take $p_\infty > p_v$, and presume that the difference $p_\infty - p_v$ will feature in the final formula. The dimensions of the quantities are

$$[R_0] = \text{m}, \quad [\rho] = \text{kg}/\text{m}^3, \quad [p_\infty - p_v] = \text{N}/\text{m}^2 = \text{kg}/(\text{m} \cdot \text{s}^2). \quad (1)$$

The only combination of these that has the dimension of time is

$$\tau \sim R_0 \sqrt{\frac{\rho}{p_\infty - p_v}} \approx 0.1\text{ ms}. \quad (2)$$

A2. Suppose that a micro-bubble consisting of air and vapour, with radius $R_0 = 10\ \mu\text{m}$, is in equilibrium when the external pressure $p_\infty = 100\text{ kPa}$. Find the partial pressure q_0 of air in the bubble. Now suppose that the external pressure p_∞ was gradually decreased, and that the air inside the bubble follows an isothermal process. Find the critical pressure p_c , defined by the condition that if $p_\infty < p_c$ the bubble size grows without bound. The quantities p_v and σ take their typical values from Table 1.

Solution. The pressure equilibrium condition is

$$p_v + q = p_\infty + \frac{2\sigma}{R}, \quad (3)$$

which, under $R = R_0$ and $q = q_0$, yields

$$q_0 = p_\infty - p_v + \frac{2\sigma}{R_0} \approx 113\text{ kPa}. \quad (4)$$

On the other hand, taking into account the isothermal law

$$q_0 R_0^3 = q R^3, \quad (5)$$

we get

$$p_\infty = p_v + \frac{q_0 R_0^3}{R^3} - \frac{2\sigma}{R}. \quad (6)$$

The critical pressure corresponds to the minimum of p_∞ as a function of R . The radius at the minimum is easily found to be

$$R_c = R_0 \sqrt{\frac{3q_0 R_0}{2\sigma}} \approx 48 \mu\text{m}, \quad (7)$$

and the corresponding pressure is

$$p_c = p_v - 2q_0 \left(\frac{R_0}{R_c}\right)^3 \approx 322 \text{ Pa}. \quad (8)$$

B1. Suppose that a single spherical bubble resides within water that fills space uniformly, and that the bubble may evolve in size without distorting its spherical shape, due to changes, e.g., in the external pressure p_∞ . Derive an equation that relates the bubble radius $R(t)$ and its time derivatives $R'(t)$ and $R''(t)$, surface tension σ , water density ρ , the pressure far from the bubble p_∞ , and the pressure inside the bubble p . Then split the pressure p into two terms, by assuming that the bubble has both vapour and air in it, and that the air follows an adiabatic process with exponent γ . To give a reference point, the partial air pressure must be q_0 when the bubble size equals R_0 . Assume that evaporation, condensation, or transfer of air between the bubble cavity and the surrounding water has no effect on the water volume.

Solution. Let $v(r, t)$ denote the radial velocity of the fluid element at the distance r from the bubble center and at the time moment t . Let also $u(t) = v(R, t)$, that is,

$$u(t) = R'(t). \quad (9)$$

Then the incompressibility condition yields

$$v(r, t) = \frac{R^2 u(t)}{r^2}, \quad (10)$$

and hence

$$\frac{\partial v}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \frac{R^2 u}{r^2} = \frac{2R}{r^2} u^2 + \frac{R^2}{r^2} u'. \quad (11)$$

The radial acceleration can now be computed as

$$a = \frac{\partial v}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial v}{\partial r} v = \frac{R^2}{r^2} u' + \frac{2R}{r^2} u^2 - \frac{2R^4}{r^5} u^2. \quad (12)$$

With $p = p(r)$ denoting the pressure field (where possible time dependence is suppressed in the notation), Newton's law reads

$$\rho a = -p', \quad (13)$$

or

$$\frac{R^2}{r^2} u' + \left(\frac{2R}{r^2} - \frac{2R^4}{r^5}\right) u^2 = -\frac{p'}{\rho}. \quad (14)$$

We integrate it from $r = R$ to $r = \infty$, to get

$$Ru' + \frac{3}{2}u^2 = \frac{p(R) - p_\infty}{\rho}. \quad (15)$$

Since the pressure inside the bubble satisfies

$$p = p(R) + \frac{2\sigma}{R}, \quad (16)$$

we conclude that

$$RR'' + \frac{3}{2}(R')^2 + \frac{2\sigma}{\rho R} = \frac{p - p_\infty}{\rho}. \quad (17)$$

Finally, taking into account the fact that the bubble pressure p consists of the vapour pressure p_v and the partial air pressure q , as

$$p = p_v + q = p_v + q_0 \left(\frac{R_0}{R} \right)^{3\gamma}, \quad (18)$$

we have

$$\rho R R'' + \frac{3}{2} \rho (R')^2 + \frac{2\sigma}{R} - \frac{q_0 R_0^{3\gamma}}{R^{3\gamma}} = p_v - p_\infty. \quad (19)$$

B2. A water tank under the external pressure $p_\infty^- = 101 \text{ kPa}$, containing a nucleus of radius $R_0 = 10 \mu\text{m}$ initially in equilibrium, was exposed to vacuum, so that the system suddenly has $p_\infty = 0$. Estimate the terminal (asymptotic) value of the growth speed R' , as well as the time it reaches this terminal value.

Solution. Putting $R'' = 0$ and $R \rightarrow \infty$ in (19) yields

$$R'(\infty) = \sqrt{\frac{2(p_v - p_\infty)}{3\rho}} = \sqrt{\frac{2p_v}{3\rho}} \approx 1.26 \text{ m/s}. \quad (20)$$

The initial acceleration can also be found from (19) as

$$R''(0) = \frac{q_0 + p_v - 2\sigma/R_0}{\rho R_0} = \frac{p_\infty^-}{\rho R_0} \approx 10^7 \text{ m/s}^2, \quad (21)$$

and hence the time for the speed to be stabilized can be estimated as

$$t = \frac{R'(\infty)}{R''(0)} \approx 0.1 \mu\text{s}. \quad (22)$$

B3. A water tank under the external pressure $p_\infty^- = 1600 \text{ Pa}$, containing a gas bubble of radius $R_0 = 10 \mu\text{m}$ initially in equilibrium, was suddenly exposed to the atmospheric pressure $p_\infty = 101 \text{ kPa}$. Estimate the minimum radius of the bubble before it rebounds.

Solution. Multiply (19) by $2R^2 R'$ to get

$$\rho [R^3 (R')^2]' + 4\sigma R R' - 2q_0 R_0^{3\gamma} R^{2-3\gamma} R' = 2(p_v - p_\infty) R^2 R', \quad (23)$$

or

$$\rho [R^3 (R')^2]' + 2\sigma (R^2)' + \frac{2q_0 R_0^{3\gamma} (R^{3-3\gamma})'}{3(\gamma-1)} = \frac{2}{3} (p_v - p_\infty) (R^3)'. \quad (24)$$

This can easily be integrated, from $R(0) = R_0$ and $R'(0) = 0$ to $R(t) = R$ and $R'(t) = R'$, which yields

$$\rho R^3 (R')^2 + 2\sigma (R^2 - R_0^2) + \frac{2q_0 R_0^{3\gamma} (R^{3-3\gamma} - R_0^{3-3\gamma})}{3(\gamma-1)} = \frac{2}{3} (p_v - p_\infty) (R^3 - R_0^3), \quad (25)$$

or

$$\rho (R')^2 = \frac{2(p_v - p_\infty)}{3} - \frac{2\sigma}{R} + \frac{2R_0^3}{R^3} \left(\frac{\sigma}{R_0} + \frac{p_\infty - p_v}{3} + \frac{q_0}{3(\gamma-1)} - \frac{q_0 R_0^{3\gamma-3}}{3(\gamma-1)R^{3\gamma-3}} \right). \quad (26)$$

When $R \ll R_0$, it shows first that

$$R' \sim -R^{-3/2}, \quad (27)$$

and moreover that the rebound radius satisfies

$$\left(\frac{R_0}{R} \right)^{3(\gamma-1)} = \frac{(\gamma-1)(p_\infty - p_v + 3\sigma/R_0)}{q_0} + 1. \quad (28)$$

Taking into account that

$$q_0 = p_\infty - p_v + 2\sigma/R_0 \approx 13.8 \text{ kPa}, \quad (29)$$

we conclude that the rebound radius is

$$R \approx 1.6 \mu\text{m}. \quad (30)$$

B4. If there is no gas other than water vapour present in a bubble, the bubble completely collapses in finite time. Determine the characteristic exponent α in

$$R(t) \sim (T - t)^\alpha, \quad (31)$$

where T is the collapse time.

Solution. We have found in the previous part that

$$R' \sim -R^{-3/2}. \quad (32)$$

Putting $R(t) \sim (T - t)^\alpha$ into it we get

$$(T - t)^{\alpha-1} \sim -(T - t)^{-3\alpha/2}, \quad (33)$$

or

$$\alpha = \frac{2}{5}. \quad (34)$$

B5. Based on the equation derived in Part 3, find the natural frequency of the spherical oscillation of a bubble of radius $R_0 = 0.1 \text{ mm}$.

Solution. Introducing the new variable x by $R = R_0x$, we write (19) as

$$\rho R_0^2 x x'' + \frac{3}{2} \rho R_0^2 (x')^2 + \frac{2\sigma}{R_0 x} - q_0 x^{-3\gamma} = p_v - p_\infty. \quad (35)$$

Now put $x = 1 + y$ and retain the terms up to linear in y , to have

$$\rho R_0^2 y'' + \frac{2\sigma}{R_0} (1 - y) - q_0 (1 - 3\gamma y) = p_v - p_\infty. \quad (36)$$

Taking into account the equilibrium condition

$$\frac{2\sigma}{R_0} - q_0 = p_v - p_\infty, \quad (37)$$

we infer

$$y'' + \frac{3\gamma q_0 - 2\sigma/R_0}{\rho R_0^2} y = 0. \quad (38)$$

Thus the bubble is unstable if

$$3\gamma q_0 \leq 2\sigma/R_0 = q_0 + p_v - p_\infty, \quad (39)$$

or equivalently, if

$$p_\infty \leq p_v - (3\gamma - 1)q_0. \quad (40)$$

On the other hand, if $p_\infty > p_v - (3\gamma - 1)q_0$ then the bubble oscillates with the natural frequency

$$f_0 = \frac{1}{2\pi R_0} \sqrt{\frac{(3\gamma - 1)q_0 + p_\infty - p_v}{\rho}} \approx 33 \text{ kHz}. \quad (41)$$

B6. Suppose that the bubble described in the previous part is subjected to a standing sound wave along the x -axis, whose pressure field is given by

$$p(x, t) = p_0 + A \sin\left(\frac{2\pi f}{c}(x + a)\right) \sin(2\pi ft), \quad (42)$$

where f is the frequency, and c is the speed of sound. The parameters p_0 , A , and a are constants, whose meanings may readily be deduced from the equation. Find the average force exerted upon the bubble. The bubble is situated at the origin of the xyz coordinate system, and its size is much smaller than the wavelength of the sound.

Solution. Small oscillation of the bubble is described by

$$\rho R_0^2(y'' + 4\pi^2 f_0^2 y) = A \sin\left(\frac{2\pi f}{c}a\right) \sin(2\pi ft). \quad (43)$$

Looking for the solution in the form

$$y(t) = B \sin(2\pi ft), \quad (44)$$

we find

$$B = \frac{A \sin(2\pi f a/c)}{4\pi^2 \rho R_0^2(f_0^2 - f^2)}. \quad (45)$$

Since

$$R(t) = R_0 + R_0 y(t), \quad (46)$$

the volume of the bubble is

$$V(t) = \frac{4\pi}{3} R(t)^3 \approx \frac{4\pi}{3} R_0^3 [1 + 3y(t)]. \quad (47)$$

Now recalling that the average force is

$$F = -\langle V \frac{\partial p}{\partial x} \rangle, \quad (48)$$

where the average is taken over time, and that the pressure gradient is

$$\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} = \frac{2\pi f A}{c} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi f}{c}a\right) \sin(2\pi ft), \quad (49)$$

we conclude

$$F = -\frac{f A^2 R_0}{2\rho c(f_0^2 - f^2)} \sin\left(\frac{4\pi f a}{c}\right). \quad (50)$$

C1. Suppose that a nucleus consisting of air and vapour, with radius $R_0 = 10 \mu\text{m}$, is placed in water-air solution, in which the dissolved air is in equilibrium with the atmospheric pressure above the water. The partial pressure of air in the bubble is $q = 170 \text{ kPa}$, and the vapour pressure can be neglected. Estimate the time required for the bubble to be completely resorbed into water. The quantities p_∞ , κ , δ and σ take their typical values from Table 1. Assume that the region surrounding the bubble in which air diffusion takes place immediately gets much larger than the bubble itself.

Solution. From Henry's law, the initial concentration of dissolved air in the body of water is

$$u_i = Hp_\infty \approx 0.024 \text{ kg/m}^3, \quad (51)$$

and the initial concentration of dissolved air in the immediate vicinity of the bubble is

$$u = Hq \approx 0.041 \text{ kg/m}^3. \quad (52)$$

Since $u > u_i$, there will be diffusive flux directed away from the bubble, and the bubble will start losing air. As a result, the bubble shrinks and the surface tension term $2\sigma/R$ increases. Since the external pressure p_∞ is constant, the partial air pressure q increases, which leads to more diffusive flux. In the end, the bubble will get completely resorbed into water.

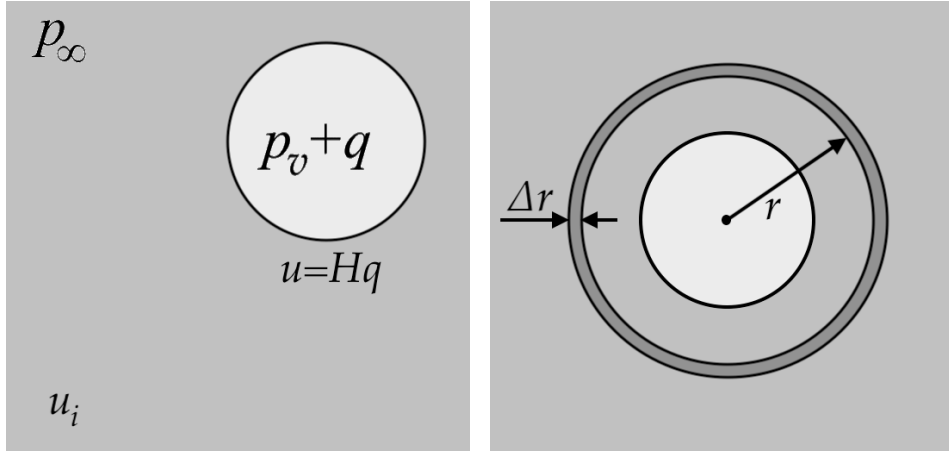


FIGURE 1. (a) Initial configuration of the system (b) The geometry used in the solution

To quantify the diffusion of air, let us consider the region enclosed by concentric spheres of radii r and $r + \Delta r$ with Δr small. The rate of change of air mass in this region is

$$\frac{dm}{dt} = 4\pi r^2 \Delta r \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad (53)$$

where $4\pi r^2 \Delta r$ is the volume of the region and the air concentration $u = u(r, t)$ is a function of r and t . On the other hand, the same quantity can be computed as the difference between the diffusive fluxes through the concentric spheres:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dm}{dt} &= 4\pi(r + \Delta r)^2 J(r + \Delta r) - 4\pi r^2 J(r) \\ &= 4\pi(r + \Delta r)^2 \kappa \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}(r + \Delta r) - 4\pi r^2 \kappa \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}(r) \\ &\approx 4\pi r^2 \kappa \Delta r \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial r^2}(r) + 8\pi r \kappa \Delta r \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}(r), \end{aligned} \quad (54)$$

where we have taken into account the directions of the fluxes, and the fact that

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial r}(r + \Delta r) \approx \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}(r) + \Delta r \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial r^2}(r). \quad (55)$$

Comparing the two equations, we infer

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = \kappa \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial r^2} + \frac{2\kappa}{r} \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}. \quad (56)$$

The dissolved air concentration in water at the initial time moment $t = 0$ is uniformly u_i , and assuming that the radius R of the bubble remains *constant*, the air concentration in the immediate vicinity of the bubble should be equal to Hq :

$$\begin{cases} u(r, 0) = u_i & \text{for } r > R, \\ u(R, t) = Hq & \text{for } t > 0. \end{cases} \quad (57)$$

Introducing a new variable $v = r(u - qH)$, and a new time parameter $\tau = \kappa t$, the diffusion equation (56) becomes

$$\frac{\partial v}{\partial \tau} = \frac{\partial^2 v}{\partial r^2}, \quad (58)$$

with

$$\begin{cases} v(r, 0) = r(u_i - qH) & \text{for } r > R, \\ v(R, \tau) = 0 & \text{for } \tau > 0. \end{cases} \quad (59)$$

We can go further by introducing

$$\xi = r - R \quad \text{and} \quad w(\xi, \tau) = v(R + \xi, \tau), \quad (60)$$

to write (56) as

$$\frac{\partial w}{\partial \tau} = \frac{\partial^2 w}{\partial \xi^2}, \quad (61)$$

with

$$\begin{cases} w(\xi, 0) = (R + \xi)(u_i - qH) & \text{for } \xi > 0, \\ w(0, \tau) = 0 & \text{for } \tau > 0. \end{cases} \quad (62)$$

The solution to this problem is

$$w(\xi, \tau) = \frac{u_i - qH}{\sqrt{4\pi\tau}} \int_0^\infty (e^{-(\xi-\eta)^2/(4\tau)} - e^{-(\xi+\eta)^2/(4\tau)}) (\eta + R) d\eta. \quad (63)$$

Since

$$u(r, t) = qH + \frac{v(r, \kappa t)}{r} = qH + \frac{w(r - R, \kappa t)}{r}, \quad (64)$$

we have

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial r} = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial w}{\partial \xi} - \frac{w}{r^2}, \quad (65)$$

and hence

$$\left. \frac{\partial u}{\partial r} \right|_{r=R} = \frac{1}{R} \left. \frac{\partial w}{\partial \xi} \right|_{\xi=0} = (u_i - qH) \left(\frac{1}{R} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi\kappa t}} \right). \quad (66)$$

The second term corresponds to the width of the diffusion layer surrounding the bubble, which we assume to be much larger than the bubble itself. Hence the rate of change of the mass of the bubble can be estimated as

$$\frac{dm}{dt} = 4\pi R^2 \kappa \left. \frac{\partial u}{\partial r} \right|_{r=R} \approx 4\pi \kappa R (u_i - qH). \quad (67)$$

On the other hand, the mass of the bubble is related to the air density, which in turn is proportional to the pressure:

$$m = \frac{4\pi}{3} R^3 \delta = \frac{4\pi}{3} R^3 \cdot \frac{\delta_0 q}{p_\infty}, \quad (68)$$

where $\delta_0 = 1.2 \text{ kg/m}^3$ is the air density at the atmospheric pressure $p_\infty = 10^5 \text{ Pa}$. Furthermore, neglecting vapour pressure, we have the mechanical equilibrium condition

$$q = p_\infty + \frac{2\sigma}{R}, \quad (69)$$

leading to

$$m = \frac{4\pi}{3} R^3 \cdot \left(\delta_0 + \frac{\varepsilon}{R} \right), \quad (70)$$

with

$$\varepsilon = \frac{2\sigma\delta_0}{p_\infty} \approx 1.73 \cdot 10^{-6} \text{ kg/m}^2. \quad (71)$$

After taking the derivative of (70) with respect to t , we equate it to (67), and get

$$4\pi\kappa R(u_i - p_\infty H - \frac{2\sigma H}{R}) = 4\pi\delta_0 R^2 \frac{dR}{dt} + \frac{8\pi}{3} \varepsilon R \frac{dR}{dt}. \quad (72)$$

Since $u_i - p_\infty H = 0$, we have

$$-2\sigma\kappa H dt = \delta_0 R^2 dR + \frac{2}{3} \varepsilon R dR, \quad (73)$$

and a direct integration yields

$$2\sigma\kappa H t = \frac{\delta_0 R_0^3}{3} + \frac{4\varepsilon R_0^2}{3}, \quad (74)$$

finally giving

$$t = \frac{(\delta_0 R_0 + 4\varepsilon) R_0^2}{6\sigma\kappa H} \approx 9 \text{ s}. \quad (75)$$

Thus the nucleus collapses in a matter of seconds.

C2. Consider a conical crevice in the wall of a water container, with an aperture angle α . A small amount of air and vapour is trapped within the cone. Write down the condition of mechanical and diffusive equilibrium. Determine when the pocket of air stays in the crevice without disappearing.

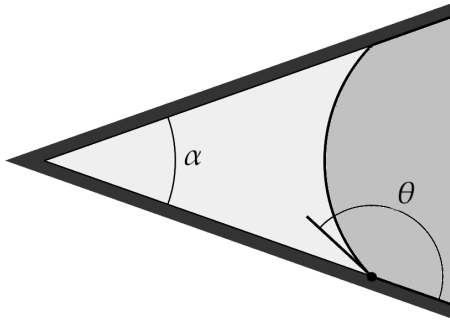


FIGURE 2. Conical crevice

Solution. The equilibrium conditions are

$$p_v + q = p_\infty \pm \frac{2\sigma}{R} \quad \text{and} \quad u = Hq. \quad (76)$$

The plus sign corresponds to the situation where the water surface is concave, and the surface tension tends to squeeze the air out of the crevice through diffusion. When the water surface is convex, we have the opposing sign. Supposing that initially the partial air pressure q is large, q will decrease as the region of trapped air shrinks due to diffusion. At some point, a diffusive equilibrium will be found. Thus the pocket of air does not disappear when the water surface is convex, meaning that

$$\pi + \alpha < 2\theta. \quad (77)$$

Theoretical Problem 3: Cavitation

Q3 - Marking Scheme

Question part	Total marks	Partial marks	Explanation
A1	0.5	0.4	Derivation of the formula
		0.1	Numerical answer
A2	1	0.3	Pressure equilibrium condition
		0.1	Numerical answer for partial air pressure
		0.1	Equilibrium condition with isothermal law
		0.4	Formula for critical pressure
		0.1	Numerical answer for critical pressure
B1	1.5	0.3	Incompressibility condition
		0.5	Computation of radial acceleration
		0.3	Taking into account Newton's second law
		0.2	Final equation with p , where surface tension enters
		0.2	Final equation with p split and adiabatic law taken into account
B2	1	0.4	Formula for terminal speed
		0.1	Numerical answer for terminal speed
		0.4	Formula for time or for initial acceleration
		0.1	Numerical answer for time
B3	1	0.5	Formula for speed R'
		0.4	Formula for rebound radius
		0.1	Numerical answer for rebound radius
B4	0.5	0.2	Writing down the asymptotic equation for R'
		0.2	Substitution of the form into the equation

Question part	Total marks	Partial marks	Explanation
		0.1	Numerical answer for alpha
B5	1	0.4	Writing down the linear second order equation
		0.2	Recognition of the stability condition
		0.3	Formula for the natural frequency
		0.1	Numerical answer for the natural frequency
B6	1	0.2	Writing down the forced oscillator equation
		0.3	Solution of the equation
		0.1	Computation of volume
		0.1	Computation of pressure gradient
		0.3	Final answer
C1	2	0.1	Initial concentration of air in water
		0.1	Initial concentration of air near bubble
		0.1	Mass change rate in a shell in terms of concentration change rate
		0.1	Mass change rate in a shell in terms of flux
		0.1	Use of Fick's law
		0.2	Diffusion equation in terms of r and t
		0.2	Initial and boundary conditions
		0.2	Reformulation and solution
		0.2	Computing the air flux at the bubble wall
		0.1	Simplification due to smallness of the bubble
		0.2	Mass of the bubble in terms of pressure with ideal gas law taken into account
		0.1	Mass balance
		0.2	Final formula for resorption time

Question part	Total marks	Partial marks	Explanation
		0.1	Numerical answer for resorption time
C2	0.5	0.2	Condition of equilibrium
		0.3	Final condition on angles

ON THEORY QUESTION 3 B4

TSOGTGEREL GANTUMUR

There has been a claim that if one uses (19) directly instead of (27), then one would have $\alpha = \frac{2}{3}$ instead of $\alpha = \frac{2}{5}$ (equation numbers refer to the solution uploaded to OlyExams). On the surface, it may look puzzling, and the leader of a team has even suggested that it means that the form $R(t) \sim (T-t)^\alpha$ is impossible. The following note is submitted by prof. Cheol-Hwang Park.

Instead of using Eq. (26) or (27),
we can also use Eq. (19) :

$$RR'' + \frac{3}{2}R'^2 + \frac{2\sigma}{\rho R} = p_v - p_\infty$$

(These terms) $\propto (T-t)^{2\alpha-2} - 0$

(This term) $\propto (T-t)^{-\alpha} \text{ ②}$

(This term) $\propto (T-t)^0 \text{ ③}$

Among ②, ③, ③ is negligible.

$\therefore (T-t)^{2\alpha-2} \propto (T-t)^{-\alpha}$

$\therefore 2\alpha-2 = -\alpha \rightarrow \alpha = \frac{2}{3}$.

This means that $R(t)$ is not of
the form $(T-t)^\alpha$ at $R \ll R_0$.

However, a closer inspection will reveal at once that $\alpha = \frac{2}{5}$ is correct. The main thing to note is that the terms RR'' and $\frac{3}{2}(R')^2$ in (19) may separately have large magnitudes, but there is no guarantee that when combined they won't cancel each other. Thus the above argument to force $\alpha = \frac{2}{3}$ is invalid.

To go into a bit more detail, if $R(t) = (T-t)^{2/3}$ then

$$RR'' + \frac{3}{2}(R')^2 + \frac{2\sigma}{\rho R} = \frac{4}{9}(T-t)^{-2/3} + \frac{2\sigma}{\rho}(T-t)^{-2/3} \stackrel{??}{=} \frac{p_v - p_\infty}{\rho},$$

and we do not get the desired cancellation. Note on the other hand that (26) or (27) with $\alpha = \frac{2}{5}$ as in the solution uploaded has no such issue.

To proceed with (19) therefore we must require the leading order growth terms in $RR'' + \frac{3}{2}(R')^2$ must cancel, which is exactly the condition $\alpha = \frac{2}{5}$. Thus we have

$$R(t) = (T-t)^{2/5}(c_0 + f(T-t)),$$

with $f(0) = 0$, and then of course f must be responsible for eliminating the term $\frac{2\sigma}{\rho R}$.