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The Oral Processing of Semi-solid and Soft-solid Foods

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Abstract

Fluid foods are popular in modern life. They are not only enjoyable to consume and provide nutrition, but are also beneficial to special populations, such as those with dysphagia and temporomandibular joint disease or who are edentate. Food rheological properties have an important influence on food oral processing and swallowing. Tongue movement plays a vital role during oral processing of liquid, semi-solid and soft-solid foods. The purpose of this research was to investigate the boundary criteria for categorising liquid, semi-solid and soft-solid foods; identify relationships between food properties and oral processing behaviours; and characterize tongue and lower jaw behaviours during food oral processing, in particular shear stresses generated between the tongue, lower jaw and hard palate.

Constant weight samples were served to subjects who were instructed to consume them naturally, whilst movements of the tongue and lower jaw were measured via articulography and masseter and submental muscle activities were measured via electromyography. Food rheological properties (viscosity, flow curve, stretch-ability, storage modulus and loss modulus), pH and moisture content were characterized for each food sample.

The oral residence time was found to be an important oral processing behaviour, which is affected by the original food viscosity, viscoelastic properties, moisture content, and stretch-ability. Tongue movements dominate the oral processing of semi-solid and soft-solid foods instead of mastication which occurs for hard-solid food. The shear stress of the tongue and lower jaw is the main power during oral processing of semi-solid and soft-solid foods. The maximum shear stress of Greek yoghurt on tongue tip was 123 ± 31 Pa and 151 ± 59 Pa for two subjects; for custard, it was 144 ± 46 Pa and 192 ± 20 Pa. These results agree with estimated data which is currently available for the same food types. Overall, the shear stress tends to increase with increasing food viscosity.

The method developed for measuring shear stresses applied in the oral cavity during oral processing was novel and is the closest to measuring real, in – mouth, shear stresses, which has not been possible to date.

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Experiments conducted in Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 were registered as low risk with the Massey University ethics committee. Experiments (Southern A Application 10/12) were approved by the Massey University ethics committee.

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1. Food oral processing	1
1.2. Objectives for this work	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2. Oral physiology.....	5
2.2.1. Teeth and jaw.....	5
2.2.2. Masticatory muscles	6
2.2.3. Tongue	7
2.2.4. Oral sensors.....	10
2.2.5. Saliva	11
2.2.5.1. Secretion of saliva	11
2.2.5.2. Functions of saliva.....	13
2.2.5.3. Amylase	15
2.3. Overview of oral processing	16
2.3.1. Food acquisition.....	17
2.3.1.1. Mouth size and bite size.....	18
2.3.1.2. Appearance properties.....	18
2.3.1.3. Textural properties	19
2.3.2. Food oral processing.....	19
2.3.2.1. Oral processing of liquid food	19
2.3.2.2. Oral processing of semi-solid and soft-solid foods	20
2.3.2.3. Oral processing of solid food	23
2.3.3. Subject factors influencing oral processing	25
2.3.4. Food factors influencing oral processing	26
2.3.5. Swallowing and oral clearance.....	33
2.3.5.1. Processing of clearance and swallowing	33
2.4. Tongue functionality during feeding	35
2.4.1. Food transport	36

2.4.2. Food retention	37
2.4.3. Food sorting and food mixing	39
2.4.4. Food evaluation	40
2.5. Neural Control.....	40
2.5.1. Central nerve system (CNS) control	40
2.5.2. Peripheral nerve control	42
2.5.2.1. Tongue innervations	42
2.5.2.2. Peripheral feedback	43
2.5.2.3. Blocking tongue function	44
2.6. Oral processing measurement techniques	45
2.6.1. Functional MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)	45
2.6.2. EMG activity	45
2.6.3. Electromagnetic Articulography (EMA)	46
2.6.4. Videofluorography (VFG)	47
2.6.5. Ultrasonograph	48
2.6.6. Tongue pressure measurement	49
2.7. Rheological measurement	49
2.8. Conclusion from the literature	51

Chapter 3: Development of methodologies for recording oral processing behaviours during consumption of liquid, semi-solid and soft-solid foods

3.1. Introduction	53
3.2. Determination of the sensor coil positions on the upper tongue surface	54
3.2.1. Materials and methods	55
3.2.2. Results and discussion.....	57
3.2.3. Conclusions	69
3.3. Determination of the oral residence time	69
3.3.1. Determination of oral residence time using jaw and tongue movement	69
3.3.1.1. Introduction.....	69
3.3.1.2. Materials and methods.....	70
3.3.1.3. Results and discussion	72
3.3.1.4. Conclusions	75
3.3.2. Determination of the oral residence time using muscle activities	75
3.3.2.1. Introduction	75

3.3.2.2.	Materials and methods.....	76
3.3.2.3.	Results and discussion.....	78
3.3.2.4.	Conclusions	87
3.3.3.	Using EMA and EMG simultaneously to determine oral residence time	88
3.3.3.1.	Introduction.....	88
3.3.3.2.	Materials and methods	88
3.3.3.3.	Results and discussion	89
3.3.3.4.	Conclusions	94
3.4.	Conclusions	95

Chapter 4: Characterisation of foods

4.1.	Introduction	96
4.2.	Materials and methods	96
4.2.1.	Materials	96
4.2.2.	Rheological properties	97
4.2.2.1.	Flow curve	98
4.2.2.2.	Storage modulus (G') and Loss modulus (G'')	98
4.2.3.	Stretch-ability	98
4.3.	Results and discussion	99
4.3.1.	Rheological properties	99
4.3.1.1.	Shear stress and viscosity	99
4.3.1.2.	Storage modulus (G') and Loss modulus (G'')	101
4.3.2.	Stretch-ability	103
4.3.3.	Summary of food properties data	105
4.4.	Conclusion	107

Chapter 5: The oral processing behaviour during consumption of different food samples

5.1.	Introduction	109
5.2.	Materials and methods	109
5.2.1.	Subjects and materials	109
5.2.2.	Methods	110
5.3.	Results and discussion	110

5.3.1. Oral residence time	110
5.3.2. Muscle activities	114
5.3.3. Reproducibility of the EMA and EMG measurement.....	118
5.3.4. The initiation of chewing activity	118
5.3.4.1. Determining the initiation of chewing using lower jaw movements..	118
5.3.4.2. Determining the initiation of chewing using muscle activities	125
5.3.5. The functions of the tongue during oral processing of different foods	129
5.4. Conclusions	130

Chapter 6: Relationships between oral processing behaviour and expectorated food bolus properties

6.1. Introduction	132
6.2. Materials and methods	132
6.2.1. Subjects and materials	132
6.2.2. Methods	133
6.2.2.1. Saliva flow rate	133
6.2.2.2. Ready-to-swallow bolus images	133
6.2.2.3. Stretch-ability of the expectorated bolus	133
6.2.2.4. Muscle activities	134
6.2.2.5. Moisture content of the original foods and expectorated bolus.....	135
6.2.2.6. pH value	135
6.3. Results and discussion	136
6.3.1. Saliva flow rate	136
6.3.2. Images of expectorated ready-to-swallow bolus	137
6.3.3. Stretch-ability of expectorated bolus	139
6.3.4. Muscle activities during oral processing of food samples	142
6.3.5. Moisture content of expectorated bolus	145
6.3.6. pH value	148
6.4. Conclusions	150

Chapter 7: The behaviour and shear of the tongue and lower jaw during oral processing

7.1. Introduction	152
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7.2.	Materials and methods.....	155
7.2.1.	Experimental procedure	155
7.2.2.	Data analysis	156
7.3.	Results	156
7.3.1.	The displacement of the tongue and lower jaw during oral processing	156
7.3.2.	The velocity of the tongue and lower jaw during oral processing	169
7.3.3.	The dynamic shear stress of the tongue and lower incisor during oral processing.....	177
7.3.3.1.	Determination of the parameters in the shear stress equation	177
7.3.3.2.	The shear rate and shear stress during oral processing	178
7.4.	Discussion	185
7.4.1.	Dynamic parameters of tongue and lower jaw movement during oral food processing	185
7.4.1.1.	Tongue and lower jaw displacement	185
7.4.1.2.	Tongue and lower jaw velocity	187
7.4.1.3.	Tongue and lower jaw shear stress	189
7.4.2.	Validity of the shear stress method	191
7.4.3.	Application of oral shear stress measurements	192
7.5.	Conclusions	193

Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations

8.1.	Conclusions	195
8.2.	Recommendations for future study	195

References	197 -- 223
Appendices	1 -- 26

List of Figures

Figure	Title	Page number
Figure 1-1.	Diagrammatical representation of the general food oral processing and force for all food types	2
Figure 2-1.	Intrinsic muscles of the tongue	8
Figure 2-2.	Lateral view of the tongue, with the extrinsic muscles	8
Figure 2-3.	Left: Tongue innervations by cranial nerves Right: sensory innervations area on tongue	43
Figure 3-1.	Locations for attaching sensor coils to the tongue: a) Near tongue tip; b) Tongue left; c) Tongue right; d) Tongue body; e) Tongue dorsum; f) Tongue tip	56
Figure 3-2.	EMA AG500 magnetic tube	57
Figure 3-3.	Sensor coils movement in three dimensions during consumption of one sip of tap water	59
Figure 3-4.	Traces of sensor coils in EMA during consumption of tap water	61
Figure 3-5.	Sensor coils movement in X axis, Y axis and Z axis during consumption of one tea spoon of yoghurt	63
Figure 3-6.	Traces of sensor coils in EMA during consumption of yoghurt	64
Figure 3-7.	Sensor coils movement on X axis, Y axis and Z axis during consumption of one roasted peanut.	66
Figure 3-8.	Traces of sensor coils in EMA during consumption of one roasted peanut	67
Figure 3-9.	The positions of the second and third sensors in the oral cavity	72
Figure 3-10.	The movement of sensors on tongue tip, tongue base and lower incisor on Z axis during consumption of Nutella	73
Figure 3-11.	The movement of sensors on tongue tip, tongue base and lower incisor on Z axis during consumption of plum jam	73
Figure 3-12.	The movement of sensors on tongue tip, tongue base and lower incisor on Z axis during consumption of standard milk	74

Figure 3-13.	The Submental triangle area	76
Figure 3-14.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of 1 cashew nut for subject A in 3 sessions	79
Figure 3-15.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of Greek yoghurt for subject A in 3 sessions	80
Figure 3-16.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of plum jam for subject A in 3 sessions	81
Figure 3-17.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of Nutella for subject A in 3 sessions	82
Figure 3-18.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of cream cheese for subject A in 3 sessions	83
Figure 3-19.	The EMG traces of right masseter, submental muscle, temporalis, hyoid bone, and Adam's apple during consumption of standard milk for subject A in 3 sessions	84
Figure 3-20.	Graphic a shows the EMG traces of right masseter and submental muscles during consumption of Greek yoghurt for subject B. Graphic b is the RMS plot of these EMG traces	87
Figure 3-21.	Three sensor coils movement on tongue and tooth on X axis (a), Z axis (b), and Y axis (c) during consumption of plum jam from EMA for subject A	90
Figure 3-22.	The rectified EMG RMS plots from right masseter muscle and submental muscles during consumption of plum jam.	92
Figure 3-23.	Plot a shows the masseter (channel 1) and submental muscle (channel 3) EMG traces during oral processing of plum jam using EMG on its own from subject B. Plot b shows EMG traces during consumption of Nutella when using EMG simultaneously with EMA from subject B	94
Figure 3-24.	Plot a shows the masseter (channel 1) and submental muscle (channel 3) EMG traces during oral processing of Nutella using EMG on its own from subject B. Plot b shows EMG traces during consumption of Nutella when using EMG simultaneously with EMA from subject B	94

Figure 5-1.	The ORTs of 22 food samples using EMA (red) and EMG (blue) methods	114
Figure 5-2.	Oral residence time versus stretch-ability (measured at 20°C using a Texture Analyzer)	115
Figure 5-3.	Average voltage, maximum voltage and total area under the EMG curve for two subjects during the consumption of 22 food samples	118
Figure 5-4.	Relationships of four types of foods	120
Figure 5-5.	The tongue and lower jaw movements during oral processing of bottle water in X and Z axes	121
Figure 5-6.	The tongue and lower jaw movements during oral processing of chocolate mousse in X and Z axes	122
Figure 5-7.	The tongue and lower jaw movement during oral processing of condensed milk in X and Z axes	123
Figure 5-8.	The tongue and lower jaw movement during oral processing of plum jam in X and Z axes	124
Figure 5-9.	The tongue and lower jaw movement during oral processing of Philadelphia cream cheese in X and Z axes	125
Figure 5-10.	EMG RMS plot of masseter and submental muscles during drinking bottled water for subject 1	127
Figure 5-11.	EMG RMS plots of masseter and submental muscles during consumption of condensed milk, sour cream and plum jam (from top to bottom) for subject 1	128
Figure 5-12.	EMG RMS plots of masseter and submental muscles during consumption of Philadelphia cream cheese for subject 1	128
Figure 6-1.	The spots where test samples were collected	134
Figure 6-2.	Nine expectorated food bolus images for subject 3	138
Figure 6-3.	Nine expectorated food bolus images for subject 7	139
Figure 6-4.	The correlation between the expectorated bolus F_{max} and ORT	142
Figure 6-5.	The average and maximum voltage of masseter and submental muscle for 8 subjects during consumption of 9 food samples.	144
Figure 6-6.	The expectorated bolus moisture content increased with the original food moisture content	147
Figure 6-7.	Expectorated food bolus moisture content vs. stretch-ability of original food measured at 20°C and 37°C.	147
Figure 6-8.	Moisture content of expectorated bolus vs. viscosity plot at 20°C	148

Figure 7-1.	3D plot of sensor coils traces during consuming standard milk	153
Figure 7-2	2D traces of three sensors (X-Z axis, X-Y axis and Y-Z axis) during oral residence time of standard milk and cheese tub (Subject 2)	154
Figure 7-3	2D traces of three sensors (X-Z axis, X-Y axis and Y-Z axis) during oral residence time of standard milk and cheese tub (Subject 1)	156
Figure 7-4a	The maximum displacement change of three sensors in three dimensions during oral processing of eighteen food samples for subject 1	159
Figure 6-4b.	The maximum displacement change of three sensors in three dimensions during oral processing of eighteen food samples for subject 2	160
Figure 7-5.	Total displacement of the lower incisor (blue), tongue tip (red) and tongue back (green) during oral processing	161
Figure 7-6.	Three sensors velocity in three dimension during oral processing time of standard milk	163
Figure 7-7.	The velocity of three sensors in anteroposterior dimension during oral processing of cheese tub	166
Figure 7-8.	Maximum velocity of the tongue tip, tongue back and lower incisor in three dimensions for subject 1 and subject 2	170
Figure 7-9.	Minimum velocity of the tongue tip, tongue back and lower incisor in three dimensions for subject 1 and subject 2	172
Figure 7-10	Average velocity of the tongue tip, tongue back and lower incisor in three dimensions for subject 1 and subject 2	174
Figure 7-11	The maximum, minimum and average shear rate during oral processing of food samples (from top to bottom) for subject 1 and subject 2	178
Figure 7-12	The logarithm value of maximum, minimum and average shear stress during oral residence time of food samples (from top to bottom) for subject 1 and subject 2	181
Figure 7-13	Representative colour spectra showed velocity of thickener solutions through the pharynx	187

List of Tables

Tables	Titles	Page number
Table 2-1.	Composition of human whole saliva general composition	13
Table 2-2.	Viscoelastic parameters from shear, simple extension, and bulk compression	50
Table 3-1.	Commercial food samples	71
Table 3-2.	Mass of one teaspoon food samples	74
Table 3-3.	Muscle voltages during consumption of 6 food samples (mean \pm SD)	86
Table 3-4.	Twenty-four food samples information	84
Table 3-5.	24 food samples were divided into 3 groups according to the lower jaw movement	91
Table 3-6.	24 food samples were classified into 3 groups according to the masseter muscle and submental muscles activity	97
Table 4-1.	Twenty-three food samples information	97
Table 4-2.	Shear stress, viscosity and logarithmic value of 23 food samples measured at 10 s ⁻¹ shear rate at 20 and 37°C (mean \pm SD)	100
Table 4-3.	G', G'', Log ₁₀ (G') and Log ₁₀ (G'') of 22 food samples (frequency is at 13.3Hz) at 20 and 37 °C (mean \pm SD)	103
Table 4-4.	Stretch-ability (F max and W max) of 23 food samples at 20 °C and 37 °C (mean \pm SD)	105
Table 4-5.	Food properties data of 23 food samples at 20°C (mean \pm SD)	107
Table 4-6.	Food properties data of 23 food samples at 37°C (mean \pm SD)	108
Table 5-1.	Oral residence time (ORT) of 22 food samples using EMA	112
Table 5-2.	Oral residence time (ORT) of 22 food samples using EMG	113
Table 5-3.	Muscle activities of 22 food samples during oral residence time	116
Table 6-1	Eight subjects' rest SFR and Parafilm stimulated SFR (mean \pm SD)	136
Table 6-2	Stretch-ability (F _{max}) of nine expectorated food bolus and original food samples	140

Table 6-3	Oral residence time (ORT) during consumption of 9 food samples from 8 subjects measured in triplicate (mean \pm standard deviation)	143
Table 6-4	Muscle activity parameters during consumption of 9 food samples from 8 subjects measured in triplicate (mean \pm standard deviation)	143
Table 6-5	The correlation coefficients (R ²) between muscular activity and stretch-ability of the expectorated bolus	145
Table 6-6	Moisture content (MC) of 9 original foods and expectorated bolus (mean \pm SD)	146
Table 6-7	pH value of nine samples (mean \pm SD)	149
Table 7-1	Rheological parameters k and n values for different food samples	176