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Nathan Pierson, M Yousfi, Karim Delage, Marion Colella, Thierry Barrière, et al.. Impact of chain extension on the melt strength properties of 3D printed high-performance polyphthalamides using fused granulate fabrication (FGF) process. The 16th Polymer Meeting (PM16), Sep 2025, Prague, Czech Republic. hal-05079630

HAL Id: hal-05079630

<https://hal.science/hal-05079630v1>

Submitted on 22 May 2025

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Impact of chain extension on the melt strength properties of 3d printed high-performance polyphthalamides using fused granulate fabrication (FGF) process

N. Pierson^{1*}, M. Yousfi^{1*}, K. Delage¹, M. Colella¹, T. Barrière², T. Joffre³, J. Duchet-Rumeau¹

¹Université de Lyon, CNRS, UMR 5223, Ingénierie des Matériaux Polymères, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, INSA Lyon, Université Jean Monnet, 69621 Villeurbanne Cedex, France

²Université de Franche-Comté, CNRS, Institut FEMTO-ST, Besançon, France

³Centre Technique Industriel de la Plasturgie et des Composites (CT-IPC), Bellignat, France

*Corresponding Author: mohamed.yousfi@insa-lyon.fr

The Fused Filament Fabrication (FFF) 3D printing is the most common and widespread additive manufacturing (AM) technique, but it requires the manufacturing of filaments. Fused Granular Fabrication (FGF), in which pellets are directly 3D printed, has become a promising technique for AM technology [1]. The present study is particularly focused on injection molding grade high performance polyphthalamides (PPAs) used in the automotive industry because of their excellent mechanical and thermal resistance properties. Two strategies were deployed to enhance the melt strength of PPAs in order to be suitable for the FGF process. The first was a partially reactive way where PA6T/6I copolymers continue to post-polymerize when they melt and the holding time in the extruder of the 3D printer was in-depth controlled [2]. The collected PPA samples were further examined and demonstrated an increase in the molar mass and in the melt viscosity with time as measured by GPC and rheological tests, respectively. The second route was a reactive way where the reaction of the PPAs in the presence of 1, 3-Phenylene-Bis-2-Oxazoline (PBO) and 1,1'-Carbonyl-Bis-Caprolactam (CBC) as chain extender were performed using a twin-screw extruder [3]. The effect of concentration of PBO reacting with the carboxylic end groups and the CBC with the amine end groups on the melt processability behavior were investigated. A design of experiments was then employed to optimize the most important printing parameters based on Charpy impact, three-point bending and short-beam shear tests. The effectiveness of developed approaches to easily improve the melt strength of high performances semiaromatic copolyamides (PPAs) for direct pellet printing is thus demonstrated, allowing the possibility of transposing these findings to highly-filled glass fiber PPAs composites dedicated to aerospace industry.

Keywords: Polyphthalamide, Chain extender, Fused Granular Fabrication, Reactive extrusion.

Acknowledgments

This work has been funded through financial support from the French Carnot Institute "Ingénierie@Lyon" assigned to the project RETPAM.

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