The impact of different aperture distribution models and critical stress criteria on equivalent permeability in fractured rocks

Predicting equivalent permeability in fractured reservoirs requires an understanding of the fracture network geometry and apertures. There are different methods for defining aperture, based on outcrop observations (power law scaling), fundamental mechanics (sublinear length-aperture scaling), and experiments (Barton-Bandis conductive shearing). Each method predicts heterogeneous apertures, even along single fractures (i.e., intrafracture variations), but most fractured reservoir models imply constant apertures for single fractures. We compare the relative differences in aperture and permeability predicted by three aperture methods, where permeability is modeled in explicit fracture networks with coupled fracture-matrix flow. Aperture varies along single fractures, and geomechanical relations are used to identify which fractures are critically stressed. The aperture models are applied to real-world large-scale fracture networks. (Sub)linear length scaling predicts the largest average aperture and equivalent permeability. Barton-Bandis aperture is smaller, predicting on average a sixfold increase compared to matrix permeability. Application of critical stress criteria results in a decrease in the fraction of open fractures. For the applied stress conditions, Coulomb predicts that 50% of the network is critically stressed, compared to 80% for Barton-Bandis peak shear. The impact of the fracture network on equivalent permeability depends on the matrix hydraulic properties, as in a low-permeable matrix, intrafracture connectivity, i.e., the opening along a single fracture, controls equivalent permeability, whereas for a more permeable matrix, absolute apertures have a larger impact. Quantification of fracture flow regimes using only the ratio of fracture versus matrix permeability is insufficient, as these regimes also depend on aperture variations within fractures.

General information
State: Published
Organisations: Centre for oil and gas – DTU, Delft University of Technology
Contributors: Bisdom, K., Bertotti, G., Nick, H.
Number of pages: 19
Pages: 4045-4063
Publication date: 2016
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth
Volume: 121
Issue number: 5
ISSN (Print): 2169-9313
Ratings:
BFI (2019): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2019): Indexed yes
BFI (2018): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
BFI (2017): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2017): CiteScore 3.19 SJR 2.272 SNIP 1.475
Web of Science (2017): Impact factor 2.752
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
BFI (2016): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 3.36 SJR 2.369 SNIP 1.558
Web of Science (2016): Impact factor 2.733
Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes
BFI (2015): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2015): CiteScore 3.39 SJR 2.754 SNIP 1.605
Web of Science (2015): Impact factor 3.318
Web of Science (2015): Indexed yes
BFI (2014): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2014): CiteScore 3.27 SJR 2.853 SNIP 1.757
Web of Science (2014): Impact factor 3.426
Web of Science (2014): Indexed yes
BFI (2013): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2013): CiteScore 3.38 SJR 3.088 SNIP 1.809
Web of Science (2013): Impact factor 3.44
ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed yes