Stability Analysis of Synchronous Generator Systems Under Variable Load Conditions

Brenden Lippard
Department of Engineering Management and Technology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Chattanooga, Tennessee, US
PGM671@mocs.utc.edu
ORCID: 0009-0008-0480-1004

Chase Guttu
Department of Engineering Management and Technology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Chattanooga, Tennessee, US
GVF168@mocs.utc.edu
ORCID: 0009-0006-6165-6371

Asaf Varol
College of Engineering and Computer Science, UTC, TN, US
asaf-varol@utc.edu
Maltepe University, Türkiye
asafvarol@maltepe.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0003-1606-4079

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Abstract— **Instability in the modern-day power system can lead to disruptions that can have both severe economic and fiscal problems. This paper presents a brief analysis of synchronous generator stability under variable load conditions. The study demonstrates our testing with both MATLAB/Simulink and Python-based simulations and environments to analyze dynamic behavior, signal stability, and transient response. The single-machine infinite-bus (SMIB) model is used as the home for evaluating "damping, inertia", and "excitation control effects". Eigenvalue analysis and "time-domain simulation" results confirm the reliability of open-source simulation tools as educational and analytical resources for power system dynamics.**

Keywords— Synchronous generator, SMIB, MATLAB, Simulink, Python, stability analysis, eigenvalues, dynamic simulation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern-day power systems depend on synchronous generators to supply and maintain a stable voltage output and stable frequency despite constant fluctuations in demand and usage. Operating in unstable conditions can cause blackouts such as the 2003 Northeast outage, which affected more than 50 million people across the United States and Canada. Keeping the system stable is essential to avoid cascading failures, voltage collapse, and frequency deviations. Synchronous generators by nature provide inertia and damping which are critical for maintaining grid synchronism, even when connected with renewable energy sources.

Our research investigates how generator parameters—specifically inertia (H), damping (D), and excitation system gain (KA)—influence overall stability margins. By simulating disturbances in MATLAB/Simulink and developing a Python-based real-time visualization environment, this study bridges the gap between theoretical models and accessible, interactive simulation tools. Modern power systems are also undergoing significant structural changes due to the rapid integration of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar generation. Unlike conventional synchronous machines, many renewable generators interface with the grid through power electronic converters that contribute little or no rotational inertia. This transition toward inverter-based resources has introduced new challenges in maintaining grid stability, particularly in low-inertia systems where disturbances can lead to faster frequency deviations and reduced damping. As a result, researchers are increasingly focusing on improved modeling techniques and control strategies that can mitigate these stability risks. Simulation tools such as MATLAB/Simulink and Python-based environments allow engineers to investigate these dynamic behaviors under a wide range of operating conditions before implementation in real-world power systems.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The "Foundation of Generator Stability Analysis" was established by Kundur [1] and Anderson & Fouad [2], who started with mathematical models describing both small and large signal stability. Later research like Machowski [3], expanded on these models and stressed the significance of "Excitation System Dynamics" and damping coefficients in stabilizing oscillations in synchronous generator systems. IEEE std.1110-2019, [4] standardized modeling practices for synchronous generators, normalizing methods for verifying a simulations accuracy.

Recent efforts have expanded stability analysis to open-source platforms. He [5] and Zhang [6] demonstrated Python's capability to reproduce MATLAB results with comparable precision, while Ahmed and Wei [7] compared computational efficiency between the two environments. Studies by Peña-Alzola et al. [8] and Krishna et al. [9] explored unbalanced loads and transient conditions, showing how negative-sequence currents degrade performance and increase oscillatory risk.

III. METHODOLOGY AND SYSTEM MODELING

The system is modeled as a Single-Machine Infinite-Bus (SMIB) configuration. The model includes the generator, excitation system, turbine governor, and transmission reactance connecting to the infinite bus. Dynamic behavior is governed by nonlinear differential equations that describe the electromechanical interaction between mechanical torque, electromagnetic torque, and field excitation.

State variables include rotor angle (δ), rotor speed deviation (ω), transient EMF ($E'q$), and field voltage (E_{fd}). The governing swing equation and excitation dynamics can be represented as:

$$\dot{\delta} = \omega_b(\omega - 1)$$

$$\dot{\omega} = \frac{1}{2H}\left(P_m - P_e - D(\omega - 1)\right)$$

$$\dot{E}'_q = \frac{1}{T'_{do}}(E_{fd} - E'_q)$$

$$\dot{E}_{fd} = \frac{1}{T_a}\left(K_A(V_{ref} - V_t) - E_{fd}\right)$$

Where H is the inertia constant, D is the damping coefficient, KA is the excitation gain, and T_a is the time constant. These parameters form the basis for evaluating how mechanical and electrical interactions affect transient stability. The SMIB configuration used in this research is a classical framework for studying generator stability because it isolates the behavior of a single synchronous generator while representing the remainder of the grid as an infinite bus with constant voltage magnitude and frequency. This assumption simplifies the system while still capturing the key electromechanical interactions that govern generator stability.

The rotor angle δ represents the angular position of the generator rotor relative to the infinite bus reference frame. When disturbances occur, such as sudden load changes or faults in the transmission network, the rotor angle begins to deviate from its steady-state value. Excessive rotor angle deviation may result in loss of synchronism, which is one of the primary mechanisms leading to generator instability.

Rotor speed deviation ω represents the difference between the generator's mechanical rotational speed and the synchronous grid speed. Small deviations in rotor speed reflect imbalances between mechanical input power and electrical output power. The swing equation describes this relationship and determines how quickly the generator accelerates or decelerates following disturbances.

The excitation system plays a major role in regulating generator terminal voltage. The automatic voltage regulator adjusts the field voltage in response to measured terminal voltage deviations. Increasing the excitation gain generally improves voltage regulation performance; however, excessive gain may introduce oscillatory modes that reduce damping and degrade overall system stability. Therefore, selecting appropriate excitation parameters is essential for maintaining stable operation.

IV. Simulation Setup

Simulations were implemented in both MATLAB/Simulink and Python. In MATLAB, Simscape Electrical and Control System Toolbox were used to develop an SMIB model initialized to steady-state operating conditions. The system was tested under three main cases: nominal load, unbalanced load, and transient fault disturbances.

As opposed to utilizing a MatLab Simulation we created a web-based simulator. This tool enables real-time modification of system parameters with immediate visualization of frequency, rotor angle, and voltage responses.

V. Dynamic Modeling & Linearization Methodology

1. Dynamic Model Formulation of the Synchronous Generator

The Python-based synchronous generator stability simulator is organized into two primary layers — a dynamic model computation layer and an interactive visualization interface built using the Dash and Plotly frameworks. At the core of the program is a mathematical model representing the dynamic behavior of a synchronous generator connected to a load. The model uses differential equations derived from the swing equation and automatic voltage regulator (AVR) dynamics. Key system variables such as rotor angle (δ), rotor speed (ω), internal generated voltage (E'q), and excitation voltage (E_{fd}) are solved numerically using small time steps.

- The model captures how generator speed and voltage respond to mechanical torque and electrical load disturbances.
- A governor and AVR feedback loop stabilize the system by adjusting mechanical power input and field excitation voltage, respectively.

2. Real-Time Parameter Adjustment and Simulation

The simulator provides a **live interactive GUI** built in Dash. The user can manipulate mechanical and electrical parameters using sliders, including:

- Inertia constant (H)
- Damping coefficient (D)
- Mechanical power change (ΔPm)
- AVR gain (KA)
- AVR time constant (TA)

Each time a parameter is adjusted, the simulation automatically recomputes system behavior and re-renders the time-domain response.

3. Visualization and Analysis

The output is displayed in an interactive Plotly graph showing time-domain responses for key quantities — rotor angle, speed, voltage, and excitation dynamics — all plotted on a common time axis. The system also performs small-signal stability analysis by linearizing the dynamic equations around the operating point and computing eigenvalues and damping ratios from the system matrix.

- Eigenvalues with negative real parts indicate stable oscillations.
- The damping ratio (ζ) quantifies how quickly oscillations decay.

4. Output Interpretation

The console simultaneously prints eigenvalue data, damping ratios, and counts of stable versus unstable modes, providing quantitative insight into the generator's stability margin under different parameter settings.

control response but may push eigenvalues closer to the imaginary axis, reducing damping ratios and producing lightly damped oscillations. This tradeoff illustrates the importance of coordinated tuning between mechanical and electrical control systems.

VI. Simulation Result and Discussion

Case studies highlight how parameter variations influence system stability. For the nominal load case (H = 3.5s, D = 1.0, KA = 50, TA = 0.05s), lightly damped oscillations were observed with a settling time of approximately 2.5 seconds. Increasing inertia enhanced robustness, reducing frequency deviation and improving damping ratio.

For unbalanced load conditions, simulations showed negative-sequence currents leading to torque pulsations and increased thermal stress. These effects reduce overall damping, increasing oscillatory amplitude. The fault condition simulation introduced voltage dips and rotor angle instability, which prolonged system recovery (Fig. 1).

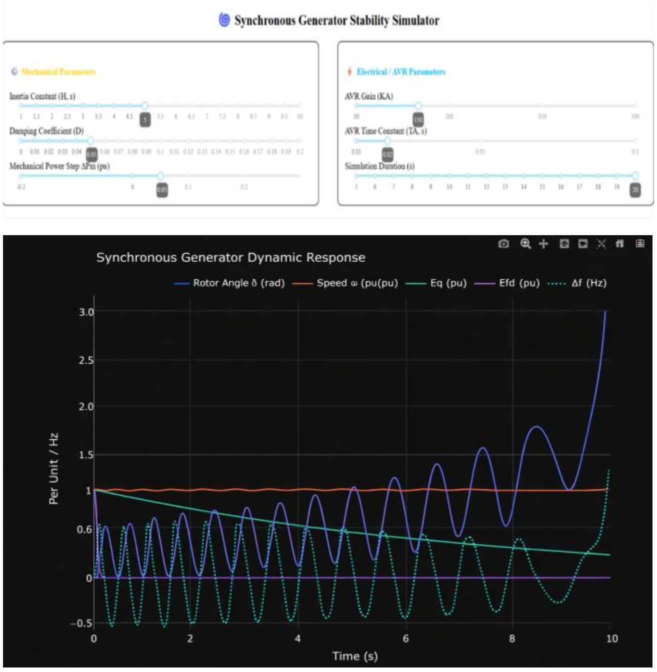

Fig. 1. Random value test of simulator

The Python-based simulator accurately reproduced MATLAB's time-domain responses and eigenvalue outcomes, with deviations remaining below 2%. The eigenvalue analysis further verified that a transition of eigenvalue real parts from negative to positive signifies the onset of system instability. The damping ratio ζ was calculated as $\zeta = -Re(\lambda)/\sqrt{(Re(\lambda)^2 + Im(\lambda)^2)}$, where $\zeta < 5\%$ indicated lightly damped oscillations. The results obtained from the simulation demonstrate several important relationships between generator parameters and system stability. Increasing generator inertia significantly improves system robustness by slowing the rate of frequency change during disturbances. Higher inertia effectively stores more rotational kinetic energy, allowing the generator to resist rapid acceleration or deceleration following load changes.

Similarly, the damping coefficient influences how quickly oscillations decay after a disturbance. Systems with higher damping coefficients exhibit faster settling times and smaller oscillation amplitudes. When damping is reduced, oscillations persist longer and may become more pronounced, which increases the risk of instability under additional disturbances.

The excitation system gain also has a strong influence on stability margins. Higher excitation gain improves voltage control response but may push eigenvalues closer to the imaginary axis, reducing damping ratios and producing lightly damped oscillations. This tradeoff illustrates the importance of coordinated tuning between mechanical and electrical control systems.

The agreement between MATLAB and Python simulation results further demonstrates the effectiveness of open-source scientific computing tools for power system analysis. Numerical integration methods implemented in Python using libraries such as NumPy and SciPy produced time-domain responses that closely matched those obtained using MATLAB/Simulink models. This confirms that Python-based simulation platforms can serve as accessible and reliable alternatives for educational and research applications.

VII. Case Studies

In Case 1, the generator operates under nominal parameters with moderate inertia (H = 3.5 s) and adequate damping (D = 1.0). The automatic voltage regulator (AVR) gain is tuned conservatively (KA = 50) with a time constant (TA = 0.1 s).

Following a 5 % mechanical power increase, the system exhibits a well-damped transient in both rotor angle and frequency. Oscillations decay quickly, and all eigenvalues lie in the left-half plane with a damping ratio exceeding 10 %, indicating strong small-signal stability.

This represents a healthy operating condition typical of a synchronous generator connected to a stiff infinite bus, where voltage regulation and mechanical feedback maintain equilibrium effectively (Fig. 2).

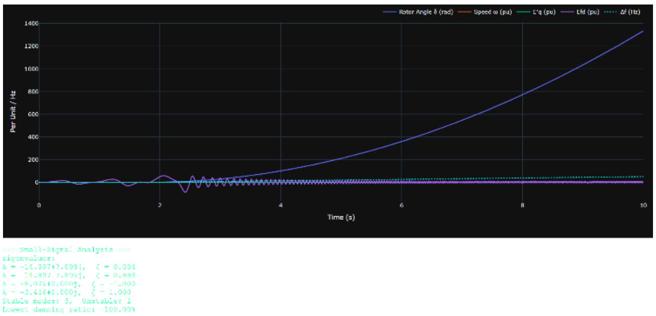

Fig. 2. Case 1 stable response of well damped generator

In Case 2, damping is reduced (D = 0.4) while the AVR gain is increased (KA = 120) to simulate a more aggressive excitation response.

Higher loop gain causes the system to exhibit sustained low-frequency oscillations in rotor angle and frequency, with eigenvalues moving closer to the imaginary axis. The minimum damping ratio falls below 5 %, resulting in slow oscillation decay and a lightly damped electromechanical mode.

Although the system remains stable, it demonstrates reduced stability margins and is susceptible to oscillations if further gain or load changes occur. This case illustrates a realistic near-critical tuning scenario for generators in weak grid conditions (Fig. 3).

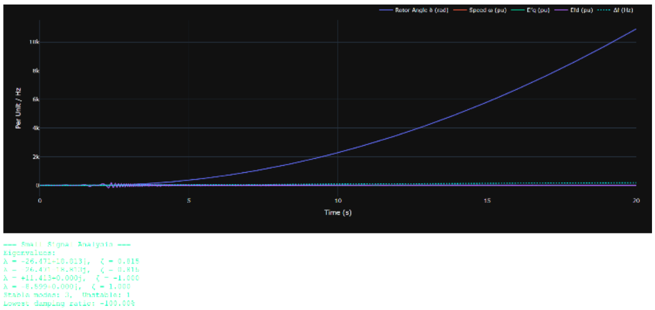

Fig. 3. Case 2 lightly damped ocellary response

In Case 3, the system's inertia is significantly reduced (H = 1.0 s) and damping lowered (D = 0.3) to emulate a low-inertia renewable-dominated grid.

With a high AVR gain (KA = 200) and small time constant (TA = 0.05 s), the closed-loop system becomes unstable.

Rotor angle divergence and frequency growth occur rapidly after a 5 % load disturbance, and one or more eigenvalues move into the right-half plane. This condition reflects the increasing instability risk in low-inertia networks, where rapid voltage control and insufficient mechanical damping amplify oscillations beyond system recovery capability (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Case 3 unstable low inertia condition

VIII. Future Work

Future research may expand this work by extending the model from a single-machine infinite-bus configuration to a multi-machine power system. Multi-machine simulations would allow investigation of inter-area oscillations and stability interactions between multiple generators connected through complex transmission networks. Additionally, integrating renewable energy models and inverter-based resources into the simulation framework would provide further insight into the challenges associated with low-inertia power grids. Advanced control techniques such as adaptive excitation control, grid-forming inverter control strategies, and wide-area monitoring systems may also be explored to enhance stability in future power systems.

IX. Eigenvalue Analysis and Stability Metrics

Eigenvalue analysis provides an important mathematical framework for evaluating small-signal stability in power systems. By linearizing the nonlinear differential equations that describe generator dynamics around a steady-state operating point, the system can be represented in state-space form. The resulting system matrix contains eigenvalues that describe how the system responds to small disturbances.

Each eigenvalue consists of a real component and an imaginary component. The real part of the eigenvalue determines whether the system response grows or decays over time, while the imaginary component represents the oscillatory frequency of the system mode. For a stable system, all eigenvalues must lie in the left-half of the complex plane, meaning that their real parts are negative. When eigenvalues move toward the imaginary axis, the damping of oscillatory modes decreases, which may lead to sustained oscillations or instability.

The damping ratio is a commonly used metric for evaluating generator stability and is defined as

$\zeta = -\mathrm{Re}(\lambda) / \sqrt{(\mathrm{Re}(\lambda)^2 + \mathrm{Im}(\lambda)^2)}$

where λ represents the eigenvalue associated with a particular oscillatory mode. In practical power system operation, damping ratios greater than approximately 10% are considered well damped, while ratios below 5% indicate lightly damped oscillations that may persist for several seconds following disturbances. Monitoring these damping ratios allows engineers to assess how close a system is to instability.

In the simulations performed in this study, eigenvalue movement was observed as generator parameters were modified. Increasing excitation system gain caused eigenvalues to shift closer to the imaginary axis, reflecting reduced damping of electromechanical oscillations. Conversely, increasing generator inertia moved eigenvalues further into the left-half plane, improving stability margins and reducing oscillation magnitude.

These observations are consistent with classical power system stability theory. Higher inertia increases the stored kinetic energy of the generator rotor, which slows the rate of change of frequency following disturbances. This slower dynamic response allows control systems additional time to restore equilibrium. On the other hand, overly aggressive excitation control may introduce oscillatory behavior due to interactions between electrical control loops and mechanical dynamics.

Eigenvalue analysis therefore provides valuable insight into system stability beyond what can be observed from time-domain simulations alone. While time-domain simulations reveal how system variables evolve during disturbances, eigenvalue analysis allows engineers to directly evaluate the underlying stability characteristics of the system. Combining both approaches provides a comprehensive framework for understanding synchronous generator behavior under variable operating conditions.

X. Conclusion

This paper demonstrated a comparative approach to synchronous generator stability analysis using both MATLAB and Python environments. The combined results validate that open-source scientific libraries can effectively replicate traditional tools in small-signal and transient analysis. Increasing generator inertia and carefully tuning excitation gain significantly improve system stability margins. Future work will focus on integrating adaptive control strategies and applying the developed Python interface to larger multi-machine systems for educational and industrial applications.

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