



MULTIBLOCK GENERATION FOR HEXAHEDRAL MESHING OF IRREGULAR PROFILE

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by

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APPROVAL

This report is submitted to the Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering of Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Manufacturing Engineering the members of the supervisory committee are as follow:

.....
(Masni Azian Binti Akiah)

ABSTRAK

Diskretisasi model reka bentuk bantuan komputer (CAD) ke dalam elemen yang lebih kecil biasanya dirujuk sebagai proses jejaring. Proses jejaring adalah strategi kritikal untuk pemodelan dan simulasi unsur terhingga (FE). Teknik jejaring yang baik adalah dengan membahagikan model asas kepada beberapa elemen ideal bagi membolehkan pengiraan berkomputer dilaksanakan dari mana-mana aplikasi FE. Salah satu cara untuk menilai kualiti mesh ialah dengan menggunakan penentu nilai Jacobian. Elemen jejaring dengan Jacobian bernilai negatif merujuk pada elemen yang sangat herot, sementara angka Jacobian yang bernilai positif menunjukkan elemen jejaring yang sempurna dan dapat digunakan untuk melaksanakan simulasi berkomputer. Unsur berbentuk hexahedron dan tetrahedron adalah antara bentuk yang selalunya dipilih untuk pembahagian objek. Tidak seperti komponen hexahedron, komponen tetrahedron memerlukan lebih banyak elemen untuk membentuk model geometri dengan lengkap. Jumlah elemen jejaring yang lebih tinggi menghasilkan lebih banyak masa pengiraan dan kos simulasi yang lebih tinggi. Walau bagaimanapun, penggunaan elemen hexahedron bagi geometri dengan profil yang kompleks sangat mencabar kerana lokasi kelengkungan yang tinggi biasanya akan mengakibatkan kehilangan ketetapan jaringan, komponen yang tidak berfungsi dan kualiti mesh yang rendah. Untuk permukaan struktur yang lebih kompleks, lebih banyak masa diperlukan untuk menghasilkan model dengan elemen hexahedron sepenuhnya. Oleh kerana profil permukaan yang semakin kompleks, teknik meshing yang sedia ada adalah tidak sesuai. Oleh itu, matlamat penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mewujudkan satu algoritma yang membantu proses penjaringan model CAD kepada element hexahedron terutamanya untuk geometri dengan profil permukaan yang kompleks dengan menggunakan pendekatan blok binaan. Jejaring dengan elemen hexahedron akan dibina dengan merujuk kepada bentuk blok binaan dan kualiti elemen akan dinilai berdasarkan penentu nilai Jacobian. Hasil daripada kajian yang telah dijalankan dapatan menunjukkan bilangan elemen terdistorsi yang dihasilkan telah dapat direndahkan menggunakan teknik yang telah dicadangkan. Kaedah yang telah digunakan berkait rapat dengan penggunaan mapping blok teknik yang telah banyak digunakan didalam kajian- kajian yang lepas. Hasil yang diperolehi dinilai berdasarkan nilai Jacobian yang diperolehi selepas proses diskretisasi. Nilai Jacobian akan menentukan sama ada kualiti permukaan mesh memenuhi keperluan untuk proses simulasi.

ABSTRACT

Discretization of the computer aided design (CAD) model into smaller elements are commonly referred as the meshing process. The meshing process is a critical strategy for finite element (FE) modelling and simulation. An appropriate meshing technique includes apportioning the basic model into perfect element that enable estimation from any FE application. One of the method to evaluate the mesh quality is using the determinant of Jacobian value. Mesh element with negative Jacobian number alludes to a very distorted element, while positive Jacobian number demonstrates perfect mesh element and can be executed for finite element simulation. The hexahedral and tetrahedral element is among the component that are usually chosen for object meshing. Unlike hexahedral component, tetrahedral component requires more number of element to completely characterize the model's geometry. Higher element numbers resulted to more computational time and higher simulation cost. However, appointment of hexahedral elements to geometry with irregular profile is very challenging since the high curvature locale will usually lead to loss of mesh constancy, misshaped component and poor mesh quality. For higher structural complexity, more time is required to create a fully-hexahedral mesh model. As the structural complexity of the profile increases, the current meshing technique may be insufficient. Therefore, the aim of this research is to create an algorithm that can assist the fully-hexahedral meshing process for geometry with irregular surface profile by utilizing the building block approach. A fully-hexahedral mesh will be built up with reference to the building block which is built in reference to the CAD model with irregular profile, and the mesh quality will be assessed based on the determinant of the Jacobian value. The results of the study have shown that the number of distorted element produced has been lowered using the proposed technique. The results obtained were evaluated based on the Jacobian value obtained after discretization process. Jacobian value will determine whether the quality of a mesh surface meets the requirements for the simulation process. The methods used are closely related to the use of the mapping block technique that has been widely used in previous studies.

DEDICATION

I am grateful to the divine presence for giving me the strength to complete my study of this thesis. I would also like to thank both parents (Mortadza Bin Ab Karim and Sakinah Binti Yusoff) and my family members who gave much encouragement and blessing throughout my study. Also, not to forget my stepmother (Zuraini Bibi Binti Muhammad Yusoff) for giving infinite moral support. I love all to the end of life.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRAK	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Objective	5
1.4 Scope	6
1.5 Rational of Research	7
1.6 Research Methodology	8
1.7 Thesis Organization	9
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Mesh Process	10
2.2 Mesh Element	11
2.2.1 Existing FE models	15
2.2.1.1. An Interactive Multiblock Approach to Meshing the Spine	16

2.2.1.2. Growing Multiblock Structures: A Semi-Automated Approach to Block Placement for Multiblock hexahedral meshing	17
2.2.1.3. Cervical Spine Finite Element Model with Anatomically Accurate Asymmetric Intervertebral Discs	18
2.2.1.4. Unstructured Hexahedral Mesh Generation of Complex Vascular Trees Using A Multi-Block Grid-Based Approach	19
2.3 Evaluation of Mesh Element Quality Based on The Determinant of Jacobian Value	20
2.3.1 Global and Natural Coordinate	22
2.3.2 Shape Function	22
2.3.3 Transfer Mapping Function	23
2.3.4 Jacobian Matrix	23
2.3.5 Determinant of Jacobian	24
2.4 VTK Format	24
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	27
3.1 General method	27
3.1.1 PSM 1: Development of The Building Block From IA-FEMesh Environment	28
3.1.2 PSM 2: Proposed Algorithm for Multiple Building Block Generation	29
3.2 Evaluation of Mesh Quality	37
3.3 Experimental Input Data (Python Algorithm)	37
CHAPTER 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION	41
4.1 PSM 1: Mesh Result Using a Building Block From IA-FEMesh Environment	42
4.1.1 Sphere Profile Mesh Data	42
4.1.2 Index Proximal Profile Mesh Data	46
4.2 PSM 2: Mesh Result Using a Building Block from Python Algorithm	50
4.2.1 Sphere and Index Proximal	50
4.2.2 Distal Phalanges (DP)	52
4.2.3 Middle Phalanges (MP)	53
4.2.4 Proximal Phalanges (PP)	55

4.2.5	Metacarpals (MC)	56
4.3	Discussion	58
4.3.1	Decrease Rate of Distorted Element.	58
4.3.2	Problems Arising and Settlement.	60
4.3.3	Analysis Summary	61
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	62
5.1	Conclusion	62
5.2	Recommendation	63
REFERENCES		
APPENDIX A		
APPENDIX B		
APPENDIX C		

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Steps to remeshing a plastically deformed model as highlighted by Schneiders & Bünten (1995)	10
Table 3.1 Nodes Id for 8 Building Blocks	36
Table 3.2 Cells Id for 8-Bulding Blocks	36
Table 3.3 Experimental Inputs Data (Python Algorithm)	39
Table 4.1 Sphere profile mesh data	43
Table 4.2 Index Proximal Profile Mesh Data	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The process of computational simulation	2
Figure 1.2 (a) Example of mesh with a hexahedral element mesh and (b) tetrahedral element	2
Figure 1.3 Different types of geometrical features. (a) Regular surface profile, and (b) Irregular surface profile.	3
Figure 1.4 Meshing Process of a hexahedral element based from seed value.	4
Figure 1.5 Building Block In IA-FEMesh Environment	4
Figure 1.6 Position and illustration of the model used in the mesh process (a) Model used in PSM1 (b) Model Used in PSM 2	6
Figure 1.7 Flow Chart for the Final Year Project	8
Figure 2.1 Distorted mesh (Schneiders & Bünten, 1995)	11
Figure 2.2 Type of element: (a) 4-node tetrahedral direct (b) 8-node trilinear (c) 6-node kaleidoscopic (d) 5-node pyramidal elements (Yang, 2018b)	12
Figure 2.3 Tetrahedral element	12
Figure 2.4 Hexahedral element	13
Figure 2.5 (a) Example of fine mesh and (b) Coarse mesh (Walter Frei, 2014)	14
Figure 2.6 (a) Example single block (b) Multiblock	15
Figure 2.7 (a) Positive mesh model (b) Negative mesh model (A.Price,1995)	15
Figure 2.8 Meshing process for the vertebral body. (A) C5 vertebral surface. (B) Posterior region was clipped off and the pedicle holes were patched. (C) Superior and inferior endplate peripheries were traced. (D) Butterfly building block pattern was generated. (E and F) Final vertebral body mesh (Kallemeyn et al., 2009).	16
Figure 2.9 A) Attachment of the posterior Building Blocks to the vertebral body mesh at the pedicles. (B) Example of a posterior Building Block structure (Kallemeyn et al., 2009)	17
Figure 2.10 A surface of the third rib was used to demonstrate the incremental results corresponding to the dotted path described (A) the user selection of surface point. (B) the selected surface reorientation. (C) Generation of truck centerline. (D) Angular analysis of truck centerline. (E) Building block incremental additions along the third rib. (F) Reorientation of the finalized block structure back to its original position.(Taylor et al., 2012)	18

Figure 2.11 (a) Sagittal and coronal planes shows by the top view of IVD at which the measure of annulus fibrosus boundaries were done. (b) The FE model of C2-C7 (John et al., 2017)	19
Figure 2.12 (a) Vascular tree branches (colored by the increasing order of parent vessel: black, red, green, and blue). Normal of bifurcation (White) and the normal of projected bifurcation (colored by order of parent vessel). (b) Position of squares along the branches. (c) Vascular tree multi-block structure with the structure of curved block in white, the block of branch connection in red, and the block of vessel connection in cyan.	19
Figure 2.13 Element transformation from global to natural coordinate system (Yang, 2018a)	20
Figure 2.14 Example of Positive Hexahedral Element (Jacobian Value of 39)	21
Figure 2.15 Example of Negative Hexahedral Element (Jacobian Value of -2)	21
Figure 2.16 VTK file format	25
Figure 2.17 Example the Nodes Id arrangement in VTK. File (Schroeder et al., 2006)	25
Figure 2.18 The Example for the Arrangement of Cell Id (Schroeder et al., 2006).	26
Figure 3.1 Flow Chart for the Final Year Project	27
Figure 3.2 Flow Chart of Meshing Process in IA-FeMesh GUI	29
Figure 3.3 (a) Illustration of 20 partitions for z -value (b) Illustration of range for z -value.	30
Figure 3.4 Illustration of range for x -value	31
Figure 3.5 Complete Plane Formation	31
Figure 3.6 (a) Process of plane movement to complete block formation (b) Plane position after the plane movement	32
Figure 3.7 Flow Chart of Proposed Algorithm for Multiple Building Block Generation	35
Figure 3.8 Node ID for the 8 Building Block Generation	35
Figure 3.9 Sequence of Nodal Coordinate to Define the Hexahedral Block.	36
Figure 4.1 The Example of The Nodes That Have Been Placed Inside the Surface Profile	41
Figure 4.2 (a) Sphere profile (b) Example Sphere Mesh Result	42
Figure 4.3 The Graph for Number of Distorted Element Versus Type of Block for Sphere	45
Figure 4.4 (a) Index Proximal Bone Profile (b) The example mesh result of Index Proximal	46
Figure 4.5 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of block for index proximal bone	49

Figure 4.6 (a) Index Proximal in single block (b) Index Proximal in multiple block	50
Figure 4.7 (a) Sphere in single block (b) Sphere in multiple block	51
Figure 4.8 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of models (single and multiple block) for Index proximal and Sphere models	51
Figure 4.9 Distal phalanges profile	52
Figure 4.10 (a) Distal phalanges in single block (b) Distal phalanges in multiple block	52
Figure 4.11 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of models (single and multiple block) for Distal phalanges models	53
Figure 4.12 Middle Phalanges Profile	54
Figure 4.13 (a) Middle phalanges in single block (b) Middle phalanges in multiple block	54
Figure 4.14 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of models (single and multiple block) for Middle Phalanges models	54
Figure 4.15 Proximal Phalanges profile	55
Figure 4.16 (a) Proximal phalanges in single block (b) Proximal phalanges in multiple block	55
Figure 4.17 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of models (single and multiple block) for Proximal Phalanges models	56
Figure 4.18 Metacarpals profile	57
Figure 4.19 (a) Metacarpals in single block (b) Metacarpals in multiple block	57
Figure 4.20 The graph for number of distorted element versus type of models (single and multiple block) for Metacarpals models	57
Figure 4.21 The graph for total percentage reduction of distorted element versus type of models	59
Figure 4.22 (a) Low level and Number of Surface Curvature (b) High level surface curvature	59
Figure 4.23 Raw STL Image before and after modification process	60
Figure 4.24 Example of human rib bone	60

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3D	-	3 Dimention
CAD	-	Computer Aided Design
FE	-	Finite Element
GUI	-	Graphic User Interface
Id	-	Identification
OK	-	Okay
PSM	-	Projek Sarjana Muda
STL	-	Standard Tessellation Language
VTK	-	Visualization Toolkit

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Before any mechanical simulation can be performed on a structural geometry, a computer aided design (CAD) model have to be established, followed by discretization of the CAD model into smaller elements to allow the structure to be computationally analysed under specific loading and boundary conditions (Figure 1.1). Discretization of the CAD model into smaller elements are commonly referred as the meshing process. A good meshing technique involves partitioning the structural model into ideal elements that enable calculation from any finite element (FE) application. One of the method to measure the quality of the meshing element is based on the element's volume ratio. The meshing phase become significantly important in ensuring an ideal volume ratio for 3D element can be achieved. The volume ratio can be computed using the determinant of the Jacobian value which compares the volume of the meshed element to the natural coordinate of an ideal element. Mesh element with negative Jacobian value refers to highly distorted elements, while positive Jacobian value indicates ideal mesh elements. In order to ensure simulation can be performed from any FE tools, the meshed elements must have a positive Jacobian value. Meshing elements with negative Jacobian value should be avoided at all cost as it could prevent the FE application from running the simulation process (Grosland, Bafna, et al., 2009).

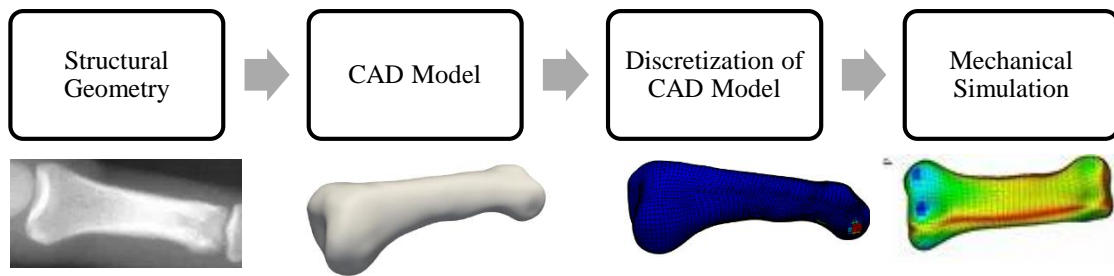


Figure 1.1 The process of computational simulation

There are many types of mesh element. The hexahedral and tetrahedral element are among the element that are commonly selected for object meshing (Figure 1.2). The hexahedral element has a cubical shape while the tetrahedral element have a triangular shape. Compared to hexahedral element, tetrahedral element requires more number of elements to fully define the object's geometry. Higher element numbers would usually result to longer computational time, and hence, higher simulation cost.

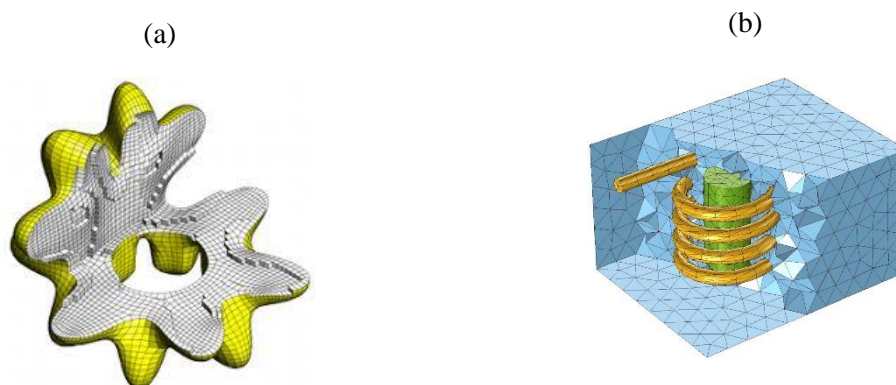


Figure 1.2 (a) Example of mesh with a hexahedral element mesh and (b) tetrahedral element

Generating an ideal hexahedral mesh element for structural features particularly with irregular surface profile have been a challenge in FE studies. The differences between geometry with regular and irregular profiles are illustrated in Figure 1.3. Biological parts in particular (example human bones) usually have highly irregular shape. Discretizing irregular surface profiles into fully-hexahedral elements have been a challenge among computational researchers as there are higher risk for the discretized elements to show a lower mesh quality with highly distorted element (Yang, 2018a). Hence, simulation engineers dealing with irregular surface profile usually choose tetrahedral elements to execute their simulation.

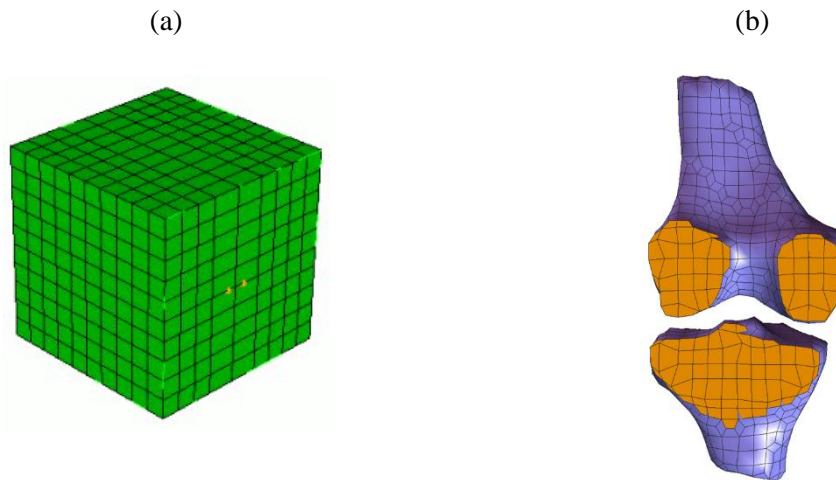


Figure 1.3 Different types of geometrical features. (a) Regular surface profile, and (b) Irregular surface profile.

IA-FEMesh is an open-source software, which was initially developed to assist meshing of anatomical parts into hexahedral elements. The software employs generation of building block which surround the CAD model (Figure 1.5). Seeds of hexahedral elements are then translated from the edges of the building block towards the nearest point on the surface of the CAD model to generate a fully-hexahedral meshing (Figure 1.4). Currently, the building block can only be altered in the IA-FEMesh environment using their graphic user interface (GUI). However, as the geometrical complexity increases, alteration of the building block in the IA-FEMesh environment becomes increasingly difficult, especially when orienting and altering the nodal points of the building block in 3D space. As a result, the mesh quality will vary and highly depends on the user's skill to establish an ideal building block. Therefore, it is the interest of this study to develop an algorithm than can be executed to develop the building block for different irregular profiles to ensure consistent meshing results. Furthermore, this study intends to explore the possibility to establish fully-hexahedral mesh elements especially for geometry with irregular profiles as it is expected to reduce computational time, increases FE computational stability and reduce simulation cost.

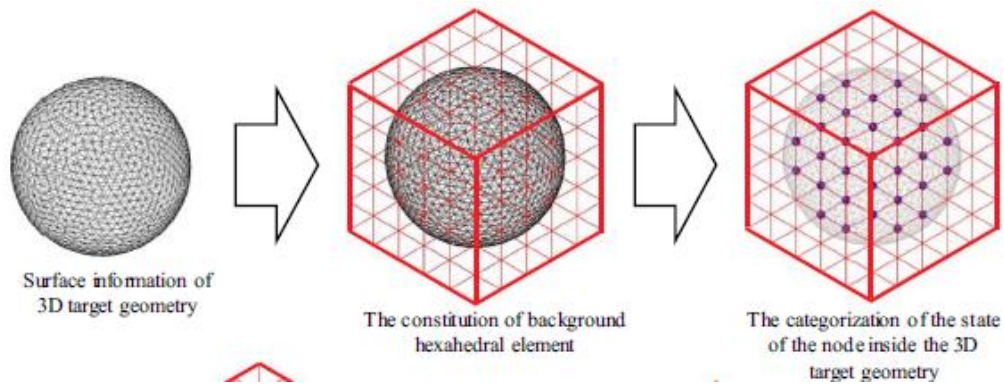


Figure 1.4 Meshing Process of a hexahedral element based from seed value.

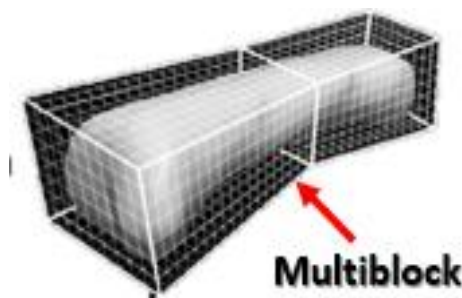


Figure 1.5 Building Block In IA-FEMesh Environment

1.2 Problem Statement

- (a) Producing the mesh element for a regular shape geometry is easier compared to the geometry with irregular shape as the geometry can be discretized accurately. When meshing irregular profile into fully-hexahedral elements, there is an increased tendency for the meshing quality to become poor based on the high number of elements with negative Jacobian value. Elements with negative Jacobian value are extensively distorted from the ideal hexahedral shape. Most FE application (eg. ANSYS, Simulia, and Provoidance) will generate error and terminate any simulation when elements with negative Jacobian value is detected (Yang, 2018b).
- (b) Currently, the effort needed to generate fully hexahedral mesh with positive Jacobian value especially for geometry with irregular profiles is very time-consuming (Yang, 2018a). As the structural complexity increases, the present meshing technique become insufficient (Shivanna et al., 2010). The irregular

profile becomes the main focus in this study because of the high curvature region that may lead to loss of mesh fidelity, distorted element and poor mesh quality (Shivanna et al., 2010).

- (c) Certain profile features like corner and ridges require extra attention during meshing so that the geometry can be reproduced accurately. In medical-engineering field, the meshing process which accurately reflect subject or patient-specific specimens are much more challenging compared to mechanical models (Mao et al., 2013). Sometimes, the effort in developing a fully-hexahedral mesh element of an irregular profile become even more complicated compared to the simulation process itself.

1.3 Objective

The aim of this research is to develop a systematic algorithm that can expedite the fully-hexahedral meshing process for geometry with irregular surface profile using the building block approach. It is expected that the algorithm can reduce the number of distorted hexahedral mesh element and can be applied to various geometries with irregular profiles.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- a) To determine the hexahedral mesh element quality of geometry with irregular profile by using manually constructed building block for single and multiple building block approach.
- b) To develop multiple building block algorithm that can reduce the number of distorted hexahedral mesh elements.

1.4 Scope

(a) Geometry of irregular profile that will be considered in this study is (Figure 1.6):

- i. Sphere.
- ii. Index proximal bone.
- iii. Distal Phalanges
- iv. Middle Phalanges
- v. Proximal Phalanges
- vi. Metacarpals

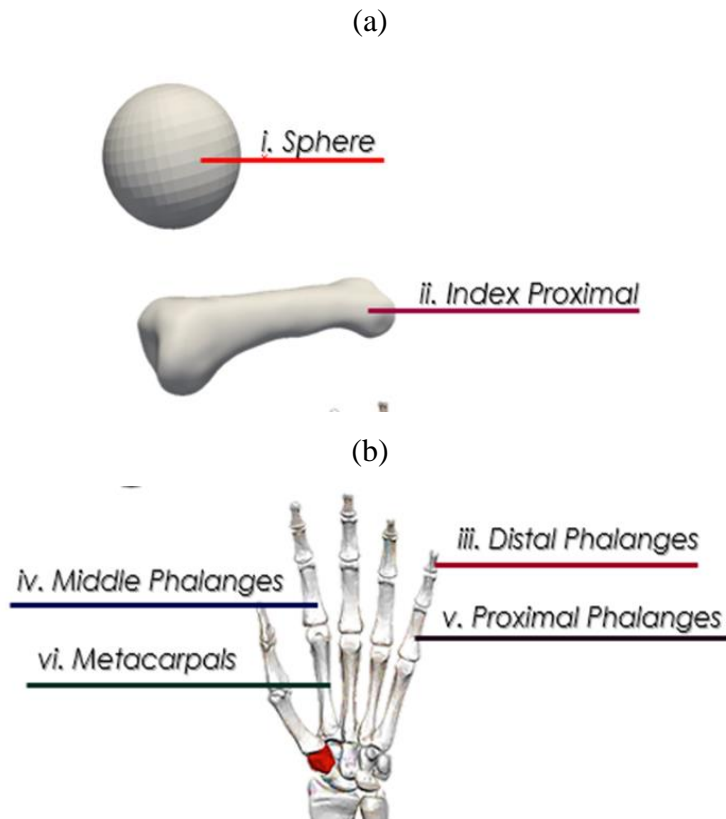


Figure 1.6 Position and illustration of the model used in the mesh process (a) Model used in PSM1 (b) Model Used in PSM 2

(b) Maximum number of building block that will be considered in this study is only up to 8-blocks.

(c) Mesh element quality is determined based on the determinant of Jacobian value.

- (d) Meshing discretization will be performed using the IA-FEMesh software.
- (e) Development of multiple building block algorithm will be performed using Python programming language.

1.5 Rational of Research

The rational of this research as follows:

- (a) The mesh generation is an important procedure in any FE modelling and simulation. However, higher structural complexity require more time to generate the mesh (Shivanna et al., 2010). Therefore, we intend to gain knowledge regarding the meshing technique that can improve the meshing quality of the selected profile.
- (b) As the structural complexity of the profile increase, the present multiblock meshing may be inadequate for the meshing process (Shivanna et al., 2010). Without proper meshing technique and poor meshing quality, the FE simulation cannot be performed at all. FE simulation is important to evaluate structural behaviour including measurement of stresses and strains of complex geometry given the loading condition and material properties. Good FE model will ensure more accurate estimation of the mechanics of the CAD model.
- (c) Application of the FE method in biomedical engineering is a growing research interest. However, due to high geometric complexity of biological component, the FE computation analysis become challenging as it could cause a high amount of time and manual effort to create an adequate and valid FE model (Grosland et al., 2009).

1.6 Research Methodology

The research consists of two main phases (Figure 1.7). Initially, the geometric profile of an irregular profile is selected and the STL data is established. In the first phase, which is accomplished during PSM 1, the preliminary building block is generated based on the STL data using the IA-FEMesh GUI. In the IA-FEMesh environment, the building block is developed without node alteration and with manual node alteration. The manual node alteration of the building block depends on the user definition in the IA-FEMesh GUI. Next, fully-hexahedral mesh is generated in reference to the building block, and the mesh quality is evaluated based on the determinant of the Jacobian value. In the second phase, which is accomplished during PSM 2, the development of the algorithm of multiple building block will be established. Accordingly, fully-hexahedral mesh will be established, and the mesh quality will be determined based on the determinant of the Jacobian value. Variation to the mesh quality value will be evaluated and research will be concluded.

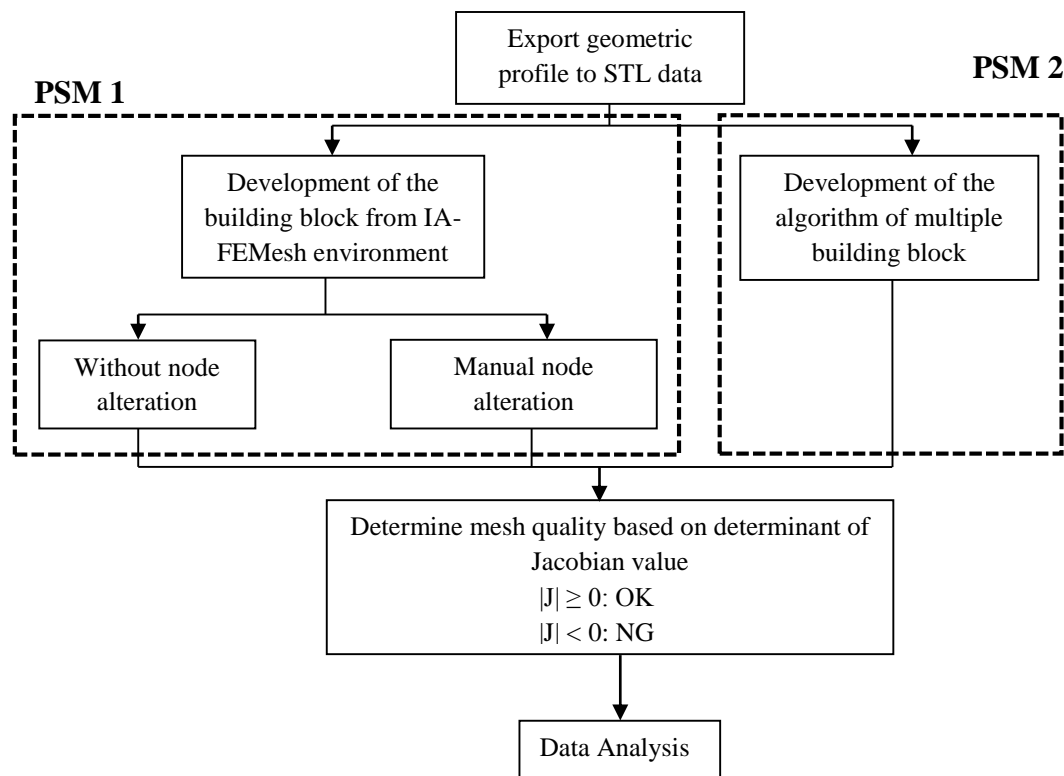


Figure 1.7 Flow Chart for the Final Year Project