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# Engineering Analysis with Boundary Elements

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## Development and implementation of some BEM variants—A critical review

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### ABSTRACT

Due to rapid development of boundary element method (BEM), this article explores the evolution of BEM over the past half century. We here summarize the overall development and implementation of several well-known BEM variants that includes collocation BEM, galerkin BEM, dual reciprocity BEM, complex variable BEM and analog equation method. Their theoretical and mathematical backgrounds are carefully described and a generalized Laplace's equation (and Poisson's equation) is utilized in demonstrating the different approaches involved. An up-to-date review on characteristics and implementation for each of the five variants is presented and also highlighted their significant contributions in boundary element research. In addition, this article tries to cover whole aspect of interests including efficiency, applicability and accuracy in order to give better understanding of BEM evolution. Comparisons and techniques of improvement for these variants are also discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

Boundary element method (BEM) is one of the numerical techniques designed for solving boundary value problems in partial differential equations (PDEs). Applied in various engineering and science disciplines, BEM can be considered as a major numerical method alongside with better known finite element method (FEM) and finite difference method (FDM) jointly providing effective computational solution for a wide class of engineering and scientific problems. Like many other numerical techniques, the interest towards BEM increased gradually over recent decades catalyzed by rapid advances in computer technology. In fact, the statistical data based on the *Web of Science* search shows that the amount of annual published literature described by BEM saw an exponential growth until late 1990s and exceeded 700 literatures annually in subsequent years [39]. In this relatively short period of time, the evolution of BEM is tremendous. Several comprehensive reviews on BEM recently prepared by scholars have documented various theoretical basis and early development of BEM [39,50,106,256]. Many of the mathematical approaches presented in BEM are associated with work of famous mathematicians and scientists. The contributions of mathematicians like Laplace, Green, Fredholm, Fourier, Kellogg and Betti could be traced in the theoretical and mathematical foundation of boundary integral equation (BIE) in the early 20th century (See [39] for more detailed description on their contributions). However, pioneering work by Jaswon [113] and

Symm [243] in 1963 has been marked as the formal beginning of the boundary element era. They demonstrated direct formulation using Green's third identity for two-dimensional Laplace's equation, hence, credited them as the first to formulate the potential problem in terms of direct BIE that set them apart from existing indirect BIE. Although, in the beginning, their work did not receive much attention as they deserved, their concept on direct approach has inspired Rizzo [219] to adopt similar approach using displacements and tractions in integral equation. Soon afterwards, his work has attracted and inspired researchers to investigate the potential of the new boundary integral approach. Considered as a major breakthrough in BEM, his work is then adopted by many researchers and saw swift progress in the development of boundary integral equation approach.

Following these early works, extensive researches and development works were carried out in 1970s to construct the basis of modern BEM on various aspects including basic principles, applications and numerical techniques. One must bear in mind that before BEM existed, Green's formulation used only to reduce the differential equation in the domain-to-boundary integral equation. Only until late 1970s, the discretization of these boundary integrals using numerical techniques creates so-called BEMs. The terminology of boundary element method, previously referred as boundary integral equation method or boundary integral method first appeared in the works of Brebbia and Dominguez [28] and Banerjee and Butterfield [18] in 1977. However, the article prepared by Banerjee and Butterfield was still based on indirect method boundary equations while Brebbia and Dominguez presented the potential problems through a weighted residual approach using direct version. A year later, Brebbia [25] published the first textbook of BEM focusing on basic

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principles and its application to potential and elasticity problems, created a major advance in BEM. At the same time, enormous research efforts have been directed in expanding the development of BEM. One of the significant achievements was the implementation of substructure technique in BEM presented by Lachat [143,144] which overcome one of the major drawbacks in BEM: nonsymmetrical matrix. On the other hand, apart from conventional BEM in frequency domain, the time domain BEM was later introduced by Cole et al. [46] for anti-plane strain problem in two-dimensional elastodynamics and then improved by Mansur and Brebbia [153,154] to accommodate scalar wave problem. Following the extension of this formulation, the BEM can be employed to investigate the transient behavior and also nonlinear problems. The detailed theoretical basis for these problems (nonlinear and time-dependent problems) can be obtained in textbooks written by Brebbia and his colleagues in [30,31]. Soon, the BEM was further extended to cover a wide scope of solid mechanics [6,249] and fluid mechanics [32] problems. Thanks to early development prepared by numerous researchers including Brebbia and his fellow colleagues who directly involved in constructing the blueprint of modern BEM which then well received by the scientific community that nowadays the BEM has been adopted by many researchers covering countless specialized areas such as acoustics [8,45,253,262], contact mechanics [152], dynamics analysis [61], solids and structures [9,231], soil-structure interactions [84], nonlinear fluid dynamics [20], heat transfer [262,263] and quantum mechanics [215]. With the solid foundation and rich heritage, BEM emerged as a powerful method and thus become a strong alternative to the FEM and FDM.

## 2. Boundary integral equation

Unlike FEM and FDM, as the numerical implementation of boundary integral equations, BEM requires surface-only discretization. The BIE re-formulations of boundary value problems for partial differential equations are valid everywhere—interior and exterior of the domain and also on the boundary, giving it a big advantage since most of the engineering and scientific applications can be described by PDEs. Note, however, that not all PDEs can be transformed into integral equations, and therefore, it is crucial for researchers to be able to understand the classification of PDEs and the concept behind each class. In most mathematics books, these PDEs can be classified as being elliptic, parabolic, or hyperbolic type according to the form of the equation. In second-order PDE (the order of a PDE indicates the order of the highest order derivative found in the PDE), the differential equation is considered as: (1) elliptic equation when the coefficients of both no mixed second-order derivatives are nonvanishing and of the same sign. (2) parabolic equation when only one second-order non-mixed derivative term is present and of opposite sign. (3) hyperbolic equation when the coefficients of the non-mixed two second-order derivatives are nonvanishing and opposite in sign. Moreover, elliptic PDEs have boundary conditions specified around a closed boundary, whilst hyperbolic and parabolic PDEs have at least one open boundary. Thus, elliptic equations are often used to describe systems in the equilibrium or steady state whereas the parabolic equations being utilized for demonstrating physical systems with a time variable, diffusion like phenomena, and for the hyperbolic equations, they are frequently used to describe oscillatory systems especially wave-like phenomena. In addition to the classification mentioned above, PDEs can be presented as single PDE or systems of PDEs with multiple variables. Although the integral equation re-formulation can only be derived for certain classes of PDE, it is much easier to apply and more computationally efficient, if applicable. Therefore, it is

critically important to know the characteristics of each differential equation in order to employ the right numerical technique. To date, the integral equations have been successfully applied to describe various physical disciplines such as elastostatics, electrostatics, electrostatics, electrostatics, elasticity, plasticity, heat transfer, acoustics, fluid dynamics and so on. Table 1 illustrates some applicable areas for linear and nonlinear problems distinguished into classes of PDEs.

**Table 1**  
Applicable areas for different classes of PDEs.

Linear	Nonlinear
<b>Single second-order PDEs</b>	
(A) Elliptic	(A) Hyperbolic
<i>Laplace's equation</i>	<i>Burgers' equation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrostatics</li> <li>• Incompressible potential flow</li> <li>• Heat Conduction (Steady state, no heat generation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluid mechanics</li> </ul>
<i>Poisson's equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electrostatics</li> <li>• Electromagnetics</li> <li>• Heat Conduction (Uniform thermal conductivity, steady state, heat generation within the solid)</li> </ul>	
<i>Helmholtz equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acoustics (Interior and exterior problem)</li> <li>• Electromagnetics</li> <li>• Optics</li> </ul>	
(B) Parabolic	
<i>Diffusion/Heat equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heat Conduction (Uniform thermal conductivity, no heat sources)</li> </ul>	
<i>Schrödinger's equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantum mechanics</li> </ul>	
(C) Hyperbolic	
<i>Wave equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acoustics</li> <li>• Electromagnetics</li> <li>• Fluid dynamics</li> </ul>	
<b>Single fourth-order PDEs</b>	
<i>Biharmonic equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thin plate problem</li> <li>• Fluid-flow problem</li> </ul>	
<b>System of PDEs</b>	
<i>Navier's equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elasticity problem</li> </ul>	<i>Navier–Stokes equation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluid dynamics</li> </ul>
<i>Maxwell's equation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electromagnetics</li> </ul>	<i>Euler's equation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluid dynamics</li> </ul>

2.1. Laplace's equation

Despite the variety, Laplace's equation is widely preferred by scholars when introducing the BEM to the reader and we noticed, in general, the elliptic equations have a well-developed theory and some equivalent forms of BIE. Hailed as the most simple and prominent example, Laplace's equation is typically utilized in formulating the potential problem in which the solution is harmonic. Thus, in studying the development of BEM, Laplace's equation (and Poisson's equation) is generally utilized in demonstrating the different approach adopted by each BEM variants. For convenience, the standard Laplace's equation with the corresponding notation described by Brebbia in [25,27,30] is then employed in this section to assist the understanding of concept behind the transformation of PDEs into integral equations form. Following this, let us begin this section with basic equation in which two-dimensional Laplace's equation is considered. Laplace's equation can be expressed as follows:

$$\nabla^2 u = 0, \quad u \text{ in } \Omega \tag{1}$$

where the domain  $\Omega$  is shown in figure below. Fig. 1

Here two BEM approaches can be used in solving Laplace's equation: 'direct' and 'indirect'. For direct approach, the integral equation is derived using Green's second theorem,

$$\int_{\Omega} (u^* \nabla^2 u - u \nabla^2 u^*) d\Omega = \int_{\Gamma} \left( u^* \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} - u \frac{\partial u^*}{\partial n} \right) d\Gamma \tag{2}$$

and leads to

$$\int_{\Omega} u^* \nabla^2 u d\Omega = \int_{\Gamma_2} q u^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma_1} u q^* d\Gamma \tag{3}$$

with both  $u$  and  $u_*$  satisfy Laplace's equation where the potential function,  $u$ , satisfies  $\nabla^2 u = 0$  everywhere in the solution domain while function  $u_*$ , known as fundamental solution satisfies  $\nabla^2 u_* = 0$  everywhere except at source points. Similarly, the derivative for fundamental solution can be obtained using  $q_* = \partial u_* / \partial n$ . Here Green's second identity is utilized in reducing the dimensionality of the problem. Integrating the left hand side of Eq. (3), one obtains

$$\int_{\Omega} (\nabla^2 u^*) u d\Omega = \int_{\Gamma} u q^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} q u^* d\Gamma \tag{4}$$

As function  $u_*$  is the fundamental solution to Laplace's equation, the solution can be written

$$\nabla^2 u^* = -2\pi \Delta^i \tag{5}$$

where the Dirac delta function,  $\Delta^i$  tends to infinity at point  $x=x^i$  and equal to zero anywhere else and the integral of  $\Delta^i$  however is

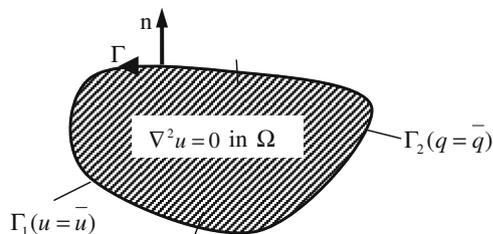


Fig. 1. Geometrical notation for Laplace's equation with two different types of boundary conditions

- (i)  $u = \bar{u}$  on  $\Gamma_1$  (Dirichlet boundary condition).
- (ii)  $q = \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = \bar{q}$  on  $\Gamma_2$  (Neumann boundary condition).

where boundary  $\Gamma = \Gamma_1 \cup \Gamma_2$  and  $n$  is the normal vector to the boundary with potential function  $u$  is specified (Dirichlet) or its derivative  $q$  is specified (Neumann), both indicated with bar sign.

equal to one. Thus, the fundamental solution can be taken as  $u^* = -\ln r/2\pi$  for two-dimensional cases where  $r$  is the distance from source point  $x$  to field point  $y$ . This function is also sometimes known as Green's function which can be expressed as  $G(x,y) = -\ln r/2\pi$ . Therefore, Eq. (4) can be reformulate and rewritten as

$$c(x)u(x) = \int_{\Gamma} q(y)u^*(x,y)d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} u(y)q^*(x,y)d\Gamma \tag{6}$$

where

$$c(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } x \text{ is in exterior of domain } \Omega \\ 1/2 & \text{if } x \text{ is on smooth boundary } \Gamma \\ 1 & \text{if } x \text{ is in domain } \Omega \end{cases}$$

Eq. (6) is known as the boundary integral equation for Laplace's equation where the coefficient  $c(x)$  depends on the position of point  $x$ . In mathematical point of view based on the description written by Arnold and Wendland [15], the Eq. (4) can be categorized into three typical classes of mathematical problems. For coefficient  $c=0$ , it best describes the exterior problems (e.g. incompressible flow, electromagnetic fields, plane elasticity, steady-state thermoelasticity and exterior acoustics problem) in which the singular integral equations with a Cauchy's kernel appeared. For  $c=1/2$ , the BIE is applicable to surface problems including normal derivative of double layer potentials in acoustics, ideal flows and plane elasticity. Meanwhile, its application on interior problem consisting of an integro-differential operators of second order, is obtained once using coefficient  $c=1$ . Other than that, special cases involving first kind integral equation with logarithmic kernel (Symm's integral equation) can be established while assuming  $c = -1/2$  and is frequently applied in areas like conformal mapping, torsion problems, plane elasticity, Stokes flows and electrostatics.

On the other hand, the indirect approach (a.k.a. classical or source method) is written in terms of source density functions defined by the boundary. The source density however has no specific physical significance. In the indirect approach, reformulation of integral equation is obtained by writing layer potential  $u$  by including unknown density  $\sigma$ ,

$$u = \int_{\Gamma} \sigma u^* d\Gamma \tag{7}$$

The above integral equation is the solution for the Neumann problem whereas the solution of the Dirichlet problem can be obtained when the unknown function  $u$  is formulated by adding double-layer potential with unknown density  $\mu$ ,

$$u = \int_{\Gamma} \mu \frac{\partial u^*}{\partial n} d\Gamma \tag{8}$$

This indirect approach has been well known and leads to the formulation of lifting surface methods pioneered by Hess and Smith [91]. Moreover, the work of Djodjodhardjo and Widnall [60] is one of the example of early manifestations of indirect BEM approach. Although the direct and the indirect methods have different techniques in solving PDEs, both can be derived from their integral expression. In fact, Brebbia and Butterfield [26] proved that the direct and indirect BEMs are equivalent. For interested reader, we refer to the standard textbooks [27,30] for further elaboration on both approaches.

3. Development of BEM variants

Using similar boundary integral equation mentioned, numerous BEM variants were created thanks to enormous efforts by researchers for the past three decades. In this review paper, the overall development of five well-known BEM variants composing

collocation boundary element method (CBEM), galerkin boundary element method (GBEM), dual Reciprocity boundary element method (DRBEM), complex Variable boundary element method (CVBEM) and analog equation method (AEM) were discussed. Among a choice of nearly 40 BEM variants, they were selected based on their significant contributions in boundary element research and at the same time, possesses solid foundations with establishment duration over 15 years. Practically, these BEM variants can be divided into two major groups—boundary integrals and domain integrals [217]. The boundary-type integrals can be discretized directly using boundary elements and they often contains kernels which are singular or hypersingular (singularity of an order greater than one). As for domain integrals, they will need to be transformed into a boundary one via analytical or numerical approaches before discretizing them into boundary elements. In the analytical approach, the conversion of domain-to-boundary is mainly based on Green's identities. Meanwhile, the technique for transferring the domain integrals into equivalent surface integrals using a set of radial basic approximation functions presents a numerical treatment of domain integrals. In dealing with boundary or domain integral equations, this article tries to outline the evolution of the theoretical and mathematical basis of each BEM variants along with the way they were being implemented in a systematic way. As the boundary is discretized, the BIE is then numerically approximated, leading to the concern of its stability and convergence properties. The accuracy of each BEM variants which mainly based on their choice of numerical technique is widely discussed in the subsequent subtopics. Fig. 2 outlines the structure of several BEM variants focusing in giving a clearer picture of BEM evolution.

3.1. Collocation boundary element method

The collocation boundary element method (CBEM) is one of the earliest variant in BEM and often known as traditional collocation boundary element method (TCBEM) or classical BEM.

The implementation of collocation method in BEM can be traced as far as in the sixties, where this method was pioneered by Jaswon [113] and Symm [243] when they discretized the boundary of a domain by a set of points with straight lines in potential theory problems and then by Rizzo [219] as corresponding numerical solution in elastostatics. At the beginning of BEM development, this basic concept of implementing collocation method in BEM has been promising due to its generality and simplicity. For this particular variant, the discretization of boundary integral equations is based on the nodal collocation method in which the approximated boundary integral equation is evaluated on the interpolation nodes. A number of discrete points (nodes of elements) on the problem boundary were chosen and it was assumed that the integral equation is satisfied at these points. In order to do so, the governing equation for direct BEM obtained from Eq. (6) can be rearranged as

$$cu + \int_{\Gamma} uq^* d\Gamma = \int_{\Gamma} qu^* d\Gamma \tag{9}$$

Then, the boundary is discretized into a series of  $N$  elements. Taking the elements mid points as collocation nodes, Eq. (9) becomes

$$cu + \sum_{j=1}^N \int_{\Gamma_j} uq^* d\Gamma = \sum_{j=1}^N \int_{\Gamma_j} u^* q d\Gamma \tag{10}$$

for  $j=1, \dots, N$ . Assuming the  $u$  and  $q$  values are constant within each element, we can rewrite it as

$$cu + \left( \sum_{j=1}^N \int_{\Gamma_j} q^* d\Gamma \right) u_j = \left( \sum_{j=1}^N \int_{\Gamma_j} u^* d\Gamma \right) q_j \tag{11}$$

which can be summarized in the form:

$$[A]\{u\} = [B]\{q\} \tag{12}$$

The numerical method mentioned above is the classical collocation procedure which also known as the nodal collocation that leads to the linear system connecting functions  $u$  and  $q$  on boundary collocation nodes. The complete and detail mathema-

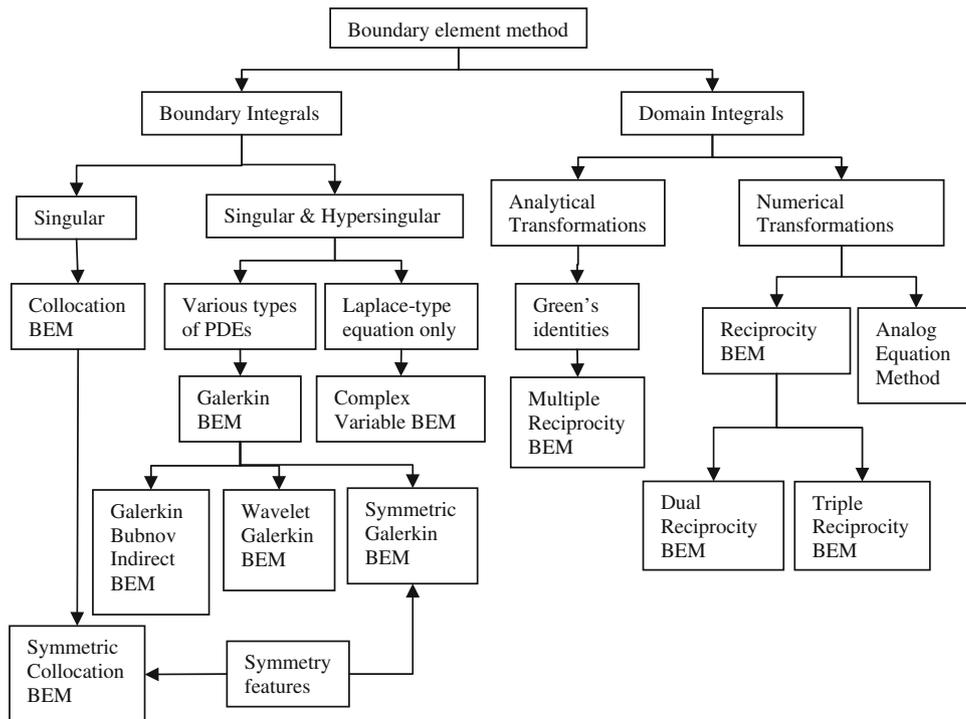


Fig. 2. Classification of BEM variants.

tical description on the nodal collocation in direct BEM can be found elsewhere, e.g. in [27,30,174]. Due to its simplicity, many researchers found it easy to implement and as a result, most of the boundary value problems at the beginning of BEM development are based on collocation method. Therefore, the collocation BEM has been adopted in diverse engineering-related discipline, such as elastostatics [49,142,219], transient elastodynamics [48,51,155], thermoelasticity [220], plate bending [90], thin plate analysis [187], fracture mechanics [156,257], Stokes flow [68,140,214], plane wave radiation and scattering problem [198] and acoustics [10,45,199]. In addition, the collocation-based direct BEM was extended for nonlinear boundary value problem [225] (i.e. elastoplastic problem [19,44,248]). Practically, the numerical solution for BIE usually employs either constant, linear, quadratic or higher element discretization of the surface as boundary elements, depending on their expected accuracy. One of the most preferable techniques in this variant is the piecewise polynomial collocation method which appears to be more adaptable to specific problems and achieves better outcome in the standard cases especially in the linear case [227]. In spite of all those mentioned above, which may appear to be an ideal numerical solution in solving the BIE, the nodal collocation was not employed in indirect BEM in the past. This is due to the difficulties associated with the evaluation of the hypersingular integrals of the indirect BEM. Furthermore, some of the researchers raise concern on the accuracy of the collocation approach. In fact, significant number of published articles mainly discuss about the convergence analysis of collocation approach; and among them, extensive analysis was performed by Arnold et al. [14,16,17], Ruotsalainen [224] and Juhl [115], and covered various aspects and provides strong evidences on this issue in their report. In conclusion, they pointed out that the collocation BEM often produces results with poor convergence and it is unlikely to employ this technique on bodies with edges as it display a strong singularity at corner points. Due to this, the collocation method appears to be less efficient. In response to that, Juhl [115] suggested two different approaches with the aim to boost the rate of convergence for this particular case (bodies with edges). One applies specialized shape functions replacing the mid-element node and another adopted the so-called generalized quarter point technique by shifting the mid-element node approximately one-fourth of an element length. Moreover, the lack of symmetry problem later noticed in the CBEM often cost the lost of computer efficiency, especially in the boundary element method/finite element method (BEM/FEM). Therefore, a new variant in the CBEM family known as the symmetric collocation BEM (SCBEM) was presented by Yu [274] in solving the elastodynamic problems. This approach retains the advantages of the collocation approach while employing symmetry coefficient matrix aiming to save memory storage. In addition, a modified CBEM was recently presented by Rüberg and Schanz [223] for static and dynamic problems which is applicable to vector problems (i.e. elasticity) and dynamic problems (i.e. acoustics and elastodynamics). Compared to standard collocation procedure, the modified CBEM is based on a mixed approximation formulation on primary variable (e.g. potentials or displacements) and on dual variable (e.g. surface fluxes or tractions).

### 3.2. Galerkin boundary element method

Another approach implemented in BEM discretization procedure using one of the weighted residual techniques called Galerkin method, formed a new variant—Galerkin boundary element method (GBEM). Apparently, the Galerkin approach for boundary integral equation was originated from the work of Bui [34] in fracture analysis

where the problem of a plane crack with arbitrary shape is investigated. However, this approach, at that time, still unnoticed by the scientific community as researchers were at the stage where they started to employ the collocation approach for boundary value problems. The work of Wendland [258] on asymptotic convergence of Galerkin approach, however, changes the fortune of this particular approach. Compared to collocation approach, Galerkin approach shows its potential in solving boundary value problems in terms of singular and hypersingular integral equations and is superior than collocation approach for obtaining more accurate results. Comparison between Collocation and Galerkin approach done by several scholars in various aspects such as computing time [15], stiffness matrices [55], time-domain BEM formulation applied to the wave propagation problem [232] and its stability [275] further explain the characteristic and performance on both methods. Unlike the collocation procedure, the Galerkin approach does not involve specific point satisfying the integral equation but requires double integrals on  $\Gamma \times \Gamma$ . In order to formulate the standard GBEM, the BIE for Laplace's equation from Eq. (6) can written as

$$P(x) = c(x)u(x) + \int_{\Gamma} u(y)q^*(x,y)d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} q(y)u^*(x,y)d\Gamma \quad (13)$$

and the corresponding equation for the normal derivative of  $u$  with respect to point  $x$  could be obtained as

$$F(x) = c(x)\frac{\partial u}{\partial N}(x) + \int_{\Gamma} u(y)\frac{\partial q^*}{\partial N}(x,y)d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} q(y)\frac{\partial u^*}{\partial N}(x,y)d\Gamma \quad (14)$$

in which both  $P(x)$  and  $F(x)$  are the residual of the Eq. (13) and (14). According to the Galerkin scheme, the integration of weighted residual statement over the surface is equal to zero where the statement is formed by multiplying the residuals with the chosen weight functions. Thus, it can be formulated in the form

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_k(x)P(x)dx = 0 \quad (15)$$

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_k(x)F(x)dx = 0 \quad (16)$$

where Eq. (15) can be employed for Dirichlet-type surface and Eq. (16) for Neumann-type surface with  $\psi_k(x)$  as the preferred weight functions. These weighting functions can be expressed by the shape functions obtained by interpolating the boundary functions  $u$  and its normal derivative. Due to this, the Galerkin approach is generally more accurate than Collocation approach as the error of satisfying the Eq. (6) are minimized. Further description on the Galerkin procedure in direct BEM can be obtained in [188] for plane elastostatic problem. Emerged as an alternative approach to the well established CBEM, the Galerkin approach in BIE then extended for other standard cases such as in elastoplastic problem [151], electrostatics problem [21], Stokes flow [52], acoustic scattering problem [38,83,114], electromagnetic scattering problem [33], acousto-aeroelastic problem [58,59], etc. For indirect approach, the implementation of the Galerkin formulation can be seen in articles by Lean et al. [146] for electrical engineering problems and nonlinear heat conduction problem by Ruotsalainen and Saranen [226]. Although regarded as more complicated and significantly slower techniques compared to collocation, the Galerkin method which concentrated on the evaluation of double integrals has its advantage by offering treatment to the hypersingular integrals with standard continuous elements—constant, linear, quadratic or higher order elements. Hence, the capability in solving the hypersingular equations is proven to be advantageous for the Galerkin approach in dealing with crack analysis where singular equation alone provides insufficient information [47,239]. Furthermore, the description written intended for the numerical integration on both singular and hypersingular BIE using the Galerkin approach for 2D problems is available in [3,4] and 3D problems in [2]. Similar work

regarding evaluation of singular and hypersingular based on Galerkin technique is also discussed by Gray and his coworkers [75,77,79,81]. Opposed to the Collocation approach, the Galerkin approach holds advantage where it is easier for Galerkin approach to formulate a natural symmetry BIE as the  $x$  and  $y$  are treated evenly. This is noticed since the early birth of GBEM which is highlighted by Sirtori [235] in the linear elastic analysis of the homogenous continuum and Hartmann et al [89] for elasticity in beams. The described symmetry matrices in elasticity then adopted and further developed by Maier and his coworkers in elastoplastic analysis [151], elasticity [236], plasticity [150] and gradient plasticity [149]. The extended Galerkin formulation is called Symmetric Galerkin Boundary Element Method (SGBEM) associated with its symmetric matrices features. In this BEM variant, the fundamental solution also known as Green's function, and its derivatives satisfy the following symmetry properties:

$$\begin{aligned} u^*(x,y) &= u^*(y,x), \quad \partial u^*(x,y)/\partial n = -\partial u^*(y,x)/\partial n, \\ \partial u^*(x,y)/\partial N &= -\partial u^*(y,x)/\partial N, \quad \partial u^*(x,y)/\partial N = -\partial u^*(x,y)/\partial n, \\ \partial^2 u^*(x,y)/\partial N \partial n &= \partial^2 u^*(y,x)/\partial N \partial n \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

With these additional symmetry features, it will significantly lessen the computational work and thus, SGBEM has been chosen and implemented in a wide range of scientific applications: fracture analysis [72,76,80,201,240], steady and incompressible flow [35], plate bending analysis [186,197], analysis of Kirchhoff elastic plates [71], heat conduction [241], viscoelastic problems [195], elastodynamics [276] and plasticity [148]. Moreover, interested readers may refer to extensive literature review on SGBEM documented by Bonnet et al. [24] which gives a greater understanding on this particular method with broad citation. In their review paper, the discussions on SGBEM are mainly focused on areas divided into several subtopics including linear elastic problems, elastic-plastic quasi-static analysis, fracture mechanics, time-dependent problems, variational approaches, singular integrals, approximation issues, sensitivity analysis, coupling of boundary and finite elements and computer implementations. Subsequently, a textbook totally devoted to SGBEM was recently written by Sutradhar et al. [242], and provides an updated information regarding SGBEM including the current development with fairly detailed survey of visualization techniques with corresponding software. In addition, a symmetric Galerkin MATLAB educational program called BEAN is also presented in the book and available for download at [http://www.ghpaulino.com/SGBEM\\_book](http://www.ghpaulino.com/SGBEM_book). In an attempt to expand the SGBEM applicability, the SGBEM was then extended by Pérez-Gavilán and Aliabadi [196] in which the modified method can be demonstrated for multi-connected bodies. However, in their following reports [193,194], they also pointed out that the applications of symmetric Galerkin boundary element method to multiple connected regions, where at least one closed boundary is subjected to Neumann boundary condition only, will result in non-uniqueness. To overcome the non-uniqueness problem, they proposed a new approach which consists of partitioning the domain in two simply connected subregions to deal with the non-uniqueness in symmetric Galerkin scheme. In another case, Gray and Griffith [78] proposed a modified Galerkin approach in order to improve the computational efficiency of Galerkin approach which can be applied on singular and hypersingular equations. To demonstrate the improved version of the Galerkin approach, the Dirichlet problem will be considered here. From the Eq. (15), the coefficient matrix can be taken from the integrals

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_k(x) \int_{\Gamma} q(y) u^*(x,y) dy dx \quad (18)$$

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_k(x) \int_{\Gamma} u(y) q^*(x,y) dy dx \quad (19)$$

In the proposed approach, the modification involves implementing the Galerkin on outer  $x$  integration and inner integration,

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_m(x) \int_{\Gamma} \psi_l(y) u^*(x,y) dy dx \quad (20)$$

$$\int_{\Gamma} \psi_m(x) \int_{\Gamma} \psi_l(y) q^*(x,y) dy dx \quad (21)$$

in which the boundary functions  $u(y)$  and  $q(y)$  have been replaced by their approximations,

$$u(y) = \sum_l u(y_l) \psi_l(y) \quad (22)$$

$$q(y) = \sum_l q(y_l) \psi_l(y) \quad (23)$$

This simple modification was reported to decrease computation time by 20–30 percent for computing the non-singular integrals and has significantly improved the computational performance, especially for moderate to large scale problems. Another effort to improve the computational efficiency of the GBEM proposed by Wang et al. [254] demonstrated in solving two-dimensional elastostatics problems involving numerous inhomogeneities. Block computation techniques were employed by computing the combined influences of groups of elements using asymptotic expansions, multiple shifts and Taylor series expansions.

In addition to all mentioned above, there are two other subclasses of Galerkin approach known as the Galerkin–Bubnov Indirect Boundary Element Method and Wavelet Galerkin Boundary element method (WGBEM). Often, the densely populated system matrices resulting from traditional discretizations of integral equations cost a major concern. As a solution, a new alternative technique employing wavelets as the basis functions and weighting functions in the Galerkin BIE discretization was proposed. The early initiative implementing wavelet Galerkin scheme in boundary integral equation can be traced back to the literature written by Lage and Schwab [145] in 1999 on wavelet-based Galerkin discretization of second kind integral equations for piecewise smooth surfaces. At the same time, a fully discrete wavelet Galerkin scheme for the 2D Laplacian was presented by Harbrecht and Scheider [88] and later extended to three dimensional [85]. From their work, a new approach which known as wavelet Galerkin boundary element method (WGBEM) was created and then utilized by researchers in engineering fields with successful implementation in electromagnetic shaping [66,67], acoustics scattering wave [86], elasticity [64] and electrostatic analysis [268]. To understand more on WGBEM, the Fredholm's integral equation of the first kind from Eq. (6) for Dirichlet problem is considered,

$$Au(x) = \int_{\Gamma} q(y) u^*(x,y) d\Gamma = f(x) \quad (24)$$

which appears as a single-layer equation and also can be represent as

$$Au(x) = c(x)u(x) + \int_{\Gamma} u(y)q^*(x,y)d\Gamma \quad (25)$$

Introducing the weighting function in the Galerkin discretization by referring to Eq. (15), the matrix system entries  $A_{\psi}$  can be formulated as

$$A_{\psi} = \int_{\Gamma} \psi_k(x) \int_{\Gamma} q(y) u^*(x,y) d\Gamma \quad (26)$$

Thus, the integral equations with the single-scale basis can be expressed in the linear system form as

$$A_{\psi}u_{\psi} = f_{\psi} \quad (27)$$

However, in the WGBEM, wavelet bases are employed instead of using the single-scale basis which is commonly applied in the traditional Galerkin approach. There are dozens wavelets that can be chosen and primarily categorized as either orthogonal [63,64] or biorthogonal [87,88]. The selection of wavelets depends on their characteristics, mainly on orthogonality, vanishing moments and smoothness. Consequently, the implementation of wavelet bases in Galerkin discretization leads to sparse matrices. These nonrelevent sparse matrix entries which can be negligible and treated as zero will be discarded in the latter part by employing the wavelet matrix compression introduced by Beylkin et al. [23]. The matrix compression which can be done using A-priori compression or A-posterior compression is one of the important factors in order to achieve an efficient computational method [53,269]. Investigation on multiwavelet basis function was also presented by in the work of several scholars [5,145,270]. In general, WGBEM offers a new class of fast solution for the integral equations other than multipole and panel clustering.

Another variant known as Galerkin–Bubnov Indirect boundary element method (GB-IBEM) was first implemented in solving the antenna radiation over lossy half-space developed by Poljak [203]. However, the implementation of the Galerkin–Bubnov scheme in boundary integral equation can be seen in the work of Rolics [221,222]. For the Galerkin–Bubnov scheme, the weighting function is obtained in the same form with the weight function for Galerkin approach (but with arbitrary coefficients). In several literatures [36,205,206,208,209,211,212], GB-IBEM is preferred for treating Pocklington's integro-differential equation arising from electric field integral equation which can be written in the operator form as

$$KI = E \quad (28)$$

Given  $E$  as the excitation with  $K$  represents linear operator, unknown function  $I$  can be computed. However, the unknown function can also be expressed by the sum of a finite number ( $n$ ) of linearly independent basis functions  $f_i$  with unknown complex coefficients  $I_i$ :

$$I_n = \sum_{i=1}^n I_i f_i \quad (29)$$

Therefore, employing the weighted residual approach with the Galerkin–Bubnov procedure, the operator Eq. (28) transforms into a system of algebraic equation

$$\sum_{i=1}^n I_i \int_{\Omega} K(f_i) f_m dz = \int_{\Omega} E f_m dz, \quad m = 1, 2, \dots, n \quad (30)$$

This approach which contains unknown sources can be pointed out as an indirect boundary element method. Full details for this approach can be obtained from textbooks [204,207]. Frequently used in dealing with the electric field integral equation, the Galerkin–Bubnov scheme demonstrated the electromagnetics analysis for antenna with partially penetrating the ground [36,205], above ground [211] and fully buried in the ground [206,208,209,212]. It was also extended for investigating the effect of electromagnetic field on human body [210].

### 3.3. Dual reciprocity BEM

In 1982, Brebbia and Nardini presented a new alternative approach in solving the elastodynamic problem at the international conference on soil dynamics and earthquake engineering and the same article [29] was published in 1983. The proposed

approach also addressed in [158] where the statical fundamental solution is employed in solving the dynamic problems which demonstrated conversion of free vibration problem to frequency independent algebraic eigenvalue problem on homogeneous elastic bodies. Thus, making the boundary integrals only computed once and therefore producing an efficient and accurate alternative method. This new BEM variant was later named dual reciprocity boundary element method (DRBEM). Unlike any other variants, this method has the ability to handle the domain integrals even nonhomogeneous is involved. To explain the DRBEM, basic formulation of Poisson-type equation in the form

$$\nabla^2 u = b \quad (31)$$

subjected to similar boundary condition mentioned earlier for Laplace's equation. Function  $b$  in the integral equation can be represented by

- (i)  $b = -(\partial u / \partial x)$  in the convective problem ( $\nabla^2 u = -(\partial u / \partial x)$ )
- (ii)  $b = (1/k)(\partial u / \partial t)$  in the diffusion problem ( $\nabla^2 u = (1/k)(\partial u / \partial t)$ )
- (iii)  $b = -\mu^2 u$  in the Helmholtz equation ( $\nabla^2 u + \mu^2 u = 0$ )
- (iv)  $b = (\partial^2 u / \partial t^2) + \beta(\partial u / \partial t) + \varphi \sin u$  in the sine-Gordon equation ( $(\partial^2 u / \partial t^2) + \beta(\partial u / \partial t) = \nabla^2 u - \varphi \sin u$ )

Applying the standard boundary integral approach, an integral equation analogous to Eq. (6) can be obtained.

$$c_i u_i + \int_{\Gamma} u q^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} q u^* d\Gamma = \int_{\Omega} b u^* d\Omega \quad (32)$$

Note that the right hand side of the equation contains domain integral. Here the domain integral can be transformed to boundary integral using the dual reciprocity method featuring the main component of DRBEM. In order to attain that, function  $b$  can be approximated as follows:

$$b \approx \sum_{j=1}^N \alpha_j f_j \quad (33)$$

where  $N$  is the number of collocation points,  $\alpha_j$  are a series of unknown coefficients which can be determined by collocation method, while  $f_j$  are a set of approximating functions usually applied as the radial basis approximation functions

$$f_j = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} r^k = 1 + r + r^2 + \dots \quad (34)$$

with the particular solutions written as

$$\nabla^2 \hat{u}_j = f_j \quad (35)$$

Multiplication of Eq. (31) with fundamental solution of Laplace's equation  $u^*$  and integrating over the domain  $\Omega$  produces the equation

$$\int_{\Omega} u^* \nabla^2 u d\Omega = \int_{\Omega} u^* b d\Omega \quad (36)$$

Substituting Eq. (33) and (35) into Eq. (36) yields,

$$\int_{\Omega} (\nabla^2 u) u^* d\Omega = \sum_{j=1}^{N+L} \alpha_j \int_{\Omega} (\nabla^2 \hat{u}_j) u^* d\Omega \quad (37)$$

Applying integration by parts twice for the domain integral term, Eq. (32) can be rewritten as

$$c_i u_i + \int_{\Gamma} u q^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} u^* q d\Gamma = \sum_{j=1}^N \alpha_j \left( c_i \hat{u}_{ij} + \int_{\Gamma} \hat{u}_j q^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} u^* \hat{q}_j d\Gamma \right) \quad (38)$$

As expected, domain integral in Eq. (32) is eliminated and replaced with boundary integral shown in Eq. (38). The subsequent discretization and its solution will follow standard BEM

procedure. Full description of this particular method can be obtained from the work of Partridge et al. [191]. Since proposed in 1982, the DRBEM experienced continuous progress which tends to improve the current formulation. For example, although the linear radial basis function  $f_j=1+r$  is commonly adopted in the beginning of DRBEM development, Zhang and Zhu [277] investigated and compared the accuracy by using different selection of terms from Eq. (34) where  $r$  term is replaced by  $r^3$  which has proven to be more superior with minimum error. In fact, there are other radial basis functions applicable in DRBEM and they are

- (i) Duchon radial cubics,  $f_j=r^3$
- (ii) Radial quadratic plus cubic,  $f_j=1+r^2+r^3$
- (iii) Thin plate splines,  $f_j=r^2 \ln r$
- (iv) Multiquadric,  $f_j=(r^2+c^2)^{1/2}$
- (v) Gaussian,  $f_j=\exp(-r^2/c^2)$

where  $c$  is a specified constant. Apart from radial basis functions, many kind of approximation functions have been proposed including global basis functions (i.e., polynomial series [40,189], trigonometric series [65,189,247] and hyperbolic series) which can be used to replace locally based radial basis function. These global basis functions in generalized form with  $m, n=0,1,2,\dots$  were listed in Table 2. In addition, Partridge and Sensale [192] suggested a hybrid approximation functions by augmenting radial basis functions with appropriate global expansions. With so many kind of approximation functions available, a study on the criteria of selection for a given problem was summarized by Partridge [190]. He concluded that the main considerations in selecting the  $f$  function rely upon the characteristic of the domain integral where different cases (i.e. known functions, unknown functions without derivatives (steady case), unknown functions with derivatives (steady case), unknown functions with derivatives (transient case), nonlinear functions and internal nodes) would adopt different approach in order to get the best performance. Furthermore, the convergence properties of the radial basis functions and global basis functions demonstrated in [40,271] shows superior convergence properties when employing the global basis functions.

In other aspect, the implementation of DRBEM was extended to the case of potential problems with arbitrarily distributed sources [167] and also in the nonlinear problem, for example in the diffusion problem [264] involving nonlinear features such as nonlinear material, nonlinear boundary conditions, nonlinear sources inside the domain and moving interface problems. Apart from Poisson-type equation, DRBEM is also employed for integral equation involving biharmonic operator  $\nabla^4$ , especially structural analysis of plates like bending problem [118], buckling problem [65], large deflection problem [255] and vibration problem [54]. Moreover, the application of DRBEM to date has successfully been implemented in areas including heat conduction problems [12,22,234,244–246,265–267], heat convection problem [41], convective-diffusive heat problem [228,229], fluid flow problems governed by the Navier–Stokes equation [42,70] and crack problem [7,252]. As DRBEM proved to have practical applicability,

it was later extended to three dimensional problems [1,73,250]. In addition, the DRBEM based on multi-domain approach was proposed to improve the performance of DRBEM and applied to nonlinear convective-diffusive equations [213], velocity-traction formulation of the Navier–Stokes equations [70] and non-Newtonian Stokes equations [69]. The review of multi-domain DRBEM in terms of performance and implementation in 3D problems can be obtained from [159].

Few years after the dual reciprocity method was established, Nowak proposed an addition to the dual reciprocity BEM family by presenting multiple reciprocity boundary element method (MRBEM) through introduction of a sequence of higher order fundamental solutions derived from the Laplace operator. Also known as multiple reciprocity method (MRM), this technique was first applied for transient heat transfer [169] and then employed to the Poisson [172] and Helmholtz equation [171]. As an extension of DRBEM, MRBEM preserved the reciprocity theorem although the technique implementing it is different. In MRBEM, sequences of higher order fundamental solutions and source function laplacians employed can be formulated as

$$\nabla^2 u_{k+1}^* = u_k^* \tag{39}$$

$$\nabla^2 b_k = b_{k+1} \tag{40}$$

where  $k=0,1,2,\dots$  Now, consider the same Poisson's equation from Eq. (28) with an extra subscript “ $k$ ” for the function  $b$ ,

$$\nabla^2 u = b_k \tag{41}$$

Start with  $k=0$ ,

$$\nabla^2 u = b_0 \tag{42}$$

and the integral equation obtained from Eq. (32) can be written

$$c_i u_i + \int_{\Gamma} u q_0^* d\Gamma - \int_{\Gamma} q u_0^* d\Gamma = \int_{\Omega} b_0 u_0^* d\Omega \tag{43}$$

while bearing in mind that  $q_0^* = \partial u_0^* / \partial n$  and the fundamental solution also with similar subscript “ $0$ ”. Using the relationship in Eq. (39), domain integral in Eq. (43) can be transformed to boundary integral by applying the reciprocity theorem, which gives

$$\int_{\Omega} b_0 u_0^* d\Omega = \int_{\Omega} b_0 (\nabla^2 u_1^*) d\Omega = \int_{\Gamma} \left\{ b_0 \frac{\partial u_1^*}{\partial n} - u_1^* \frac{\partial b_0}{\partial n} \right\} d\Gamma + \int_{\Omega} u_1^* \nabla^2 b_0 d\Omega \tag{44}$$

Utilizing the relationship in Eq. (40), one can obtain new function  $b_1$  such that

$$b_1 = \nabla^2 b_0 \tag{45}$$

Consequently the domain integral from the right hand side of Eq. (44) can be computed by

$$\int_{\Omega} b_1 u_1^* d\Omega = \int_{\Gamma} \left\{ b_1 \frac{\partial u_2^*}{\partial n} - u_2^* \frac{\partial b_1}{\partial n} \right\} d\Gamma + \int_{\Omega} u_2^* \nabla^2 b_1 d\Omega \tag{46}$$

These repeated procedures can be carried out until reaching desirable number of cycles. Similar with DRBEM, MRBEM also successfully employed for several integral equation such as Helmholtz equation [37,116,117,272], diffusion equation [111,112,185] and biharmonic equation [164,237,238]. With both methods capable of transforming domain integrals, both often draw comparison between them [74,173]. One significant difference shown is the inclusion of the internal points is rather necessary in the dual reciprocity approach but not needed in MRBEM. Moreover, MRBEM produced better degree of accuracy compared to DRBEM but required more computational effort. In spite of DRBEM is more widely implemented in various problems, MRBEM rather focuses its potential in selective areas such as in vibration problem [238], heat conduction problem [168,170,

**Table 2**  
Example of the global basis functions in generalized form.

Global basis function	Generalized Equation
Polynomial series	$f_j = x^m y^n$
Fourier sine series	$f_j = \sin mx \sin ny$
Fourier cosine series	$f_j = \cos mx \cos ny$
Hyperbolic sine series	$f_j = \sinh mx \sinh ny$
Hyperbolic cosine series	$f_j = \cosh mx \cosh ny$

181,216], thermoelasticity analysis [165,166,233] and elastoplastic analysis [180]. In [180], Ochiai and Kobayashi stipulated that the conventional MRBEM is not convenient to operate in the elastoplastic problems arising from inability in determining the distribution of initial stress and initial strain analytically. Thus, they proposed an improved MRBEM called triple reciprocity boundary element method (TRBEM) in handling the elastoplasticity problems [175]. According to this approach, the domain integral in each step is divided into point and area integrals. Two step functional approximations can be formulated as

$$\nabla^2 W_1 = -W_2 \quad (47)$$

$$\nabla^2 W_2 = -W_3 \quad (48)$$

The term  $W_1$  is known function whereas functions  $W_2$  and  $W_3$  are unknown. From Eqs. (47) and (48), one can obtain

$$\nabla^4 W_1 = W_3 \quad (49)$$

In the elastoplastic analysis [175],  $W_1$  represents deformation of a fictitious thin plate while  $W_3$  as the unknown point load. Based on TRBEM, the unknown point load can be computed inversely by utilizing the displacement given. Aside from elastoplastic analysis, the TRBEM is exercised in heat conduction problem [177–179,183], thermoelastic [182], thermal stress [176] and convection-diffusion problem [184]. Based on their work, TRBEM can produce remarkable degree of accuracy using only the fundamental solutions of lower order [176,179].

### 3.4. Complex variable boundary element method

Complex variable boundary element method (CVBEM) is another well-known BEM variant. The CVBEM is a numerical technique based on Cauchy's integral formulae with complex variable to formulate boundary integral equation and mainly dedicated only to Laplace's and Poisson's equations. This method was originated from the work of Hromadka and Guymon [99] in 1984, initially for the solution of two-dimensional potential problem involving Laplace's partial differential equation and was further elaborated in [105]. Basically, the CVBEM adopted similar idea developed in Analytic Function Method (AFM). This method which was presented by van der Veer [251] is based on summation of simple products of complex linear polynomials and complex logarithm functions to form an analytic approximation function and connection between both of them (CVBEM and AFM) was described in [96]. Unlike real variable BEM procedures, the functions used to approximate the exact solution in CVBEM are analytic and thus, exactly satisfy the integral equation throughout the domain of the problem. In addition, the integration of the boundary integrals along each boundary elements can be solved analytically without any numerical process. In general, the theoretical basis of CVBEM can be described by commencing the complex variable analytic function

$$\omega(z) = \phi(x,y) + i\psi(x,y) \quad (50)$$

where  $z=x+iy$  and  $i=\sqrt{-1}$ . Both potential function  $\phi(x,y)$  and stream function  $\psi(x,y)$  satisfy the Laplace equation

$$\nabla^2 \phi = 0 \text{ and } \nabla^2 \psi = 0 \quad (51)$$

and they are connected by the Cauchy-Reimann equations

$$\frac{\partial \phi}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial y} \text{ and } \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial y} = -\frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x} \quad (52)$$

With the analytic function  $\omega(z)$  defined, the Cauchy integral formula can be written as

$$\omega(z_0) = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\Gamma} \frac{\omega(z)}{z-z_0} dz \quad (53)$$

where  $z_0$  is the interior point. As the solution cannot be performed analytically, approximate numerical solution is chosen instead. Similar to the collocation approach, the boundary then divided into straight line segments by boundary nodal points. However, nodal point equation needs to be employed as both functions  $\phi$  and  $\psi$  are unknown. For a standard case, the nodal point equation is normally obtained through linear trial function given by

$$\omega(z) = \omega_i \left( \frac{z_{i+1}-z}{z_{i+1}-z_i} \right) + \omega_{i+1} \left( \frac{z-z_i}{z_{i+1}-z_i} \right) \quad (54)$$

Besides the linear trial functions, other approximation techniques applicable in CVBEM such as circular contour integration and high order polynomial approximations were mentioned in [99]. Soon afterward, it was extended to higher order trial functions and the implementation for parabolic, cubic and Hermite cubic polynomial functions is demonstrated in the article written by Hromadka II and Yen [105]. In their report, they concluded that those four investigated trial function (including linear trial function) produced same level of accuracy. However, the CVBEM is not error-free and more research efforts were carried out in order to improve the CVBEM performance. From there, the error analysis was further investigated and the studies indicated that the error analysis measured in the CVBEM is due to modelling error [95] and approximation error [97] and therefore leads to its convergence study on Dirichlet and mixed boundary value problems in [94]. Error reduction was later examined by refining approximate boundary method [261] in which the modeling error can be easily reduced by adding nodal points along the boundary accordingly. In other aspect, the applicability of CVBEM has been extended to accommodate doubly connected analysis [120] and multiply connected analysis [107] for potential problems. This additional feature enables solution of problems involving multiple domains especially structure containing multiple holes, cracks and inclusions using CVBEM. To date, the CVBEM which can be applied to mixed boundary value problems (Dirichlet, Neumann or Robin) has been successfully implemented in potential problems including ideal fluid flow (for instance: air flows [82,157,230], groundwater flows [218], hydrodynamics [200], etc.), heat transfer [119], torsion analysis [43,62], crack problems [11,57,202], etc. Although regarded as specialized method devoted for the Laplace and Poisson equations, an attempt to use CVBEM for biharmonic problem ( $\nabla^4 u=0$ ) for elasticity of plane and plate was reported by Lei and Mao-Kuang [147]. In their report, computational results of CVBEM on several different structures (i.e., circular disk, cantilever beam, simply supported square plate) under external concentrated forces or uniform loads show good agreement with the exact solution. The CVBEM was later imposed into other elasticity problem including thermoelasticity [13,141], poroelasticity [108] and viscoelasticity [109]. In spite of all those improvements mentioned above, before 21th century, the CVBEM only concentrated in the 2D problem and the lack of multi-dimensional application feature was realized and recently, the problem is solved and the upgraded CVBEM can be applied for three-dimensional analysis [103]. The new additional feature in CVBEM is then employed by Hromadka and Whitley [102] for three dimensional steady-state potential flow problems using two-dimensional complex polynomials. In other related work, Huber and Hickman [110] developed a scheme called surface 'dust' to randomly generate dust points on 3D object's surface. In their report, they attached the Mathematica code for their scheme which demonstrated the new approach on typical sphere and open cylinder. In spite of recent progress in three dimensional, the CVBEM transformation in multi-dimension is still in the early stage of development and required more intensive study. In separate case, the program Mathematica was again utilized to investigate the implementation of CVBEM using

collocation points not located at the usual boundary nodal point locations [56]. However, further research is needed to improve the current approach. In overall, this advanced mathematical modeling approach had seen considerable theoretical development for the past two decades and all mentioned aspects above along with complete derivation compiled in several published articles [92,259,260] and series of textbooks [93,98,100,101,104].

3.5. Analog equation method

Analog Equation Method (AEM) presented by Katsikadelis [125] was originally designated for solving the linear and nonlinear potential problem. Combining the features and advantages of few numerical techniques like FEM, BEM and FDM, this method tries to establish itself as one among few leading BEM variants. Similar to DRBEM, this method is developed to deal with domain integrals without involving domain discretization. Given a nonlinear differential equation or a linear one which is difficult to establish its fundamental solution, the actual problem can be substituted with an equivalent one described by a linear differential operator with known fundamental solution using AEM. In order to solve this equivalent equation, the unknown fictitious source density function needs to be computed first using indirect BEM while preserving the boundary and initial conditions. Described in [125], the AEM procedure can be laid out by first considering the boundary value problem,

$$N(u, u_x, u_y, u_{xx}, u_{xy}, u_{yy}) = g(x, y) \text{ in } \Omega \tag{55}$$

$$\alpha u + \beta u_n = \gamma \text{ on } \Gamma \tag{56}$$

where  $N$  is in general a nonlinear second order differential operator and  $\alpha, \beta$  and  $\gamma$  are functions specified on  $\Gamma$ . Now, function  $u$  can be assumed as the sought solution of the real domain problem and once Laplacian operator applied to this function, the Poisson equation similar to Eq. (31) can be obtained

$$\nabla^2 u = b \tag{57}$$

In AEM, Eq. (55) is known as the analog equation and the uniqueness of AEM is laid on the approach in constructing the source density function  $b$ . Here, the solution for Eq. (57) at instant time  $t$  can be written as a sum of the homogenous solution  $\bar{u}$  and a particular solution  $u_p$ .

$$u = \bar{u} + u_p \tag{58}$$

However, to solve Eq. (57), fictitious source can be established where we assume

$$b = \sum_{j=1}^M \alpha_j f_j \tag{59}$$

and the particular solution as

$$u_p = \sum_{j=1}^M \alpha_j \hat{u}_j \tag{60}$$

in which  $\hat{u}_j$  are the particular solutions for  $\nabla^2 \hat{u}_j = f_j$  with  $f_j$  as a set of approximating functions while  $\alpha_j$  known as the time-dependent coefficients. On the other hand, the integral representation of the solution  $\bar{u}$  is given as

$$c\bar{u} = - \int_{\Gamma} (u^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q^*) ds \tag{61}$$

and substituting Eq. (58) into Eq. (61) and assuming  $c=1$  yields

$$u = - \int_{\Gamma} (u^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M \hat{u}_j \alpha_j \tag{62}$$

Differentiating the above equation, one would obtain

$$u_x = - \int_{\Gamma} (u_x^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q_x^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M (\hat{u}_j)_x \alpha_j \tag{63}$$

$$u_y = - \int_{\Gamma} (u_y^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q_y^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M (\hat{u}_j)_y \alpha_j \tag{64}$$

$$u_{xx} = - \int_{\Gamma} (u_{xx}^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q_{xx}^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M (\hat{u}_j)_{xx} \alpha_j \tag{65}$$

$$u_{yy} = - \int_{\Gamma} (u_{yy}^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q_{yy}^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M (\hat{u}_j)_{yy} \alpha_j \tag{66}$$

$$u_{xy} = - \int_{\Gamma} (u_{xy}^* \bar{q} - \bar{u} q_{xy}^*) ds + \sum_{j=1}^M (\hat{u}_j)_{xy} \alpha_j \tag{67}$$

Then, in order to complete the solution process, the Eqs. (63–67) above can be further discretized and full description of AEM procedure with several demonstrated examples (such as membranes on elastic foundation, heat flow in bodies with non-homogenous material properties, heat flow in bodies with nonlinear material properties and steady-state spontaneous ignition) can be obtained in [125]. This method had been demonstrated in solving boundary value problems for many research areas, i.e. thermal conductivity in non-homogenous or nonlinear bodies [125], nonlinear flexural vibrations of plates [135], integration of nonlinear equations of motion [121], linear and nonlinear plate bending problems [132,160], plane elastostatic problems [128,129], finite deformation analysis of elastic cables [123,127], plate buckling problems [161], inverse problems [162], soap bubble problem [131], nonlinear analysis of shells [273], finite equationless problems in nonlinear bodies using only boundary data [133], large deflection analysis of beams [137], nonlinear static and dynamic analysis of membranes [122,130,136,138,139], ponding problem on membranes [134,163] and meshless approach on 2D elastostatic problem [124]. Since it is considered as boundary-only method, this method only deals with discretization and integration on the boundary only. However, the collocation points inside the domain may be used to improve the solution. This method was later further developed by Katsikadelis [126] to meshless analog equation method (MAEM) as a new RBFs (radial basic functions) method for solving 2D and 3D PDEs. Similar with other RBFs method, MAEM requires no domain boundary (BEM) discretization and integration and thus avoids establishment of fundamental solutions and evaluation of singular integrals.

4. Summary and conclusion

The reviews presented in this article are rather basic concepts of several BEM variants with their significant contributions in boundary element research. The detailed developments for each of the variants were outlined in a systematic way to enhance the understanding of their different approaches. In general, BEM and more specific, the BEM variants underwent a remarkable progress over the past half century. They are well developed in both theoretical and applied aspects. Compared to FEM and FDM, BEM possess a clear advantage in modeling and meshing stage which reduces the dimensionality of problems considered. However, like many other numerical methods, BEM also has advantages and disadvantages. Table 3 gives a detailed comparison of the BEM with FEM and FDM regarding their theoretical basis, as well as advantages and disadvantages.

**Table 3**

. Comparisons between BEM, FEM and FDM.

	Boundary Element Method (BEM)	Finite Element Method (FEM)	Finite Difference Method (FDM)
Theoretical basis	Based on approximation on equivalent governing integral relation using boundary segments.	Based on approximation on equivalent governing integral relation using finite segments.	Based on finite difference approximation on governing differential equation using a grid of uniformly spaced nodes.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discretisation of the boundary only</li> <li>● Ideal for infinite problem</li> <li>● Less computational time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integration of simple function</li> <li>● Symmetrical and sparse matrices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easiest method to implement</li> <li>● No numerical integration</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mostly nonsymmetrical matrices</li> <li>● Requires complicated integral relation</li> <li>● Difficult treatment of inhomogeneous and nonlinear problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires domain meshes</li> <li>● Not suitable for infinite problems</li> <li>● Requires integral relation from variational principle or weighted residual formulation</li> <li>● Computation process is time consuming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires domain meshes</li> <li>● Not suitable for infinite problem</li> <li>● Requires very fine grids</li> <li>● Computation process is time consuming</li> </ul>

**Table 4**

. Comparisons between CBEM, GBEM, DRBEM, CVBEM and AEM.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
CBEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easiest to implement</li> <li>● Fast solution</li> <li>● Applicable to wide range of standard cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poor convergence and accuracy</li> <li>● Nonsymmetrical and dense matrices</li> <li>● Difficult to deal with hypersingular integral</li> </ul>
GBEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High accuracy</li> <li>● Able to handle singular and hypersingular integrals</li> <li>● Easier to produce symmetric coefficient matrix</li> <li>● Can be implemented for various problems including</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Slow solution</li> </ul>
DRBEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to deal with domain integrals</li> <li>● Requires only boundary discretization</li> <li>● Applicable to wide range of problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fully populated and nonsymmetrical matrices</li> <li>● Computationally expensive</li> <li>● Mathematically complicated</li> </ul>
CVBEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High accuracy</li> <li>● Suitable for problems with stress singularities and concentrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limited to Laplace-type problem</li> </ul>
AEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to deal with domain integrals</li> <li>● Requires only boundary discretization</li> <li>● Suitable for linear and nonlinear problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mathematically complicated</li> <li>● Limited applicability</li> <li>● Hard to implement</li> </ul>

In this article, we briefly discussed the implementation for each of the BEM variants considered in each of the variants and have demonstrated many different solving approaches when dealing with boundary integral equation. To illustrate the differences, Table 4 gives a comparison between these variants regarding their advantages and disadvantages. For beginner in BEM community, the collocation BEM is highly recommended as it is the simplest among them and the easiest to be implemented. It is preferable for engineer looking for fast solution and at the same time avoiding complicated mathematical procedure. However, for advance and more accurate analysis, SGBEM and DRBEM are considered as the best choice in their particular field: boundary-based and domain-based problems, where they can practically demonstrated in every known application area. On the

other hand, specific method such as CVBEM extends BEM application scope to integral equation with complex variable configuration. Although, it is limited to Laplace-based integral equation, yet it has the potential for expansion in a much wider application area. In spite of considerable progress towards effective computational method, these BEM variants experiences continuous development with several additional improvement features proposed by various researchers. With all mentioned above summarized in this article, this review is believed to assist the task for researchers in selecting the appropriate BEM approach in solving particular problem. In general, the BEM still lacks behind FEM in the field of numerical method. Although, the BEM has improved in a big step forward but still the initial objective to replace FEM has not been realized. More needs to be done in order to achieve the goal.

Aside from these variants, new variants have emerged as strong competitor in the numerical analysis. Those recommended are boundary node method, boundary contour method, boundary particle method, boundary knot method, cell boundary element method, hybrid boundary element method, fast multipole boundary element method, spectral stochastic boundary element method, scaled boundary finite-element method and variational indirect boundary element method. The future of BEM may be depends on these variants.

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