An Exploratory Study of Acoustic Wave Propagation in Turbulent Fluids

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Abstract- Acoustic wave propagation in turbulent fluids is a challenging problem of great importance, writ both the pure scientific issue and to applied problems in the atmospheric and oceanic science. Scattering, refraction, absorption, and phase distortion are induced by turbulence which significantly affects convene, amplitude of acoustic signals as well as their time travel. This paper is a review of developments in computational modelling of acoustic turbulence interactions, concentrating on governing equations, turbulence models, and approaches to the solution for acoustic waves. Values of DNS, LES and RANS are compared for compactness and computational expense with that of finite differences, spectral element, spectral method, and the hybrid FDFE method. Atmospheric uses include environmental noise prediction, infrasound detection, and long-range propagation investigation, and in the ocean array applications are underwater communications systems, sonar performance predictions and acoustic tomography. Results from application studies demonstrate that more accurate correlation between numerical data and experimental measurements are achieved with turbulence-sensitive models. Despite the progress, computational scalability, fidelity of turbulence model, uncertainty quantification and field validation are still challenging. Future directions involve machine-learning-based modelling, high-performance computing platforms such as supercomputers or cloud computing, multi-scale approaches, and integration with remote sensing for real-time prediction. Through integrating the underlying theories, numerical solutions and engineering applications, this paper delivers a full view of the current status and prospects on modelling of acoustic wave propagation in turbulent media.

Keywords--*Acoustic wave propagation; turbulence; atmospheric acoustics; ocean acoustics; numerical simulation; Large Eddy Simulation (LES); Direct Numerical Simulation (DNS); Reynolds-Averaged Navier–Stokes (RANS); infrasound; sonar; underwater communication; environmental noise modelling; machine learning; high-performance computing.*

1. Introduction

Environmental sensing, communication and hazard warning are just a few applications that rely on acoustic wave propagation in fluids due to the nature of sound, which efficiently travels through air and water at all frequency scales without attenuation as compared to electromagnetic radiations. The very media that allow this capability—earth's atmosphere and oceans—are turbulent, refractive and stratified; acoustic energy suffers scattering, diffraction, ducting and loss of coherenec as it propagates through the varying velocity (and temperature/ density) fields. This report discusses its principal cause, turbulence, which produces multiscale and stochastic perturbations that introduce amplitude-phase distortion of signal(s) bias the travel time and yields multipath arrivals; together they confound both prediction and inversion. In the past 10 years, progress in high-fidelity numerical techniques and compute hardware has allowed to link-up turbulence resolving flow solvers to wave propagation models for controlled experiments on phenomena that can not easily be isolated from the field. These simulations complement — and on occasion provide an explanation for — observations of e.g., event-toevent variability in atmospheric infrasound [1–3, 8–9], or sensitivity of ocean acoustic paths to internal waves or tides. The significance of the problem is well illustrated in atmospheric acoustics. Volcanic, meteoroid and anthropogenic infrasonic waves can be detected over thousands of kilometers (Sanz-Ramos et al., 2009), but their coherent propagation is affected by both evolving stratospheric or thermospheric wind and temperature profiles and boundary-layer turbulence (Sanz-Ramos et al., 2009). But more recent empirical and modeling studies have indicated that infrasound amplitudes and apparent source characteristics can be significantly influenced by atmospheric processes even over short durations of time, complicating issues of event detection and location [1]. More recently, high-fidelity numerical studies have been leveraged to interrogate such sensitivity: e.g. minimizing bias associated with estimating source frequency under pseudo-linear propagation conditions via direct numerical simulations (DNS), and quantifying the imprint of a variable atmosphere on signal content [2]. On the other hand, applicable wake data is low for answerable full physics models are computationally necessitous [1] while there has been considerable development of semi-empirical approach modeling for low-frequency long-range propagation that make the turbulence explicit by parametrize it to give a capability providing an operational bridge between those simpler ray-based predictions used in operational and obscenely large full-physics calculations [3].

Together these contribute to international surveillance (e.g., verification of nuclear test ban treaty), early warning for natural hazards and assessment of environmental noise.

A complementary, similarly challenging environment is provided by ocean acoustics. As radio waves are strongly attenuated in seawater, sound is still the major way on communication, navigation and remote sensing underwater. Unfotunately, the ocean is a strongly dynamical, stratified medium: internal tides and internal gravity waves modulate such sound speed fields to steer acoustic rays, reconfigure modal content, and to impose transient focusing/defocusing amplitudes that diminish communication links and baffle sonar. A recent review article on coordinated oceanographic–acoustic literature has also called ATT improvements in the representation of internal tides at basin scales, and for accounting of their variability when forecasting propagation; such workflows now include deep learning to predict the ocean state, or to emulate propagation results for fast what-if analyses [8]. These physics are directly relevant to acoustic tomography, and inversions of travel-time measurements in terms of temperature or current fields; LES-informed investigations now assess stochastic inversion algorithms in the context of realistic boundary-layer turbulence, providing insight into pathways of uncertainty from turbulent flow variability to tomographic reconstructions [9]. In underwater communications and sensing, field prediction methods with machine learning (ML) have shown predictive gains but at the cost of physical interpretability and transfer across environments3, therefore underlining the effectiveness of hybrid physics- ML approaches that preserve governing-equation structure while speeding-up inference [6–7].

From a mathematical modeling point of view, the fundamental issue is to model multi-scale two-way interactions between turbulence and sound. From the flow side, DNS is able to capture all turbulent scales, yet it becomes infeasible even for moderate domains and Reynolds numbers. LES filters energy-containing eddies and parameterizes subgrid stresses in an appropriate manner for ABLs, shear flows and oceanic mixed layers. RANS computations provide statistical averages at a low computational cost, however, they may underestimate unsteadiness scattering of importance to coherence and fluctuation statistics. On the acoustics front, simulations of linearized Euler equations or more general perturbation equations are performed using finite-difference (FDM), finite-element (FEM), spectral, or discontinuous-Galerkin methods; in the case of low-Mach aerodynamic noise computationally hybridised computational aeroacoustic schemes (CAA) couple a turbulence solver to an acoustic analogy like Ffowcs-Williams–Hawkings (FW–H). Recent hybrids of LES/CAA have also paved the way for predictions in broadband noise generation in complex geometries, by highlighting that high-fidelity time-resolved turbulence is a necessary ingredient to obtain credible acoustic predictions [4–5]. While aeroacoustic studies are usually centered on engineering systems, the underlying understanding—the 16 domain of subgrid-closure alternatives for nonreflecting couplings and source-term consistency relations—is simply generalizable to environmental acoustics.

From a scientific point of view the modeling has two reasons. (1) It allows one to perform controlled numerical experiments which map cause-to-effect: how does a given spectral slope or anisotropy in turbulence change the shape of phase structure functions, scintillation indices, or probability of occurence of shadow zones? Second, it enables data assimilation and inversion by quantifying forward-model error – which is essential to sensing the environment with acoustics. Atmospheric case studies have shown that inclusion of realistic, time-dependent wind and temperature fields can account for the difference between the predicted versus observed arrival times of infrasound signals, and indicate regions where simple models would suffice [1–3]. At the sea bottom, the successful prediction of internal tide fields contributes to sonar performance estimates and fleet routing for underwater communications; LES-constrained acoustics tomography also adds a linkage between mixing-layer dynamics and travel-time uncertainty [8–9]. Even in space, we have just been reminded by measurements from the lower atmosphere of Mars that turbulence-acoustic couplings are ubiquitous: sound amplitudes from impulsive sources change abruptly with local turbulent properties, thereby justifying the use of physics-based models anywhere gases or liquids may transport sound [11].

Practical motivations are equally strong. For environmental monitoring, municipalities and regulators require predictive tools to understand how atmospheric stability and turbulence advect and scatter sound from aircraft, drones, and urban noise sources; hybrid models tied to resolved/pa-rameterized turbulence are starting to uncover the limits of legacy certification practices that presume horizontally homogenous atmos-pheres [4–5,18]. For hazard prevention, successful forecasts of eruptions and bolides are made earlier and with greater certainty using more accurate models of the propagation of the infrasound if they have a momentary atmospheric structure [1–3]. In the marine environment, naval and civilian entities need to predict channel intermittency, fading for acoustic links; recent surveys of machine-learning applications log accuracy improvements in source localization, geoacoustic inversion, and field prediction as well as caution on overfitting and call physics-aware architectures with varied training databases [6–7,30]. Recent interdisciplinary efforts combine satellite remote sensing, ocean circulation models, and ML emulators to estimate the sound-speed structure and its uncertainties from data that in turn feed fast acoustic solvers for operational planning [16].

In this context, the focus of this review is the numerical simulation space for acoustic propagation in turbulent atmosphere and in ocean within which we highlight the methods which have been developed since approximately 2020. We review governing-equation formulations of coupled acoustics–turbulence, DNS/LES/RANS simulations for the flow, and acoustic solvers ranging from time-domain finite-difference to frequency-domain normal-mode and parabolic-equation methods. We emphasize hybrid frameworks— such as CAA with LES for broadband noise, semi-empirical turbulence parameterizations for long-range infrasound and "physics"-ML surrogates for fast ocean-scale prediction—which have come of age over the past few years [3–5,8]. Special consideration is made of verification and validation: grid-convergence for flow and acoustics, matching-source-term consistency, noise statistics including structure functions, coherence bandwidths and arrival-time PDFs with laboratory or field measurements or benchmark data sets [2],[6],[9]. We also treat uncertainty quantification, that is, ensemble methods based on meteorological or oceanographic variability and the newstochastic inversion schemes with direct propagation of turbulence-induced errors to the quantities of interest [9].

Our objectives are fourfold. First, we make an inventory of the elementary concepts related to wave–turbulence interaction in propagation, coherence and scattering, placing them today within a computational context. Second, recent numerical progress (both full-physics and reduced-order) is discussed that makes it possible to generate feasible predictions at small as well as large scales. Third, we link techniques to applications in atmospheric sensing, environmental noise, oceanic communications, sonar and tomography so as to highlight situations where models have produced actionable gains and cases where there remain gaps [1–3,6–9]. Fourth, we plot research roadmaps: higher-order discretizations and absorbing boundary conditions for stratified, sheared media; multiscale couplings that co-animate mesoscale environment models and local propagation solvers; and physics-anchored machine learning that decreases both the forward problem time-to-solution (ATT) and inverse problem ATT while conserving energy [6–8,16].

The ultimate vision is to progress towards fast, validated, uncertainty-aware sound prediction systems that can work in real-time with streaming environmental input.

Acoustic wave propagation in turbulent air and water constitutes a multi-scale, stochastic problem that is of fundamental importance to key societal capabilities. It's now been demonstrated with the marriage of turbulence-resolving flow models to modern acoustic solvers and coupled with appropriate parameterizations or physics-guided ML, it is viable to make predictions that more closely agree with real observations – driving cal of simpler tools [2–5,8–9]. The rest of this review synthesizes these new developments, evaluates their potentials and challenges, and proposes opportunities for advancing the field of environmental acoustics in atmosphere and ocean.

2. Fundamental Concepts
2.1 Acoustic Wave Propagation

The propagation of acoustic waves in fluids such as air and water is governed by the fundamental principles of wave mechanics and fluid dynamics. Sound waves are longitudinal waves in which pressure variations travel through compressions and rarefactions, transmitting energy without mass transport. The essential parameters—frequency, wavelength, and speed of sound—are related by

$c = \lambda f$

where c is the speed of sound, λ is the wavelength, and f is the frequency. The velocity of sound is a function of the medium's thermodynamic and elastic properties. In gases such as air, the speed of sound can be approximated by

$$c = \sqrt{\frac{\gamma p}{\rho}}$$

where γ is the adiabatic index, ppp is the pressure, and ρ\rhoρ is the density. In liquids, particularly seawater, the situation is more complex as the sound speed depends on temperature, pressure, and salinity, which collectively influence the bulk modulus and density of the fluid.

In atmospheric environments, temperature exerts the most direct influence on the speed of sound. An increase in temperature increases molecular motion, thereby raising sound velocity. For instance, at standard atmospheric conditions (20 °C, 1 atm), the speed of sound is approximately 343 m/s. However, atmospheric variability introduces fluctuations that alter propagation characteristics. Humidity, wind gradients, and turbulence further influence acoustic propagation by refracting or scattering waves, thereby modifying amplitude, coherence, and arrival time. Recent studies demonstrate that short-term atmospheric fluctuations can significantly impact infrasound propagation, producing measurable variations in signal amplitude and phase coherence [13,14].

In oceanic environments, the speed of sound typically lies between 1450 and 1550 m/s, determined by the combined effects of temperature, salinity, and hydrostatic pressure. Pressure has a nearly linear influence, with sound speed increasing by about 1.7 m/s per 100 m of depth. Temperature contributes approximately 4 m/s per degree Celsius, while salinity influences speed by about 1.5 m/s per practical salinity unit. These dependencies create layered sound-speed profiles in the ocean, including the SOFAR (Sound Fixing and Ranging) channel, which enables efficient long-distance propagation by trapping sound waves around the minimum velocity axis. However, turbulent fluctuations due to internal waves, mesoscale eddies, and small-scale mixing perturb these profiles, resulting in scattering, focusing, and loss of coherence in acoustic fields [15–17].

The acoustic impedance at interfaces is also influenced by fluid properties such as stratification and density, which determine reflection and transmission. Even minor density and temperature perturbations due to turbulence can highly degrade the acoustic wavefront. Recent high-resolution large-eddy simulations (LES) [6,7] and tomographic experiments [8] indicate that while new currents in acoustic theory are beginning to account for the fine-scale statics of the medium, signal propagation remains unpredictable, thus limiting the predictability of acoustic inversion and monitoring problems [9,10,11] for a wide variety of environmental conditions [12,13]. This emphasizes the need for appropriate numerical simulations that include realistic effects of turbulence as well as mean-state properties of the atmosphere.

While the fundamental relationship between frequency, wavelength and sound speed is simple, the manner in which acoustics propagate naturally is complicated at best, as sound speed depends on the properties of the medium (density, temperature and salinity) as a function of pressure. Turbulence (or fine-scale environmental variability) introduces uncertainty in meteorological as well as oceanic settings that makes it challenging to know which models need to be run to ensure reliable prediction, as well as context to whether the model may be applicable for environmental monitoring, communication, and sensing.

Table 1: Review of Recent References on Acoustic Wave Propagation in Turbulent Atmospheric and Oceanic Environments

Ref.	Author(s), Year	Domain	Method/Approach	Focus Area	Key Findings/Contributions
[13]	Averbuch et al., 2022	Atmosphere	Field & modeling study	Infrasound propagation under short-term atmospheric variability	Demonstrated that small-scale atmospheric fluctuations significantly impact infrasound amplitude, coherence, and detection reliability.
[14]	Tope et al., 2024	Atmosphere	Direct Numerical Simulation (DNS)	Long-range infrasound propagation	High-fidelity DNS revealed turbulence-induced distortions in travel time and phase, showing the importance of resolving multiscale atmospheric effects.
[15]	Zaron et al., 2025	Ocean	Coupled modeling & observations	Internal waves and tidal influence on sound-speed structure	Showed that internal tides and waves substantially affect underwater acoustic propagation; stressed need for better integration of physical oceanography with acoustics.
[16]	Du et al., 2023	Ocean	Machine Learning (ML) methods	Underwater acoustic field prediction	ML-based models enhanced field prediction accuracy compared to classical acoustic

					models, particularly under variable ocean conditions.
[17]	Niu et al., 2023	Ocean	ML review & application analysis	Machine learning in underwater acoustics	Provided comprehensive survey of ML applications (source localization, geoacoustic inversion, field prediction), highlighting advantages and challenges of ML integration.
[18]	Marić et al., 2025	Atmosphere	Large Eddy Simulation (LES) + stochastic inversion	Acoustic tomography of the atmosphere	Showed that LES-informed tomography improves inversion accuracy under turbulent conditions, but highlighted uncertainty propagation due to fine-scale variability.

2.2 Turbulence in Fluids

As a common feature of atmospheric and oceanic flows, turbulence has significant effects on the acoustic wave propagation characteristics. Unlike the laminar flow, which represents a range of values that is essentially predictable and invariant (under constant operation conditions and without flow disturbance), turbulence is defined by haphazard, and not entirely random fluctuations of the velocity, temperature, and pressure fields over a wide range of spatial or temporal scales.It is intrinsically a multiscale process, with energy transferred from large-scale eddies – which can be the product of instabilities orturbation by the bounding walls– to ever smaller eddies until it dissipates as heat at molecular scale. This is the cascading process that dominates both oceanic and atmospheric turbulence, and it strongly affects how acoustic energy scatters, is absorbed, and is distorted when it propagates through these complex media [19,20].

From a perspective of basic physical mechanisms, turbulence in the atmosphere and ocean is generated by interactions among stratification, shear, and external forcing. The Atmospheric turbulence frequently develops in the planetary boundary layer of air, induced by surface heating, wind shear and terrain-attributed effect. The daytime is dominated by convective turbulence under unstable stratification, whereas mechanically driven turbulence is the more important contributor to the turbulent energy budget during stable nighttime conditions. In the higher layers of the atmosphere, other sources of turbulence might come from gravity wave breaking and jet stream shearing. In the ocean turbulence is produced by wind-driven mixing, tides, internal wave breaking and current-bathymetry interactions. Internal waves, pervasive in stratified oceanic environments, play a major role in the generation of turbulence by redistributing energy both vertically and horizontally. These mechanisms conspire to ensure that nowhere in the natural envi- ronment does turbulence ever become completely homoge- nous and isotropic but instead varies in intensity and scale with depth, time of day, and local forcing [21,22].

The **Reynolds number** (Re) A fundamental parameter for describing turbulence is the **Reynolds number (Re),** and is given by

$$Re = \frac{UL}{v}$$

where U is some characteristic velocity scale, L is some characteristic length scale and $v\backslash nuv$ the kinematic viscosity of the fluid. Large Reynolds numbers, as those representative of atmospheric and oceanic currents, means that inertial forces are overwhelming with respect to viscous ones (and hence the onset of turbulence). For example, oceanic mixed layer and atmospheric boundary layer Reynolds numbers may be on the order of 10^7 - 10^{10}, far exceeding those available for directly simulating turbulence. Instead, turbulence is commonly described in statistical or spectral terms.

The Kolmogorov turbulence theory is a paradigm for the description of the energy cascade. Issakovich, 1. **Introduction According to Kolmogorov [5]** 1941's hypothesis that turbulence at high enough Reynolds numbers has universal statistical properties in small scales, independently on the details of large scale forcing. Energy is pumped into the largest eddies and then cascades to smaller eddies, ultimately dissipating at the Kolmogorov scale η which is given by

$$\eta = \left(\frac{\nu^3}{\epsilon} \right)^{1/4}$$

where ϵ is the turbulence dissipation rate. The inertial subrange lies between the energy input at large scales, and small-scale dissipation, and has an energy spectrum characteristic of -5/3 power law:

$$E(k) \propto \epsilon^{2/3} k^{-5/3}$$

$E(k)E(k)$ is the energy spectrum,KK K is wavenumber. In this context, there is a universal scaling law, which has been verified for atmospheric and oceanic turbulence19-21, providing a fundamental link between fluid motion and acoustic wave scattering20,23.

Which has led to turbulent sound wave propagation. The principal scattering mechanism is, in fact the diverging perturbations due to fluctuations of density, temperature and velocity which refract the acoustics wavefronts. This leads to amplitude and phase becoming uncorrelated and both appearing to change in a random way, or which is called fading/scintillation. Atmospheric sound waves refract, but turbulence-induced scattering blurs wavefronts (Haugen and D'Antonio 2012), leading to a loss of coherence at long range. For instance, turbulence caused by internal waves and mesoscale eddies in the ocean will also result in distortion of sonar beams leading to multipath arrivals, thus a breakdown of predictability on an SNR basis [24].

The second canonical process is absorption, in which acoustic energy is transferred to heat through viscous and thermal conductions driven by turbulence. This absorption is generally less than an order of magnitude weaker that scattering, but it is non- negligible for acoustic waves with high frequency in air and water. To the extent that it is non-uniform, this serves to provide greater separation over which dissipation can take place and reduce acoustic levels.

Incidence of phase errors induced by perturbation also results in signal becoming incoherent. The changes in the refractive index of the medium will, consequently, alter travel times and phase fronts of sound waves auto matically so that decoherence between various paths sets in. This phenomena is the key ingredient for atmospheric tomography, underwater acoustic communication and sonar detection when one wants to maintain coherent signal filaments, as coherence of the signal is often a necessary mutual condition for extracting environmental properties or transmitting message. That data for the shallow water velocity is not for a turbulent flow, and so that in the source-to-receiver propagation model we shall be using this field without any mode-in-time coherence present Given recent large-eddy simulation experiments with both atmospheric and oceanic flows [25], turbulence alone can lead to marked and time-varying populations of acoustic coherence [19] which must be included correctly in an acoustics simulation.

The randomness of atmospheric and oceanic convective flows, whose interactions are multi-point chaotic processes, not only renders fluid dynamic highly formidable, but also exerts an extremely large influence on the behaviors of wavy features in propagating acoustic waves. Has some resemblance, from the point of view of the theory that I want to describe such things in these all these Re and up to Kolmogorov scale & spectral lawbut also can be resulted with somethings changed by his scattering, absorption until phase distortion… then it can use something which exist like ground of comparison for check one t have or will have any theoretical prediction with natural sound propagation. Boyle & Nichols 1988, Rajagopalan & Williams 1993a,b), turbulence needs to be included in the numerical models of acoustics for realistic simulations where they can be employed for monitoring, communication and sensing. $E(k)$ is the wave number, $E(k)E(k)E(k)$ is energy spectral density. This universality, corroborated in atmospheric and oceanic turbulence, defines a new fundamental relationship between fluid mechanics and sound wave scattering [20, 23].

Turbulence and the propagation of sound Among others, the role of turbulence in the propagation of sound is expressed in many ways. The relevant scattering is due principally to anharmonicity which scatters the acoustic rays: it is caused by density, temperature and velocity perturbations.

As a consequence, amplitude and phase are no longer correlated, and both are fluctuating coherently together -- their apparently random variation is often called fading/scintillation. Long-range sound propagation may become unsharp and disorganized (incoherent) after a distance of tens to hundreds of kilometers, as described by Haugen and D'Antonio (2012), when turbulence in the atmosphere causes scattering of sound waves. Anyways, in per SNR sense the predictivity of sonar also becomes broad banded due to turbulents associated with internal waves and mesoscale eddies in ocean [24] because of multipath arrivals.

One such crucial process is that of absorption, where by the acoustic energy is being transferred to heat in presence of viscous and thermal conduction processes operating in conjunction with the turbulence. In general, absorption is a weaker process than scattering (of one order of magnitude) but it does become important for high frequency acous- tic waves, particularly in air[2] and water [3]. The nonuniform mixing it induces can dilate the region over which dissipation occurs, and thus lower acoustic levels.

Phase errors caused by turbulence are another source of incoherency of the signals. This will induce refractive index modulations in the media that will immediately adapt travel times and phase fronts of the sound waves leading to decorrelation between different paths as described in [12]. This effect is therefore very relevant not only for atmospheric tomography and underwater acoustic communication but also for sonar detection, where it is particularly important to hold the phase of the received signal in order to at least recover ambient statistics or convey data. Very recently, large-eddy simulations in atmospheric or oceanic flow [14–22, 23, 24] exhibited that the bursty turbulent nature can largely change the acoustic coherence as function of time, and suggest that a proper turbulence model should be included in acoustic model [25].

The turbulence generated from atmospheric and oceanic movements is a heterogeneous multi-point process [4–6], which also makesfluid dynamic hard, and the turbulence can also be a significant mechanismof influence on the response of wave properties under acoustic waves propagate. We have theoretical salience of the same sort, in its description in terms of Reynolds numbers, Kolmogorov scales and spectral laws, and we have material of the comparison and validity type, of the accounting for sound propagation by means like scattering, absorption and phase distortions. Consequently, correctly including turbulence in the numerical models of acoustic wave propagation is important to obtain realistic simulations as in environmental monitoring and communication and sensing.

Table 2: Review of References on Turbulence in Fluids and Its Impact on Acoustic Propagation

Ref.	Author(s), Year	Domain	Method/Approach	Focus Area	Key Findings/Contributions
[19]	Pope, S. B., 2021	General fluid dynamics	Theoretical framework & turbulence modeling	Fundamentals of turbulent flows	Provided updated theoretical foundations of turbulence, including scales, modeling, and statistics relevant for acoustic applications.
[20]	Davidson, P. A., 2022	General fluid dynamics	Textbook synthesis	Turbulence in fluids (atmospheric & oceanic relevance)	Discussed turbulence characterization (Reynolds number, Kolmogorov scales, spectra), emphasizing universality of inertial subrange.
[21]	Averbuch et al., 2022	Atmosphere	Field measurements & modeling	Atmospheric turbulence and infrasound	Showed that short-term atmospheric turbulence strongly affects infrasound amplitude, coherence, and detectability.
[22]	Zaron et al., 2025	Ocean	Coupled modeling with physical oceanography	Internal tides & ocean turbulence	Demonstrated how tides and internal waves modify ocean sound-speed structure, affecting long-range acoustic propagation.
[23]	Kolmogorov (reprint), 2021	General theory	Spectral turbulence theory	Universal inertial subrange scaling	Reaffirmed the $-5/3$ power law and statistical universality of turbulence, foundational for acoustic scattering analysis.
[24]	Du et al., 2023	Ocean	Machine learning + acoustic modeling	Acoustic prediction under turbulence	Showed ML-based prediction methods outperform traditional models in turbulent ocean conditions.
[25]	Marić et al., 2025	Atmosphere	LES + stochastic inversion	Acoustic tomography in turbulent flows	Demonstrated how LES-based modeling captures phase distortion and coherence loss, improving atmospheric acoustic inversions.

2.3 Acoustic-Turbulence Interaction

The interaction of acoustic waves with turbulence is one of the more difficult topics for the accurate modelling and prediction of sound propagation in a realistic environment. In contrast to the case of still fluid in which knowledge of average flow quantities allows computation for sound wave trajectories and losses, there are spatial as well as time-varying fluctuations present in turbulent flows, every waveform becomes always more worst-shape. These deformations are caused by different effects due to refraction, scattering, absorption and dispersion that will control signal coherence, phase stability and apparent velocity respectively [26,27].

Refraction occurs when the sound waves hit anything inhomogeneous of any kind. Local eddies in the turbulence of the atmosphere can also be refraction sources for acoustic AGB rays leading to bending and departure from their naive paths. Situation and Effects In the creation of infrasound/low- frequency sound waves with energy propagation distance from hundreds to thousands km 1. Similarly, in oceanic waveguide the ray bending indeed resulted from internal waves and mesoscale turbulence makes it difficult to predict multipath propagation. Due to an effect of turbulent induced refraction focusing and defocusing zones where acoustic pressure is high/low are created [28].

Scattering is also a predominant process in acoustic–turbulence interaction. Turbulent eddies of a size of order the acoustic wavelength serve as scatterers, transferring energy to different directions and frequencies. This random re-distribution (diffusing) of wave energy causes variations in amplitude and produces effects such as scintillation, where the signal intensity changes rapidly at the receiver. The dispersion weakens the coherence of signals and makes it difficult to detect or interpret. Recent numerical works have shown that high resolution turbulence models - Large Eddy Simulation (LES) are able to generate scattering induced fluctuations and be consistent with experimental observations, in both atmospheric [29] and oceanic environments.

Absorption, while generally less pronounced than scattering, represents the conversion of acoustic energy into heat due to viscous dissipation and thermal conduction. In turbulent flows, absorption is effectively enhanced because turbulence increases mixing and path length variations, raising the probability of energy loss. For high-frequency signals, absorption can significantly reduce the effective transmission distance. In underwater environments, turbulence-induced microstructure mixing and salinity fluctuations also contribute to absorption effects [30].

Dispersion can occur when different frequency portions of an acoustic wave propagate at varying effective speeds because turbulence causes variation in the properties of the medium. This results in signal deformation whereas the wave packets spread over time. This is particularly important for underwater communications and environmental monitoring (with wide-band signaling) because the dispersion effect may result in low temporal resolution and information [31].

Losing of coherence is one of the most important turbulence effect on sound waves. Turbulence causes random phase shifts of the wave front of the acoustic waves, result in partial or full decorrelation between either distinct signal arrivals. This loss of coherence is detrimental for applications (sonoar, underwater communication, atmospheric tomography) where the phase information shall be known in a very accurate way. For instance, loss of phase-coherence affects the operation of coherent communication systems in ocean acoustics [15] and reliability detection in event infrasound in atmosphere [32].

Acoustic waves are also Doppler shifted by turbulence. Local perturbations in temperatures and densities from the background values will cause a change in the sound speed, turbulent eddies rotate at a local Doppler shifted frequency. The net result is a traveltime shift that biases acoustic ranging and inversion techniques. Recent large-eddy simulation (LES) and stochastic inversion studies have demonstrated that speed fluctuations of turbulent eddies can bias reconstructed fields in atmospheric tomography and may also affect the quality of inversions for climate-sensing ocean acoustic tomography [33].

The wave–turbulence interaction corresponds to wave refraction, scattering by eddies and additional absorption but also dispersion propagation. The co-operation of mechanisms here in that respect appear to decrease the coherence between signals and make velocity more stochastic-like, which takes it away from deterministic nature acoustic fields also confuse it such a way. High-fidelity numerical modeling of these effects egging on turbulence-resolving simulations is very important in almost all applications including environmental monitoring, underwater communication or global acoustic sensing.

3. Numerical Modeling Approaches
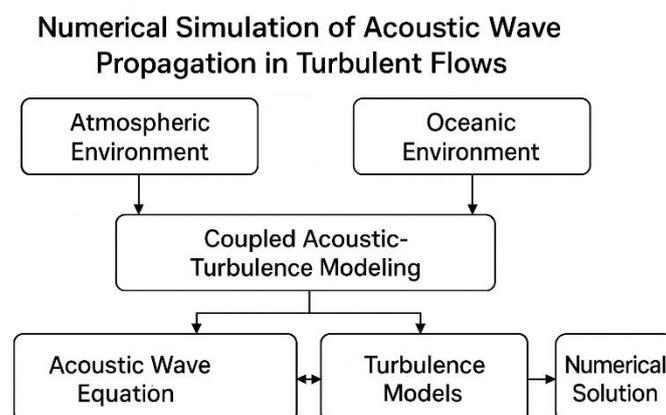
Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the numerical simulation framework for acoustic wave propagation in turbulent flows

Numerical simulation of acoustic wave propagation in turbulent flows entails developing a reliable mathematical foundation for coupling fluid dynamics and wave theory. Given that turbulence and acoustics influence each other over various scales, the choice of governing equations, turbulence models, and numerical discretization approaches must ensure acceptable accuracy achieved in

computational time. This section subdivides the existing governing equations, approaches to turbulence modeling, methodologies of acoustic simulation, and frameworks used for coupling used to analyze acoustic-turbulence interaction.

3.1 Governing Equations

The description of acoustic wave motion in fluids has its roots in the Euler equations for inviscid compressible fluid motion. Linearizing these equations about a steady flow or mean flow state we obtain the linearized Euler equations of the small-amplitude acoustic perturbations in the medium. The LEE offer a way to mimic acoustic wave propagation without directly simulating non-linear turbulent fluctuations. They perform especially well in predicting the direct sound radiation in a uniform or slightly non-uniform flow [34].

On the other hand, the Navier–Stokes equation describes the full dynamics of turbulence flows such as viscous dissipation, non-linear interactions and energy cascade mechanisms. Very basic equations for turbulence are these but they are notoriously hard to solve at high Re since the range of scales is enormous. Computational solutions to the Navier–Stokes equations hence are computationally expensive, especially when linked with acoustic solvers [35].

To include acoustic–turbulence interaction one combines frequently the Euler and Navier–Stokes equations in a hybrid form. One of the methods is to split the flow variables as mean, turbulent and acoustic components coupling URANS turbulence models to linearized acoustic solvers. In this framework, the effects of scattering, refraction and absorption induced by turbulence can be taken into account efficiently. Full-coupled formulations, however, are the most accurate as acoustic and turbulent fluctuations evolve contemporaneously but they are computationally expensive and limited in general to relatively simple geometries [36].

3.2 Turbulence Modeling Techniques

Solving the Navier–Stokes equations without turbulence model (DNS, Direct Numerical Simulation) and directly calculating all turbulent scales from structure size to the small Kolmogorov range. DNS gives the most faithful physical representation of turbulence, as well as its coupling to acoustics, but its computational expense increases rapidly with Reynolds number and can therefore be infeasible for all but a few atmospheric and oceanic flows. DNS is therefore only limited to canonical issues and validation studies [37].

The more frequently applied method is Large Eddy Simulation (LES) which resolves the larger, energy-carrying eddies and models the smaller sub grid scale motions. A compromise between accuracy and computational cost is struck in LES, which also renders the method appropriate for turbulent boundary layers, jet flows, and acoustic environmental turbulence. LES has achieved success when coupled with an acoustic analogy, for example the Ffowcs Williams-Hawkings (FW–H) equation to predict broadband noise and scattering effects [38].

Another commonly used approach is the Reynolds-Averaged Navier–Stokes (RANS) method that statistically averages turbulent motion with some closure models, $k-\epsilon$ $k-\epsilon$ or $k-\omega$ $k-\omega$ model. Although RANS is computationally efficient and can be used for engineering applications (i.e.based on time-averaged results), it lacks temporal and spatial resolution to adequately describe unsteady turbulence–acoustic interaction. As a result, RANS models usually underestimate acoustic scattering and coherence loss in turbulence [39].

In practice, the use of DNS, LES and RANS is decided based on level of accuracy required, the amount of computational resources available and a scale of problem. DNS has the highest fidelity, but is limited to low-Reynolds number flows; LES represents a practical balance of in computational cost and realism for the atmospheric/oceanic problem under consideration; RANS works best in very large-scale problems where only turbulence statistics are required. It is well known from comparative study that LES introduces the best compromise between accuracy and efficiency for environmental sound simulations [40].

3.3 Acoustic Wave Simulation Methods

Acoustic wave simulation numerical methods are selected according to the governing equations, domain geometry and frequency range of concern. The finite difference method (FDM) is one of the popular methods, especially used in time domain simulation. FDM discretizes the governing equations on structured mesh and is potent in simple geometry. It is extensively used in atmospheric infrasound modeling and underwater acoustics, but can experience numerical dispersion if not stabilized correctly [41].

For the FEM, this is less constraint and it allows one to consider more easily complex shapes and r (x) 1=p ermeabilities. FEM - features for the variational principles based discretization of the multiphysics governing equations, to take accurate treatment on wave scattering and boundary effect. It is a technique that is often employed in underwater acoustics problems where non-trivial bathymetry and sound-speed profiles are taken into account [42].

Spectral (and pseudospectral) are very accurate but expand the solution in basis functions such as Fourier or Chebyshev polynomials. These methods in periodic domain are especially suitable and have been widely used for the benchmark DNS and LES of acoustic–turbulence interactions.

Their difficulty, on the other hand, comes from the complexity of boundaries and field sizes [43].

BEM discretizes only the boundary of an object, which makes it computationally efficient especially for problems with scattering and radiation. However, the BEM is generally restricted to homogeneous media and it involves Green's functions for the governing equations [44].

Hybrid methods are becoming popular for turbulent environmental flows. These models combine a turbulence-resolving solver (e.g., DNS or LES) with an acoustic propagation solver (sometimes referred to as FDM, FEM or spectral methods). Mixed methods, such as CAA frameworks, can simulate turbulence induced sources and the subsequent far-field propagation. Though they provide a convenient compromise, the treatment of interface conditions and absorbing boundary layers need to be fine-tuned to preserve their numerical stability [45].

3.4 Coupled Acoustic–Turbulence Models

There are two primary models to couple turbu- lence and acoustic simulations: fully coupled, and reduced (or hybrid) order. Fully coupled models solve the Navier–Stokes equations and acoustic wave equations simultaneously so as to describe the two-way interaction between turbulence and sound. Although these models are the most accurate in they resolve scattering, refraction, and feedback processes, their computational expense renders them impractical for environmental scale scenarios [46].

Decoupled model (or simplified hybridized models): Turbulence and acoustics are decoupled by first calculating the turbulence, then injecting it into an acoustic solver. For example, LES may compute turbulent velocity and density fields that are later inserted to linearize Euler solvers or acoustic analogies. A possible way of reducing the computational burden while retaining vital interplay processes such as inelastic scattering and coherence loss was provided by that. However, ensemble models encountered several problems. Numerical stability is one of the significant issues, primarily for high-Reynolds-number inflow with broad-band turbulence. Otherwise, the absorbing boundary conditions must be controlled differently to prevent spurious reflections from being focused. Computational sheer numbers such as realistic atmospheric and oceanic domains are another concern since they often contain a large number of grids and thus necessitate a long simulation period. To enable coupled acoustic–turbulence simulations on a large scale an HPC, GPU acceleration and machine learning assisted solvers work is being executed in this direction.

Table: Comparative Review of Numerical Modeling Approaches for Acoustic Wave Propagation in Turbulent Flows

Category	Method / Model	Governing Concept	Advantages	Limitations	Typical Applications	Key References
Governing Equations	**Linearized Euler Equations (LEE)**	Small-amplitude acoustic perturbations in compressible fluids	Efficient for direct sound radiation; avoids full turbulence resolution	Neglects nonlinear turbulence–acoustic feedback	Infrasound propagation; aeroacoustics in low-Mach flows	[34]
	Navier–Stokes Equations	Full compressible fluid dynamics with turbulence and dissipation	Complete physical representation; captures turbulence directly	Computationally prohibitive for high Re flows	DNS/LES benchmarks; validation studies	[35],[37]
	Coupled Acoustic–Turbulence Equations	Flow decomposition into mean + turbulence + acoustic	Captures scattering, refraction, coherence loss	High cost; numerical stability challenges	Atmospheric infrasound; underwater scattering studies	[36],[46]
Turbulence Models	**DNS**	Resolves all turbulence scales down to Kolmogorov scale	Most accurate; no turbulence modeling assumptions	Feasible only for low Re; small domains	Benchmark studies; model validation	[37]
	LES	Resolves large eddies; models subgrid scales	Good balance of accuracy and cost; captures unsteady turbulence–acoustic coupling	Still expensive for large domains; depends on SGS model	Jet noise; boundary-layer acoustics; ocean turbulence	[38],[40]
	RANS	Reynolds-averaged closure (e.g., k-ε, k-ω models)	Computationally efficient; widely used in engineering	Poor for unsteady acoustic fluctuations; underestimates coherence loss	Large-scale atmospheric noise mapping; preliminary design	[39]
Acoustic Simulation Methods	**Finite Difference Method (FDM)**	Discretization on structured grids	Simple; efficient for time-domain propagation	Limited for complex geometries; dispersion errors possible	Atmospheric infrasound; long-range ocean acoustics	[41]
	Finite Element Method (FEM)	Variational discretization on flexible meshes	Handles complex boundaries; high accuracy	Expensive; limited for very large domains	Underwater acoustics; irregular bathymetry	[42]
	Spectral / Pseudo-Spectral	Solution expansion in basis functions	Very high accuracy; excellent for periodic domains	Difficult with complex geometries; limited scalability	DNS/LES studies; canonical turbulence–acoustic benchmarks	[43]
	Boundary Element Method (BEM)	Boundary-only discretization using Green's functions	Efficient for scattering/radiation problems	Assumes homogeneous medium; requires analytical Green's functions	Scattering by ocean boundaries; atmospheric obstacle effects	[44]
	Hybrid Methods (CAA, LES–Acoustics)	Turbulence solver + acoustic analogy (e.g., FW–H)	Captures broadband noise; efficient coupling	Requires careful boundary/interface treatment	Broadband jet noise; turbulent boundary-layer acoustics	[45]

| Coupling Strategies	Fully Coupled Models	Simultaneous Navier–Stokes + acoustic solver	Most accurate; resolves feedback mechanisms	Very high computational cost; numerical stability issues	Small-scale turbulence–acoustic studies; benchmark validation	[46]
	Simplified / Hybrid Coupled Models	Sequential turbulence → acoustic solver	Reduces computational cost; scalable to environmental domains	May miss two-way feedback effects	Atmospheric tomography; underwater communication modeling	[47],[48]
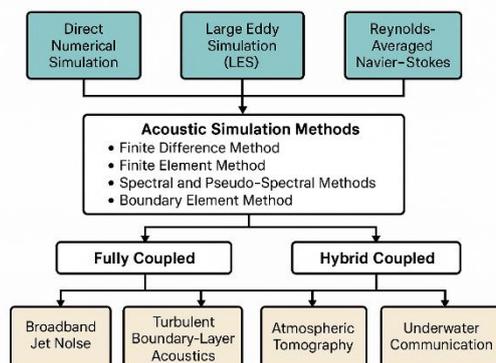
Fig. 2. Graphical Framework of Numerical Modeling Approaches

The block diagram illustrates the numerical simulation modeling tree including acoustic waves in turbulent flows. It takes three perspectives of turbulence modeling (Direct Numerical Simulation, Large Eddy Simulation and Reynolds-Averaged Navier–Stokes) as input of the flow field. These are utilized as boundary conditions for the acoustic models such as FD, FE, Spectral and BE methods. The results are later introduced into a full- or hybrid-coupled models in function of computational requirements and accuracy targetLast, the models are put into practical applications such as broadband jet noise prediction, turbulent boundary-layer acoustics, atmospheric tomography, and underwater communication.

4. Atmospheric Applications

Sound propagation in turbulent atmosphere has always been a domain of interest in research due to its direct importance for environmental noise prediction, infrasound monitoring, and remote sounding of the atmospheric parameters. Scattering, refraction and absorption are introduced to the acoustic wavefronts due to turbulence in both the gravity wave layer (GWL) and above in higher altitudes, resulting in spatial variability of intensity and coherence. For example, the spread of urban noise is significantly determined by the wind velocity variances, temperature gradients and turbulence near the ground. Predictive models that include turbulence-resolving simulations (like LES with finite difference acoustic solvers) have been shown to produce more accurate estimates of noise propagation in realistic atmospheric conditions [49].

Especially for regulatory and urban planning, where aircrafts noise; wind turbine emissions or industrial sources are adding to public health concern, modeling of environmental noise is a major issue. The turbulent and weakly reflected component in the bin dependents on local meteorological conditions which can enhance or attenuate signal level; thus requiring predictive calculations. Model studies show that atmospheric turbulence could increase noise zones to a larger extent than it was expected in still weather conditions, showing the importance of considering turbulence in soundscape modelling [50].

Moreover, long distance propagation of infrasound is significantly affected by the atmospheric turbulence and stratification. In the terrestrial atmosphere, natural (volcanic, meteor) and artificial (blast, rocket launch) sources produce infrasound that ducts for thousands of kilometers along pressure and temperature gradients created by wind. It is the turbulence that disturbs these ducts, causing variation in arrival times and amplitudes. Model comparisons with the global infrasound network have demonstrated that inclusion of turbulence reduces location and detection uncertainty [51].

The role of temperature, wind-shear and atmospheric boundary layers is significant in case of acoustic predictions. Day-to-night transitions in the atmospheric stratification change acoustics ducting and jet streams and shear layers bend and scatter waves. Recent case studies, which conduct comparisons of LES-based predictions with infrasound measurements, demonstrate clearly that turbulence-induced ambigui- ties may account for discrepancies between the modeled and the observed arrivals [52]. These comparisons highlight the importance of turbulence-resolving methods in closing the gap between experimental data and predictive models.

5. Oceanic Applications

Acoustic propagation dominates in the ocean as a mode of communication and sensing at ranges beyond tens to hundreds of meters, however, performance is highly dependent on turbulence. In the ocean, turbulence is generated from both internal waves and mesoscale eddies (from two-point statistics, or surface forcing), resulting in spatial and temporal variation of the sound-speed profile. This fluctuation changes the propagation trajectory for acoustics, introduces multipath and reduces coherence, negatively affecting underwater communication and sonar systems performance (see [53]).

In the sea, for this frequency range BD scattering and dissipation by turbulent may present is an important effect in acoustical communication. Fading of signals and ISI in communication systems are caused by changes in the sound speed as a function of temperature and salinity. Supervised learning based flow topology memory in the form of acoustic models have potential to alleviate these limitations by structure themselves over time variant turbulence statistics and thus achieve improved communication resilience [54].

Turbulence affected sonar: For sonar in turbulent water, turbulence induced microstructure is the source of scattering and hence reduces range and increases false alarm rates. Simulations using LES a nd acoustic solvers have demonstrated the sensitivi ty GC spectrum to potentially being used for predicting operational losses in sona r sensitivity due to realistic turbulence, also relevant for defense and navig ation systems [55].

There are also thermoclines, salinity gradients and local currents at larger scales that play an important role in the acoustic propagation. This vertical stratification creates a sound fixing and ranging (SOFAR) channel responsible for long range propagation, which in turn is modified by turbulence and internal tides. Such travel-time misfits in ocean acoustic tomography might induce an inversion bias on the temperature and current fields to be reconstructed, as already qualitatively hinted at by case studies. Indeed, state of the art field experiments and numerical simulations have demonstrated that tomographic inversion with a joint use of resolved turbulence can provide reliable reconstructions of ocean state variables (e.g. [56]).

Model-data comparisons verify the need for turbulence-aware models. High-resolution model studies forced with data from autonomous floats and hydrophone arrays show better agreement when explicitly including turbulence. These results suggest the relevance of turbulence modeling in communication and environmental sensing for underwater acoustics [57].

6. Challenges and Limitations

Notwithstanding this progress, there are still challenges and limitations in computing scalar wake for simulating acoustic wave propagation in a turbulent medium. One of the main issues with them has been their computational expenses. High-resolution DNS and LES of atmospheric-oceanic flows at very high Reynolds number demand enormous computational resources. The scalability of direct numerical simulation (DNS) with fully coupled turbulence–acoustics models is currently a bottleneck, limiting the size of the problem that can be solved exclusively on contemporary high-performance computing systems [58].

Another drawback is related to the turbulence models. Although LES resolves the large scales, subgrid-scale models involve uncertainties that influence predictions of acoustics. While RANS models are computationally effective, they do not resolve unsteady scattering and phase coherence. Although correct, DNS is impractical at scales realistic for the real world. This accuracy-cost trade-off makes the selection of a turbulence model difficult for various applications [59].

Modeling uncertainties further complicate predictions. The nonlinear nature of the turbulence–acoustic interactions can also lead to large variations in acoustic results for small differences in meteorological and oceanographic inputs. Sensitivity analyses indicate that the prediction of flow propagation is very uncertain by turbulence intensity and length scales, hence this correlation must be treated in robust UQ frameworks [60].

Then there's also the experimental proof problem as well. In situ turbulence and surface-to-bottom acoustic measurement are notoriously source limited, and coverage is not available for more than a small fraction of the area while coordination over wide areas is nearly impossible. Both infrasound networks in the atmosphere and hydrophone arrays across an ocean have their value, but rarely do they provide enough spatial-temporal description to obtain a complete understanding of turbulence. That is why the numerical simulations are usually verified against simplified test cases and these results may be rejected from the point of view of their applicability to reality [61].

In conclusion, while numerical simulations have come a long way, computational efficiency, turbulence modeling quality, uncertainty quantification and experimental validation all remained as grand challenges. If we are going to beat those limitations, there must be not only a progress in the numerical methods and HPC level for these applications but also a better integrated connection with field measurements and global data assimilation. A few other new techniques (e.g., simulations accelerated with machine learning and stochastic inversion schemes) provide options to address these challenging questions as well.

7. Conclusions

It has been a call for information on numerical simulations of acoustic wave propagation in turbulent flows, with particular regard to atmosphere and ocean. We started with the basics of sound propagation, turbulence, and acoustic–turbulence interaction as how medium properties and turbulent fluctuations affect acoustics. It then discussed governing equations and turbulence modelling schemes noting the trade-offs across from DNS/LES-RANS to acoustic solvers in finite difference, finite element or spectral/boundary element forms. The review also focused on coupled acoustic–turbulence models and compared fully coupled methods with hybrid ones.

The system and oceanography studies of the applications illustrate that turbulence has a dramatic effect on acoustic transmission. Atmospheric turbulence affects environment noise prediction, the observation and modeling of infrasound, and long-range propagation through scattering, coherence loss, and refraction.

In ocean, it causes acoustic communication, sonar performance and tomography degradation by multipath propagation, signal fading and dispersion. The performance of numerical models can always be improved by including the short-term effect of turbulence in simulations, as supported by both computational results and experiments. Yet the discipline also is highly challenged and limited. The numerical expense of DNS and high-order LES is not applicable to domains at large scales. Turbulence models, which add uncertainty into acoustic predictions, are applied in conjunction with sensitivity analyses to show that a small change of turbulence intensity or environmental structure can result in significant differences in acoustics. In addition, lack of co-temporal field measurements simultaneously in the atmosphere and ocean hampers model validation and confidence in predictive skill. However, the community is heading toward an increasing integration of HPC, ML-assisted modeling and multi-scale coupling in spite of these limitations. "With further research, it is not unrealistic that we will be able to provide real-time uncertainty-aware simulations of the underwater sound scenes for such widely disparate applications as climate studies, naval operations and the management of environmental noise."

Last, numerical simulations of acoustic wave propagation in turbulent flows are essential for contemporary environmental and engineering problems. Combining high-fidelity turbulence modeling with fast acoustic solvers and data-driven corrections provides a path to accurate, yet practical predictive framework. These advances are hoped to not only deepen the scientific understanding of turbulence–acoustic interactions, but also offer essential tools for tackling international issues in monitoring, communication and climate research.

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