

Interactive comment on “Current status of the ability of the GEMS/MACC models to reproduce the tropospheric CO vertical distribution as measured by MOZAIC” by N. Elguindi et al.

N. Elguindi et al.

nellie.elguindi@gmail.com

Received and published: 8 July 2010

The authors are grateful to the valuable comments by the reviewer. We think that this manuscript is suitable for GMD because it presents work that was carried out for a project whose main goal is to develop an operational data assimilation system for chemically reactive gases. The validation results presented in this study were used in developing such a system, so we do feel it is well suited to this journal. Below is our response to your other concerns.

Regarding the possibility of splitting the paper in two: We agree that the manuscript is quite lengthy, however we would prefer not to split the paper in two mainly because

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we think a thorough description of the observations is necessary before we present the validation, particularly because as the reviewer pointed out there is very little information about the seasonal variations of tropospheric CO concentrations from in-situ measurements in the literature. We think it was necessary to present a description of the characteristic CO profiles over the cities in which the validation is performed and to put the year we validate, 2004, into context in terms of CO inter-annual variability. Therefore, we opted to shorten the manuscript and make it more concise and readable in the areas that the reviewer suggested.

Specific Comments:

Introduction: We have shortened the introduction (from 1360 words to 860) and made it more concise and easier to read as the reviewer suggested.

Section 2: We have removed most of paragraph 1 in Section 2.1 describing the MOZAIC data and have added the following paragraph to Section 2.2 describing the assimilation technique;

‘MOPITT V3 total column data (Deeter et al, 2003) are assimilated using ECMWF’s 4D-VAR data assimilation system. The data are thinned to a resolution of 0.5 deg x 0.5 deg and are only assimilated over land between 65N and 65S. Averaging kernel information from the MOPITT data is not used, because it was not available at the time the GEMS simulations were run. The model equivalent of the observation is calculated as vertical integral. The background errors statistics for the CO assimilation were determined with the NMC method (Parrish and Derber 1992). For this, 150 days of 2-day forecasts were run with the coupled system initialized from fields produced by the free running MOZART CTM, and the differences between 24-h and 48-h forecasts valid at the same time were used as a proxy for the background errors.’

Section 3: Following the reviewer’s suggestion, we have shortened this section considerably and think that it reads better. Specifically,

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Figure 1 and corresponding paragraphs 2 and 3 have been removed. The last paragraph on page 405 that summarizes the CO profiles and discusses the impact of the fall 2002 Russian fires has been removed. Although we feel this material would be a valuable contribution to the literature, we agree with the reviewer that it does not fit well in this manuscript. Following the reviewers suggestion, Tables 2-5 have been moved to the supplementary online material. Regarding the suggestion to include plots of the same format as in Section 4, we prefer not to add any more plots to the manuscript which we are trying to shorten. We hope that the profiles shown in Figures 1-4 and the Tables now given in the supplementary online materials will be sufficient to give the readers an idea of the seasonal variations of CO at various altitudes.

Section 4: We are very interested in assessing how much of an improvement a data assimilation system strategy offers for a semi-operational system, such as developed in the GEMS project. Therefore it is of particular interest to compare the biases of the stand-alone models to that of the coupled model with assimilation so that we are able to say in the end that the coupled model with data assimilation is able to reduce the biases by X. For this reason we prefer to keep the validation of the stand-alone CTMs and coupled model together in the same section. To make this point more clear to the reviewer and potential readers we have added the following sentences to the first paragraph in Section 4,

“Comparing the model biases from the CTMs and coupled system allows us to assess how much of an improvement the data assimilation provides. To differentiate between improvements due to better meteorology and transport in the coupled model versus the data assimilation, we analyze both a coupled IFS/MOZART simulation with full data assimilation (ASSIM) and a control run with no data assimilation (CTRL).”

Section 5: The extent to which the models were able to reproduce CO plumes from the boreal fires was not necessarily known before hand, and we think that the sensitivity studies we have performed provide some information as to processes that are currently not well represented in the models. The fact that using what we consider to be a

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better emissions inventory (Turquety) for the boreal fires results in a deeper CO plume downwind in most of the cases suggests that the models are indeed able to transport the emissions long distances downwind, despite their coarse resolution. Due to lack of resources we did not perform a resolution sensitivity test in this study.

Conclusions: Regarding the first point, we rephrase the line “...showing that assimilation alone is not sufficient for compensating for other model inadequacies.” to read as “...showing that the method used for assimilation does not provide enough information about the vertical profiles and is therefore not sufficient to compensate for other model inadequacies’

and add the following lines to the end of the last paragraph to emphasize potential errors in the 4DVAR assimilation procedure,

‘Finally, the fact that the depth of the CO plumes is not well represented in the troposphere, and that in some cases the CO appears to be over-compensated for in the PBL (i.e.~Case~1) suggests that some improvements could be made in the assimilation process. One possible shortcoming of using the MOPITT V3 data without averaging kernels is that the assimilation could be biased to the a-priori profile. Therefore, in the current MACC (follow up project to GEMS) reanalysis, that will cover the period 2003-2010, averaging kernel information is used for MOPITT V4 data. This allows one to separate the contributions of measurement and a-priori information in forming the total column and will hopefully lead to improvements in the CO analysis.’

Regarding the second point, we replace the sentence ‘This reflects the true variability associated with the injection height of emissions from boreal fires’ to the following,

“ One possible explanation for this is the fact that in reality there is considerable variability associated with the injection height of emissions from boreal fires, depending on the intensity of the fire and the present synoptic conditions. Therefore a parameterization which is based on these factors would be most accurate. However, we can not rule out the possibility that there are other factors in the model, such as mass conservation in

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the advection scheme and numerical diffusion, which inhibit the long-range transport.”

Interactive comment on Geosci. Model Dev. Discuss., 3, 391, 2010.

GMDD

3, C155–C159, 2010

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