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Temporal Variations of Mixing Layer Height in Rural Environment under Clear Sky Conditions Using a Campbell Ceilometer CS135: Preliminary Results †

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Abstract: The scope of the study is to analyze the variations of the Mixing Layer Height (MLH) under different cloud conditions on a daily and monthly basis. For this scope the data of the first five months from the Campbell ceilometer CS135 were analyzed. The instrument is operating in a rural place of Euboea Island (Greece) and the study presents preliminary results about the atmospheric profile of this area which is also related with the air transport of the largest airport in Greece (Athens airport).

Keywords: mixing layer height; ceilometer; planetary boundary layer; Euboea Island; diurnal variation; sky conditions

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1. Introduction

The atmospheric mixing layer (AML) is the turbulent layer of atmosphere adjacent to the earth's surface and determines the vertical mixing of air by thermal and/or mechanical turbulence [1,2]. The AML responds to variations evapo-transpiration and sensible heat fluxes within the timescales of an hour or less. In the context of the planetary boundary layer (PBL), the mixing layer height (MLH) represents a salient parameter, because it has a considerable impact on the processes involved in the transportation and dispersion of pollutants from various sources. [3,4]. The development of the AML during a day is governed by a variety of parameters, such as cloud cover, water vapor content, concentration of air pollutants, strength of synoptic wind patterns, soil moisture, nighttime cloud cover, and stratification in the free troposphere [5]. During daytime the AML top represents the entrainment zone hence, an understanding of the diurnal and seasonal variations in the atmospheric mixing layer height (MLH) is essential for discerning the mechanisms controlling the air quality, chemical processes, and numerical modeling of the lower atmosphere [6,7].

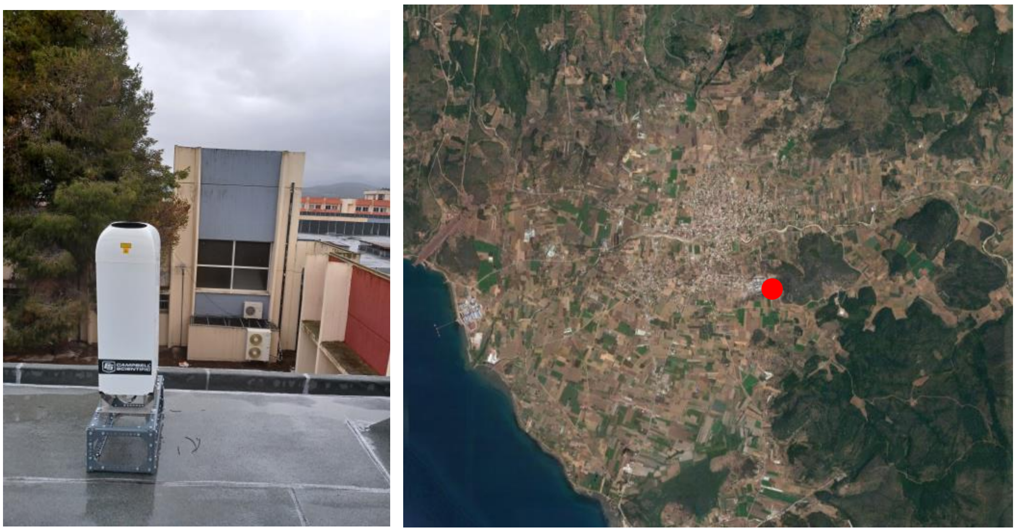
Automatic lidar-ceilometers (ALC) with their compact design, and the high range resolution (~10 m) make them advantageous to many of the alternative systems for the MLH estimation. AML height estimation from ceilometers can reveal intricate features about the vertical structure of the atmosphere [8–10].

2. Data and Methods

For the scope of the study the first datasets of the Campbell Ceilometer C135 which is continuously operating in the National Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), Department of Aerospace Science and Technology in the facilities of Euboea Island, has been used. The ceilometer of the study (Figure 1) is using the method of Haij et al., 2007 to estimate the MLH [11,12]. At this point it is noteworthy pointing out that the area around the location of the ceilometer is rural with significant agricultural sector and a small town with 8000 population. Also, the location has a straight-line distance of 75 km from the international airport of Athens which is the largest in Greece. This means that the information derived from ceilometer can be very useful about the air transportation safety in the greater area.

All the measurements from the instrument (Figure 1a) for the period from 01/06/2023 to 31/08/2023 were collected. During this period a large number of valid measurements were examined. The initial dataset was filtered to keep only the clear sky measurements from days that were considered to have clear sky conditions. More specifically, as clear sky measurements were considered each instantaneous measurement in which the "cloud base", as it was recorded by the instrument has null value. At this point it must be referred that the ceilometer provides three different estimations of the MLH for each measurement, labeled according to their accuracy [12]. Considering this information, a second filter was applied based on the difference between the MLH values, retaining only those measurements with a difference of less than 500 m.

In order to identify the mean daily variation of MLH, the final datasets split by months (June, July and August) and the mean hourly MLH was calculated (Figure 2). Using the provided estimations of the MLH from the ceilometer, the weighted hourly mean MLH was calculated.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 1. (**a**) Campbell Ceilometer C135 which is operating in the National Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), Department of Aerospace Science and Technology in the facilities of Euboea Island. (**b**) The greater area around the ceilometer (red dot).

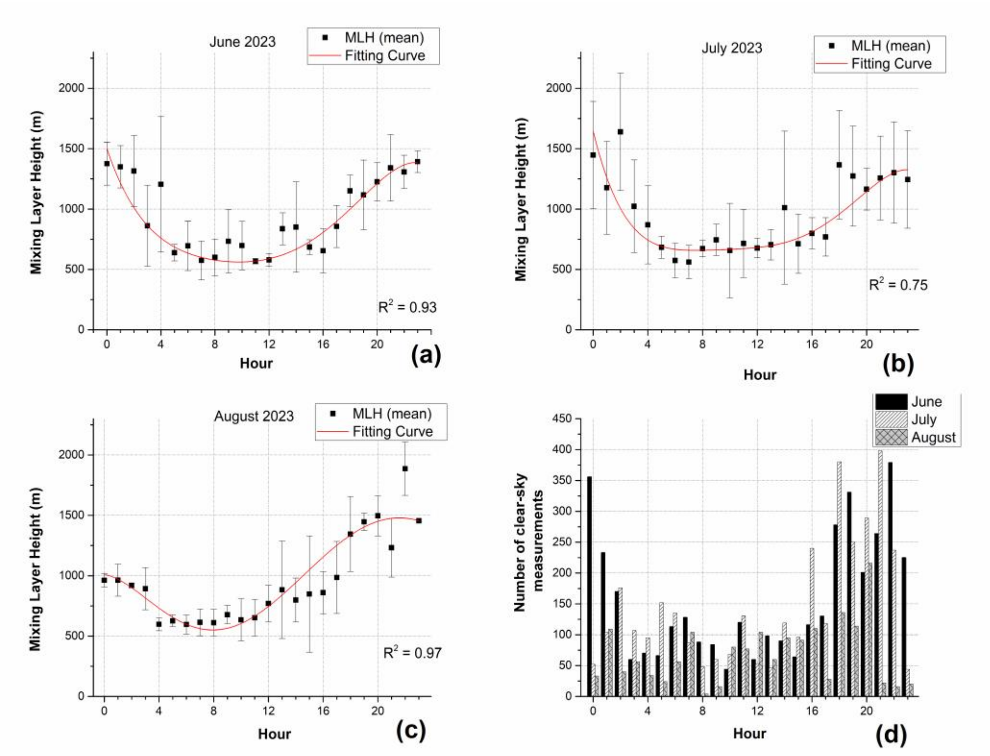


Figure 2. Mean daily variation of MLH during (**a**) June, (**b**) July and (**c**) August. (**d**) The total number of valid measurements is also depicted.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the mean daily variation of MLH during the summer months (June, July, and August) can be seen in Figure 2. The Figure depict that the lowest daily MLH values are recorded during 05:00 to 09:00 which is expected since the land has stopped to heat from incoming solar radiation many hours before 05:00 (previous night) and do not start to be heated from the solar radiation of the current day (daily heat). The MLH starts to rapidly increase after 12:00 the whole summer period reaching a plateau of 1250–1500 m little after dusk (around 20:00–22:00) when the impact of solar radiation stops again due to the Earth's daily heating cycle. The use of a third order polynomial function to fit the mean hourly MLH values provides a high correlation coefficient (adjusted R^2) above 0.75. This type of function can efficiently represent the general shape of MLH variation. The maximum range of values of the MLH in all the examined months indicates a well-mixed atmosphere with significant heating of land surface. The role of wind shear is also important highlighting the need of such dataset to enrich this finding. An interesting result of Figure 2 is the mean MLH remains in high values (above 100 m) in a significant part of the night (00:00–04:00), especially during June and July. This result indicates low surface cooling rates after transition from day to night. This can be explained not only with the vertical stratification of the atmospheric boundary layer (ABL) itself but also by the differentiation of the land cover due to the cultivation in the surrounding areas [13]. Nevertheless, this result needs more data (Figure 2d) and a parallel study of land use/land cover classification of the study area during the summer period, to be evaluated.

Regarding the number of data used (Figure 2d) to calculate the mean hourly MLH (Figure2a–c) during the summer months, it can be considered quite satisfactory from statistical point of view to provide preliminary results, but a larger number of data must be used in a future study to record more efficiently the trends and the variations are depicted in Figure 2a–c. Also, alternative filters (and thresholds) to characterize clear-sky (and/or cloudy) conditions must be examined in a future study to conclude robust criteria that represent different atmospheric conditions. Finally, the larger values of the standard deviation of the mean MLH are concentrated mainly (but not exclusively) during the day which is consistent with the usual turbulence in the ABL after noon that in turn cause large variation in the MLH. Finally, the role of land-sea breezes must be also examined in the affection of the MLH daily variation because five kilometers western of the location of the ceilometer is extended the gulf Euboea (Figure 1b).

4. Conclusions

The central scope of this study is to examine the daily variations of the mixing layer height during the summer period in a rural environment (Euboea, Greece) during clear-sky conditions with the use of a ceilometer (Campbell ceilometer CS135). Among the main results of the study is the maximum height which is located during the late afternoon as well as the high values of the MLH during the night (00:00–04:00). This may be caused by the low cooling rate of the land surface and the lowest part of the troposphere after dusk. The daily profile of the August differs from June and July which may be caused by the land use/land cover profile due to the cultivation activities in the agricultural sector.

Moreover, the lowest MLH values are located in the transition period between day and night (05:00 to 09:00) with August profile to have significantly lower MLH values than the two other summer months.

These preliminary results of the study will be enriched in the near future with more data coming from the ceilometer and it is intended to be correlated with wind measurements and land cover data to examine in depth the MLH variation in the study area.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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