

INVESTIGATION OF CO₂-FOAM STABILITY WITH ANIONIC AND
NONIONIC SURFACTANTS AT DIFFERENT SALINITIES

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ABSTRACT

Gas flooding is one of the most widely applied EOR methods in field applications, but viscous fingering and gravity segregation are the main issues in gas displacing. To mitigate these problems, water alternating gas injection (WAG) has been used. Another useful proposal is applying foams to improve sweep efficiency because of their high viscosity and mobility. Surfactants have historically been used in field applications to reinforce foam. One of the most important tasks in petroleum engineering is the characterization of the properties of the reservoirs for the application of the method that will lead to a greater oil recovery factor. Among the different tertiary recovery methods with great potential for improving the oil recovery factor, foam injection can be mentioned. In this study, comprehensive laboratory research explored the performance of CO₂ foam with anionic and nonionic surfactants. The objectives were to determine the critical micellar concentration (CMC) of SDS and TX100 surfactants and to investigate the effect of varying surfactants salinities and ratios on CO₂-FOAM stability. The concentrations of SDS and TX100 were considered in a range of (0.01-0.4wt%). Furthermore, the salinities of SDS and TX100 were fixed at (25000, 30000, 35000, 40000, and 45000 ppm) during the stability tests. This study's methodology included several laboratory tests divided into two sections. In the first section, the surface tension of (SDS) and (TX-100) surfactants was measured to estimate CMC. The second section was to consider the behavior of foam stability in various salinity and ratios of surfactant solutions. The results showed that the CMC for SDS and TX100 surfactants was equal to 0.05 and 0.02 wt%, respectively. Moreover, CO₂ foam stability can be improved by increasing the salinity of surfactants solution. SDS at 35000 ppm salinity was the best for CO₂ foam stability, which was stable for 8 minutes.

ABSTRAK

Banjir gas ialah salah satu kaedah EOR yang paling banyak digunakan dalam aplikasi lapangan, tetapi penjarian likat dan pengasingan graviti adalah isu utama dalam sesaran gas. Untuk mengurangkan masalah ini, suntikan gas berselang-seli air (WAG) telah digunakan. Satu lagi cadangan berguna ialah menggunakan buih untuk meningkatkan kecekapan sapuan kerana kelikatan dan mobiliti yang tinggi. Surfaktan secara sejarah telah digunakan dalam aplikasi lapangan untuk menguatkan buih. Salah satu tugas terpenting dalam kejuruteraan petroleum ialah pencirian sifat-sifat takungan untuk penggunaan kaedah yang akan membawa kepada faktor pemulihan minyak yang lebih besar. Antara kaedah pemulihan tertiri yang berbeza dengan potensi besar untuk meningkatkan faktor pemulihan minyak, suntikan buih boleh disebut. Dalam kajian ini, penyelidikan makmal yang komprehensif meneroka prestasi buih CO₂ dengan surfaktan anionik dan bukan ionik. Objektifnya adalah untuk menentukan kepekatan micellar kritikal (CMC) surfaktan SDS dan TX100 dan untuk menyiasat kesan saliniti dan nisbah surfaktan yang berbeza-beza terhadap kestabilan CO₂-FOAM. Kepekatan SDS dan TX100 telah dipertimbangkan dalam julat (0.01-0.4wt%). Tambahan pula, kemasinan SDS dan TX100 telah ditetapkan pada (25000, 30000, 35000, 40000, dan 45000 ppm) semasa ujian kestabilan. Metodologi kajian ini merangkumi beberapa ujian makmal yang dibahagikan kepada dua bahagian. Dalam bahagian pertama, tegangan permukaan surfaktan (SDS) dan (TX-100) diukur untuk menganggarkan CMC. Bahagian kedua adalah untuk mempertimbangkan kelakuan kestabilan buih dalam pelbagai kemasinan dan nisbah larutan surfaktan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa CMC untuk surfaktan SDS dan TX100 adalah sama dengan 0.05 dan 0.02% berat, masing-masing. Selain itu, kestabilan buih CO₂ boleh dipertingkatkan dengan meningkatkan kemasinan larutan surfaktan. SDS pada kemasinan 35000 ppm adalah yang terbaik untuk kestabilan buih CO₂, yang stabil selama 18 minit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAC	- Critical Aggregation Concentration
CMC	- Critical Micelle Concentration
CST	- Critical Surface Tension
CNC	- Cellulose Nanocrystal
CTAB	- Cetyltrimethylammonium Bromide
EOR	- Enhanced Oil Recovery
GOR	- Gas to-oil ratio
GEOR	- Gas Enhanced Oil Recovery
ID	- Inner Diameter
IFT	- Interfacial Tension
MMP	- Minimum Miscibility Pressure
OD	- outer diameter
RST	- Rheometer
SDS	- Sodium Dodecyl Sulphate
SDBS	- Sodium dodecyl benzene sulfonate

LIST OF SYMBOLS

CO_2	-	Carbon dioxide
CH_4	-	Methane
C_2H_6	-	Ethane
C_3H_8	-	Propane
L	-	Length of capillary
R	-	Radius
N_2	-	Nitrogen
ΔP	-	Differential Pressure

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Primary, secondary, and tertiary processes are the steps in the classic oil recovery process that are used today. To make oil, the fundamental process relies on the expansion of water, crude oil, gas caps, and dissolved gas in reservoirs, all of which release energy when they are heated. The secondary process involves injecting water or an immiscible gas into reservoirs after pressure has been depleted, in order to keep the pressure constant. Due to high interfacial tension and inadequate mobility control, the average recovery efficiency is only one-third of the original oil in place (OOIP) following primary and secondary operations (Wardlaw, 1996). An EOR (enhanced oil recovery) technique uses tertiary chemistry or thermal energy to solve the difficulties of interfacial tension and/or mobility control, which increases the oil recovery efficiency (Lake, 1989).

More than 70% of the world's oil and gas production is via mature field growth, consisting mainly of secondary and tertiary production. The average recovery factor for gas is 70%, while that of oil, it is about 35%. (East African Scholars Publisher) In the tertiary recovery systems, Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) technology is often used, in which chemicals that were not initially present in the reservoir are injected to stimulate oil recovery. EUR strategies optimize the economic potential of mature oil fields by increasing oil recovery and extending field life. (Kittisrisawai and Romero-Zerón, 2015). For decades, gas enhanced oil recovery (GEOR) has been commonly used to improve oil recovery from hydrocarbon reservoirs. Researchers have experimented by injecting various forms of gases into reservoirs with the aim of increasing oil extraction. Carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen (N₂), methane (CH₄), ethane (C₂H₆), and propane (C₃H₈) are some of these gases. (Fakher and Imqam, 2020)

This section provides an overview of the most common EOR approaches, such as chemical EOR, miscible flooding, and thermal methods. Polymers are used to control mobility in chemical EOR procedures and surface-active materials to minimise interfacial tension (IFT). Surfactants supplied directly to the injection solution or soaps produced by the interaction of crude oil and the injected alkaline solution can be used as surface-active materials. There are a variety of chemical EOR methods available, such as surfactant flooding; alkaline flooding; polymer flooding, as well as their combination (e.g., alkaline-surfactant-polymer (ASP) flooding) (Rognmo, 2019).

Molecule EOR processes have mechanisms and limitations unique to each chemical. Surfactants can lower water oil's IFT and change rocks' wettability. High cost and retention of surfactants, such as adsorption on rocks, precipitation in highly salted brine, and partition in residual oil, limit their use. Cost-effective chemicals like alkalis can react with crude oil's acid components to produce soap, which reduces the water-interfacial oil's tension (IFT) and the injected surfactant's ability to adsorb (Nelson *et al.*, 1984). The created soap in alkaline flooding can lower IFT to a satisfactory level if the crude oil's soap number is high enough. The alkalis, on the other hand, can still be employed to minimise the adsorption of surfactant (Nelson *et al.*, 1984). Several factors will affect the stability of these materials, including the interfacial properties of the adsorbed layer between the gas and liquid phases, as well as the bulk properties of the liquid films that isolate the bubbles. The interfacial properties of the air/water interface are often dominant for foam stabilization in relatively simple structures, such as foams stabilized by low molecular weight surfactants. (Chen *et al.*, 2017).

Foams are commonly used in the petroleum industry for stimulation therapy. The use of foamed fracturing fluid in the production of low permeability, low pressure, and water-sensitive reservoirs is gaining prominence. Surfactants can be absorbed at the gas-liquid interface, decreasing surface tension and producing foams. (Zhan *et al.*, 2018). Foam can increase both aerial and vertical sweep efficiencies in high permeability zones by increasing gas-effective viscosity and decreasing gas mobility. (Samimi *et al.*, 2020)

Sodium dodecyl sulphate (SDS) has been commonly used as a foaming agent in many fields due to its low cost and strong foaming ability. Foam can eventually come in contact with salts in practical applications, such as when being mixed with seawater to extinguish a fuel fire or in enhanced oil recovery (EOR). Salts were shown in several experiments to have a direct effect on the foaming performance and foam consistency of SDS foams. SDS foam has the highest foamability in four wt% sodium chloride (NaCl) solution (Jiang et al., 2020). NaCl will not improve the foam stability from 2% to 5%. (Samin et al., 2017). Kumar and Mandal (2017) used various combinations of anionic (sodium dodecyl sulphate) as CO₂-foam foaming agents. Some EOR procedures, such as foam chemical EOR and miscible CO₂ flooding, are also secondary processes that can be employed to maintain reservoir pressure and boost oil recovery efficiency at the same time.

1.2 Problem Statement

As global demand for oil increases so does its value and this makes more expensive oil extraction techniques more and more viable. Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) offers the only viable solution for retrieving anywhere up to 80% of the world's oil reserves. One of the techniques of EOR is foam flooding, which has proven that it can increase the oil recovery of the reservoir. However, many factors can affect the efficiency of the foam flooding. One of the factors is the surfactant concentration used in the foam flooding. It is believed that surfactant concentration will influence the critical micellar concentration (CMC), the foam adsorption and the ultimate oil recovery.

Additionally, a small number of studies have suggested that a surfactant work as stabilise supercritical CO₂ foam. To further understand how stabilise surfactant foam, researchers incorporated a surfactant in the experiment. Because of its widespread use in the industry, sodium dodecyl sulphate (SDS) was chosen as the surfactant. It is the stability of the foam sheets that determines the stability of foam in

porous media (lamellae). As a defoaming agent, oil may have an impact on foam performance by decreasing lamellae stability.

Foam has a low density, a high apparent viscosity, and a high blocking capability in high-permeability formations. As a result, foam increases oil recovery by growing sweep efficiency in gas injection, decreasing gas mobility, and redirecting the gas flow. Because of their important properties, foams have been of considerable practical importance, and their use has gained wider acceptance in the petroleum industry. Foam is a two-phase system that includes gas bubbles in a thin liquid film, effectively controls gas mobility, and improves sweeping performance. (Li et al., 2020a).

Foam is a possible alternative to mitigate the above-mentioned gas flood problems. By increasing the apparent gas viscosity and trapping a wide gas fraction within the porous medium, it can significantly decrease gas mobility by many orders of magnitude. In the past, many field experiments were conducted, for example, steam-foam injections, foam-assisted water-alternating gas, carbohydrate foam injections, and foam inundations with a carbon dioxide-solution surfactant used to boost spraying performance. Surfactants have historically been used in field applications to reinforce foam. Although, under extreme pressures of a reservoir such as high temperatures, high salinity, and crude oil contact, penetration enhancer foams are not quite steady. Other considerations such as compressive adsorption of rock matrix, crude oil surfactant partitioning, thermal degradation of a surfactant at the high-temperature further challenge the economic implementation of foam flooding. (Singh and Mohanty, 2017). It is necessary to figure out how foam perform when exposed to oil. Because these foams are used in EOR, their stability must be maintained even when exposed to oil. As a result, it is critical to conduct studies that examine the consequences of oil contact while the three phases are present.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Thus, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- I. To estimate the critical micellar concentration (CMC) of SDS and TX100 surfactants.
- II. To investigate the effects of varying brine salinities on CO₂ – foam stability.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the research covers parameter that affects the foam.

- I. The CMC of SDS and TX100 were determined in a range of (0.01-0.45wt%).
- II. The salinity of SDS and TX100 were determined at (25000, 30000 35000, 40000, and 45000 ppm).
- III. Comparison of CO₂-foam stability with different salinities.
- IV. The experiments were conducted at room temperature 25C and atmospheric pressure 14.7 psi.

1.5 Significance of Study

This work is interesting in that the renewable and organic resource foam has been taken into account. Where foams are used in an enhanced oil recovery as a surface-active agent. In comparison to surfactants and nanoparticles that are commonly used in foam flooding, the foam will become an out-of-box” future technology for enhancing oil recovery. This will serve as the point of departure for further research involving various foam types and altering or incorporating additional materials to enhance moisture and foam consistency to increase foam efficiency in oils and gas industry applications.

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