DEVELOPMENT AND MODELLING OF MIXED MATRIX MEMBRANES INCORPORATING LARGE PORE SIZE CLAY FOR GAS SEPARATION

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For Ahlul Bayt,

my beloved mother and father,

my wife

and my sons.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to develop Polyetherimide (PEI) mixed matrix membranes (MMM) by incorporating large pore size fillers. This study was divided into two main parts. In the first part, the existing MMM permeation models were evaluated and based on series-parallel resistors approach, a new model has been developed. The developed model was capable to predict gas permeation for all wellknown MMMs morphologies and a good agreement was achieved between the model and the experimental data from open literature. The first part was extended by proposing a morphological map which by virtue the prediction of MMMs morphologies was achievable. The second part of the work was performed to investigate the effect of incorporation of montmorillonite (MMT) and halloysite nano tubes (HNT) as large pore size filler in MMMs for gas separation. MMMs were fabricated using a dry/wet casting technique. The chemical modification of HNTs involved silvlation and Ag⁺ ion exchange treatment. The silvlated HNTs was prepared by treating them with N- β -(aminoethyl)- γ -aminopropyltrimethoxy silane agent. The results from thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA) and Fourier transform infra red spectroscopy (FTIR) confirmed that chemical modification on clay surface has taken place successfully. A perfect compatibility between the polymer matrix and filler was observed from field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM) micrographs. The outcomes showed that, 0.5% loading of silvlated-HNT resulted in 27% enhancement in CO₂ permeability and 8% increase in selectivity relative to the neat polymer membrane. In order to apply the facilitated transport properties in MMMs, Ag⁺ ion exchange treatment was performed because of its high affinity toward CO₂ rather than CH₄. Results showed that silane can successfully enhance the HNTs cation exchange capacity, which led to higher concentration of Ag⁺ ions in the modified HNTs. Ag⁺ ion exchange exhibited about 250% enhancement in CO₂ permeability. The effect of montmorillonite nano-clay fillers on PEI MMM was also studied. The gas permeation results revealed the following order in terms of selectivity for CO_2/CH_4 separation: Cloisite 15A > general MMT > hydrophilic MMT > hydrophobic MMT > raw MMT. In conclusion, the best results were achieved at 0.5%of Cloisite 15A loading where permeability and selectivity enhancements were 24% and 28% respectively.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menghasilkan membran matrik tercampur (MMM) polieterimida (PEI) dengan memasukkan bahan pengisi berliang besar. Penyelidikan ini pada dasarnya dibahagikan kepada dua bahagian utama. Dalam bahagian pertama, model kebolehtelapan MMM yang sedia ada telah dinilai dan kemudian berdasarkan pendekatan perintang siri-selari, model baru telah dibangunkan. Model yang dibangun mampu untuk meramal kebolehtelapan gas untuk semua morfologi MMM yang sedia ada dan kesamaan yang baik telah dicapai di antara semua model dan data ujikaji dari literatur. Bahagian pertama ini telah dilanjutkan dengan mencadangkan plan morfologi berdasarkan kepada peramalan morfologi MMMs yang boleh dicapai. Bahagian kedua dari penyelidikan ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji pengaruh montmorillonite (MMT) dan tiub nano haloisit (HNT) sebagai bahan pengisi berliang besar dalam MMM bagi pemisahan gas. MMM telah dihasilkan dengan menggunakan teknik tuangan basah-kering. Modifikasi kimia HNTs termasuk sililasi dan rawatan pertukaran ion Ag⁺. HNT bersililasi telah rawatan menggunakan agen silan N- β -(aminoetil)- γ dihasilkan melalui aminopropiltrimetoxi. Keputusan daripada analisis termogravimetri (TGA) dan spektroskopi inframerah penjelmaan fourier (FTIR) mengesahkan bahawa pengubahsuaian kimia pada permukaan tanah liat itu berlaku dengan jayanya. Keserasian sempurna antara matrik polimer dan bahan pengisi dapat diperhatikan dari mikrograf mikroskopi imbasan elektron pemancaran medan (FESEM). Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penambahan 0.5% HHT bersililasi menghasilkan peningkatan 27% dalam kebolehtelapan CO₂ dan 8% peningkatan pemilihan berbanding membran polimer asal. Untuk menggunakan sifat pengangkutan dalam MMM, rawatan pertukaran ion Ag⁺ telah dilakukan kerana ia mempunyai daya tarikan terhadap CO2 lebih tinggi berbanding CH4. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa silan berjaya meningkatkan kapasiti tukaran kation HNT, yang turut menyebabkan peningkatan kepekatan ion Ag⁺ pada HNT terubahsuai. Pertukaran ion Ag⁺ menunjukkan peningkatan sekitar 250% dalam kebolehtelapan CO₂. Pengaruh bahan pengisi tanah liat bersaiz nano, montmorillonit PEI MMM juga telah dikaji. Keputusan kebolehtelapan gas menunjukkan urutan kememilihan berikut untuk pemisahan CO_2/CH_4 : Cloisite 15A > MMT umum > hidrofilik MMT > hidrofobik MMT > MMT mentah. Kesimpulannya, hasil yang terbaik dicapai pada penambahan 0.5% Cloisit 15A di mana peningkatan kebolehtelapan dan kememilihan adalah 24% dan 28%.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

ROMAN LETTERS

a, b, c	-	MMM element dimensions
A	-	Membrane area
AARE	-	Average absolute relative error
d	-	Particle diameter or height or number density
D	-	Diffusivity
E	-	Diffusion activation energy
J	-	Gas flux
k	-	Langmur adsorption coefficient or constant or Knudsen number
l	-	Membrane thickness,
т		Mass of gas molecule
М	-	Molecular weight
n	-	Parameter in Frendlich –Lungmuir Model
NDP	-	Number of data points
р	-	Gas pressure
Р	-	Permeability
q		Amount of gas saturated in adsorbant
Q	-	Gas volumetric flow rate
r		Pore radius
R	-	Gas universal constant or Permeance resistance
S	-	Gas solubility in membrane or inorganic, or parameter
t		Interphase thickness or measured time
Т	-	Absolute temperature
и	-	Parameter in the developed model
V	-	Gas volume

x	-	Diffusion distance dimension
Ζ	-	Gas compressibility factor
%AARE		Average absolute relative errors
%ARE	-	Percentage of absolute relative erroe
%RE	-	Percentage of relative error

GREEK LETTERS

α	-	Permselectivity
β	-	Ratio of the interphase permeability to the polymer permeability
δ	-	Ratio of the interphase radius to the particle radius, particle size
Δ	-	Difference in pressure
ε	-	Porosity
ϕ	-	Filler loading
φ'		Dimension parameters in developed model
γ	-	Ratio of the interphase thickness to the particle radius
η	-	Gas viscosity
λ	-	Permeability ratio or Gas mean free path
μ	-	Number density
θ	-	Site occupancy of gas molecules in adsorbant
ρ	-	Density,
σ	-	Standard deviation or molecular size
$\dot{\sigma}$	-	Gas kinetic diameter
τ	-	Tortuosity

SUPERSCRIPTS

Cal	-	Calculated
Exp	-	Experimental
i	-	Interphase

SUBSCRIPTS

В	-	Boltzmann
d	-	Dispersed phase
f	-	Feed side
i	-	Interphase or gas component
j	-	Gas component or counter
Κ	-	Knudson
L	-	Downstream pressure
т	-	Polymer matrix or molecular property
М	-	Molecular weight, Maximum filler loading
0	-	Upstream presure
р	-	Permeate side or Poiseuille
r	-	Relative
S	-	Inorganic phase in the combined inorganic and interphase phase
0,∞	-	Different diffusivity
1,2	-	Penetrant gas through membrane
I,II,III	-	Element different regions

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Membranes are used industrially for separation purposes and gas separation is a particularly attractive area because of their potential energy savings compared with more conventional separation techniques. Like any process, their application is closely linked to economic aspects such as energy costs, but also costs associated with the system itself. Membrane economics is closely related to their transport properties, permeability and selectivity. Permeability determines the productivity of the separation, and selectivity determines the efficiency of separation. The application potential of membranes is determined by the polymeric layers or composite structures which separate gaseous mixtures such as nitrogen /oxygen for air separation, CO_2 separation from natural gas and hydrogen separation, areas which form the backbone of membrane technology research.

Nowadays, natural gas is the fastest growing primary energy source in the world and its applications are expected to increase by 70 % between 2001 and 2025 (Energy Information Administration, 2005). Natural gas is a very versatile feedstock, since it can be converted into a variety of products such as methanol, synthesis gas (CO/H2), and synthetic crude oil and diesel via Fisher-Tropsch technology. From many points of view, methane is a perfect fuel for these purposes. It is available in most populated areas, impurities can be easily separated and among the hydrocarbons, it has the highest heating value relative to the amount of CO_2

produced. On the other hand, natural gas is a cleaner burning fuel compared to coal or fuel oils for power plants and home heating.

As worldwide demand increases, even those gas fields with high concentrations of CO₂ must be developed. The natural gas CO₂ content must be reduced to a specific level in order to increase the heating value and to reduce the effect of corrosion in process equipment in the presence of water (formation of carbonic acid). Acid gases, including CO_2 and H_2S , are known as contaminants in natural gas and biogas. On one hand, CO₂ causes a decline in natural gas and biogas heating value and on the other hand, H₂S is a very poisonous, polluting and corrosive ingredient. The removal of these acid gases becomes very important. Present approaches to separate off-gas impurities and to increase its heating value have been basically limited to physicochemical methods such as chemical separation, adsorption, cryogenic separation, as well as membrane separation technology. Chemical techniques are principally based on absorption at high pressure (in water, 30% solution of potassium carbonate, solution of monoethylenamine, etc.). Adsorption is based on the sorptivity of impurities in which a suitable adsorbent material plays a vital role (Astarita, 1983). Amine absorption is a conventional process in the acid gas removal market. High costs, solvent regeneration and operational issues are major problem in the absorption process. Thus, the application of membranes for gas separation may be preferred in many cases provided that they could maintain good implementation in the presence of corrosive feed streams. On the other hand, there are also economically significant benefits in constructing hybrid membrane-amine systems. (Rao and Rubin, 2002).

1.2 Problem Statement

Penetration through membranes in which filler has been embedded, known as mixed matrix membranes (MMMs), has already been investigated theoretically as well as experimentally since the 1960s. Theoretically, there is a demand for an equation that describes the permeability of the composite membrane as a function of the permeability of the matrix phase and the filler phase, along with the amount of filler. The equivalent for this problem in dielectrics has been studied extensively. (Bouma *et al.*, 1997). Nearly all of the present models are derived from other systems i.e. electrical or thermal systems, while a model based purely on MMM physical geometry is highly required. Moreover, almost all of the present models are not able to predict the MMMs permeability directly in one step.

Membrane materials possessing high selectivity for carbon dioxide/(methane or nitrogen) have been proposed, using both organic (e.g. polymeric materials) and inorganic (e.g. ceramic materials) membranes. At present, the application of commercial membranes is governed by polymeric membranes. Current studies have pointed to the development of polymeric membranes as well as their applications. The separation properties of the inorganic materials locate far from the polymeric membranes which indicates their superiority based on the upper-bound diagram (Singh and Koros, 2000; Feuters and Centeno, 1999; Kim et al., 2004; Park et al., 2004; Tin et al., 2004). Although outstanding enhancement in gas separation performance of the membranes over the last few decades had been achieved, much development is still needed if membrane performance surpassing the trade-off boundary is considered as the key target. Likewise, the current utilization of inorganic membranes seems to be limited because of the unclear issues in terms of preparing membranes with defect-free structures, the economic aspects, along with the handling problem (Saracco et al., 1999; Caro et al., 2000). In order to achieve this goal, and to provide an acceptable substitute, an economically viable membrane with outstanding properties beyond the upper-bound limit, should be proposed using novel techniques. MMM, one of the most recent advances in membrane morphology development is comprised of a polymeric matrix and inorganic phases, representing the latest generation of membranes. MMMs or hybrid membranes have inorganic fillers such as zeolite, carbon molecular sieve or carbon nanotubes with excellent gas separation properties embedded into the matrix of a prospective polymer (Duval et al., 1994; Gur, 1994 and Anson et al, 2004). The composite material would have permeation properties surpassing the upper-bound while retaining the attractive economics and relative ease of processing a polymeric material (Jia et al. 1991; Jiang et al., 2004a; Huang et al., 2006 and Jiang et al., 2006b). However, among the attempts to develop MMM, there is some successful work that can jump the upper bound, but there is still a long distance to go before mass production and

industrialization of this category of membranes. Therefore, developing new MMMs with the aid of novel fillers and polymers in conjunction with the use of novel coupling agents is highly required.

The majority of membranes used in natural gas dehydration or CO₂ removal application have been made from cellulose acetate and polysulfone, which provide a CO_2/CH_4 selectivity around 15 to 20. Membranes with high CO_2/CH_4 selectivities (>35) would be very beneficial to minimize the loss of CH₄ and other hydrocarbons in the permeate stream, thereby maximizing recovery of CH₄ and other hydrocarbons in the product or retentate stream. For N_2 removal from N_2/CH_4 gas mixture Teflon AF2400 (Pinnau and Toy, 1996; Robeson, 2008) and polyimide (Wang et al., 2008; Robeson, 2008) offer a selectivity of 1.3 and 4.43 respectively. As can be seen, membrane with higher selectivities are required (>10) to minimize the CH4 loss .Hydrocarbon loss in the permeate stream can incur significant processing cost because of the loss of product gas that could otherwise be sent down the pipeline. Currently, hydrocarbon losses are typically greater than 5 % for natural gas CO_2 removal application using existing membranes. Such high losses are not economically favorable in comparison to conventional amine process where hydrocarbon loss is negligible. Therefore, more selective along with more permeable membranes are required to effectively compete with traditional process. Now for the purpose to achieve higher selectivity, using polymers having higher performance in terms of selectivity and permeability such as: Polyimide (i.e. Matrimid 5218) because of high cost is not economically applicable; therefore developing MMMs to achieve higher selectivity and permeability but not at the cost of the increase in expenses is one of the researchers interests.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The preceding sections outlined the current challenges which must be overcome before MMMs can be used for commercial application. Therefore, based on the problem statement, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1. To develop a new theoretical model to predict gas permeability for mixed matrix membrane.
- 2. To conduct functionalization and characterization of clay i.e. Montmorillonite and Halloysite nano-tubes using coupling agent .
- 3. To perform transition metal ion exchange treatment on halloysite nano tubes to study the facilitated transport effects on mixed matrix membranes performance.
- 4. To characterize and evaluate the performance of mixed matrix membrane membranes for CO₂/CH₄ separation.

1.4 Scopes of the Study

In order to achieve the abovementioned objectives, the following scopes of works were drawn:

- 1. Studying and evaluating the existing theoretical models.
- 2. Developing a new model to predict the MMMs permeability and the MMMs penetration flow path across MMMs.
- 3. Functionalization of clay nan-otubes using N- β -(aminoethyl)- γ aminopropyltrimethoxy silane (AEAPTMS) as a coupling agent.
- 4. Fabricating of mixed matrix membrane using polyetherimide and functionalized Halloysite nano-tubes clay.
- 5. Fabricating of mixed matrix membrane using polyetherimide and five types of Montmorillonite (raw MMT, Cloisite 15 A, general MMT, hydrophilic MMT and hydrophobic MMT) nano-particles clay.
- 6. Conducting Ag⁺ ion exchange treatment of Halloysite nano-tubes to enhance CO₂ solubility selectivity, hence the final MMMs permselectivity.
- Membrane characterization using X-ray Diffraction (XRD), Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy (FESEM), Fourier Transform Infra Red spectroscopy (FTIR), Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA),

Differential Scanning Calorimetric (DSC), Energy dispersive X-rays (EDX), viscometry and constant pressure permeation test.

- 8. Proposing a morphological map and modeling of MMMs transport properties applying large pore size fillers.
- 9. Performance evaluation of each functionalized or synthesized clay nanotubes mixed matrix membrane for the purification of natural gas.

1.5 Thesis Organization

This thesis describes the development of PEI/MMMs incorporated with large pore size halloysite nano-tubes (HNTs) for gas separation both theoretically and experimentally, which is divided into 10 chapters.

Chapter 1 presents background of the study, problem statement, objectives and scopes of the researches. Chapter 2 discusses the different aspects of MMMs along with their challenges for gas separation in details. In addition, current status of the techniques is critically presented. The research methodology of the developed permeability model for MMMs system along with the MMMs fabrication and characterizations are described in details in Chapter 3.

The gas permeability in MMMs using theoretical models and their comparison with the published experimental data are extensively discussed in Chapter 4. The models considered are: Maxwell model modified Maxwell model, Lewis-Nielsen model, modified Lewis-Nielsen model and Felske model. Chapter 5 discusses the development of a new theoretical model based on resistance modeling approach to predict mixed matrix membrane performance. The expected morphologies for MMMs compromising large pore size fillers are investigated in Chapter 6. Halloysite nanotube (HNT) was employed as a representative of large pore size fillers to interpret the morphologies.

Chapter 7 investigates the gas separation and transport properties of asymmetric mixed matrix membranes fabricated from polyetherimide (PEI); Ultem 1000 incorporated with raw and modified HNTs as filler. The modified HNTs; S-**HNTs** were prepared by treating **HNTs** with N- β -(aminoethyl)- γ aminopropyltrimethoxy silane (AEAPTMS). In Chapter 8, the facilitated transport effect of Ag⁺ ion exchanged HNTs as filler on the gas separation performance of asymmetric mixed matrix membranes are discussed. Three protocols were performed: (i) S-HNT MMM (no Ag⁺ ion exchange treatment), (ii) S-Ag-HNT MMM (first Ag⁺ ion exchanging and then silvlation of HNTs), and (iii) Ag-S- HNT MMM (first silvlation and then Ag⁺ ion exchanging of HNTs). The effect of montmorillonite (MMT) nano-clay fillers on polyetherimide (PEI) mixed matrix membrane for carbon dioxide removal has been studied in Chapter 9. Five different types of MMT nano-clays including unmodified and industrially modified clays were used as filler to fabricate asymmetric flat sheet MMM via a dry/wet phase inversion technique. The five types of clay used were: raw MMT, Cloisite 15A, general MMT, hydrophobic MMT and hydrophilic MMT.

The general conclusions drawn from this research and some recommendations proposed for future study are presented in Chapter 10.

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