

**SURFACE MODIFICATION OF MULTIWALLED CARBON NANOTUBES BY  
CHEMICAL OXIDATION AND IMMOBILIZATION OF TYROSINASE**

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*Dedicated with love:*  
*To my beloved daddy; Mohammad Sabri Ab Rahman,*  
*To my adored mom; Mazni Ismail,*  
*To my sweet little sisters and brother; Amira, Zamani, Salwana, Syukri*  
*To my one and only, Fahmi Aizuddin Sha'ari*

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## ABSTRACT

Studies on the development of interface between biological molecules and novel nanomaterials have attracted research worldwide. Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) have become an important matrix for the fabrication of biomaterials due to its unique properties. Surface properties of the CNTs and the medium of immobilization are critical in the immobilization of enzymes. In this study surface modification of multi-walled carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) for carboxylic moieties attachment was accomplished by acid treatment and reaction with potassium permanganate ( $\text{KMnO}_4$ ). The effect of these two oxidants on the surface modification of MWCNTs for tyrosinase immobilization was studied. Commercial MWCNTs were treated with either concentrated sulfuric acid - nitric acid mixture of ratio 3:1 or 0.1 M  $\text{KMnO}_4$  via reflux, stirring and ultrasonication. The resulting surface modified MWCNTs were characterized with FT-IR spectrophotometer, XPS, and FESEM. The immobilized tyrosinase was tested for leaching assay and its catalytic activity towards phenol was analysed. The FTIR spectra of functionalized MWCNTs showed a significance peak in the range of  $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$  to  $1729\text{ cm}^{-1}$  indicating the presence of carboxyl double bond, which confirmed the successful functionalization of MWCNTs (FCNTs) by chemical oxidation. The carboxylic peak of MWCNTs treated with  $\text{KMnO}_4$  (FCNTK) showed higher intensity as compared to acid-treated MWCNTs (FCNTA). These results are supported with the shift of O 1s binding energy at 534.9 eV and shoulder of C 1s at 289.00 eV corresponding to carboxylic groups from XPS analysis. The immobilization of tyrosinase onto FCNTA is higher than FCNTK with high catalytic activity for phenol degradation. Further sorption study showed that FCNTA with immobilized tyrosinase (FCNTA-Ty) has higher sorption towards phenol as compared to FCNTA and pristine MWCNTs. The results illustrated that FCNTA-Ty, FCNTAs and MWCNTs had relatively well adsorption capacity for phenol as described by both Langmuir and Freundlich models. In addition, the adsorption kinetics for these CNTs were well fitted with the pseudo-second order model with reasonably good correlation coefficient. This study led to possible application of bioremediation of phenol in industrial sample by attaching the FCNTA-Ty onto chitosan.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian berkenaan perkembangan hubungan antara molekul biologi dan bahan nano baru telah menarik minat sedunia. Tiubnano karbon (CNTs) menjadi matriks yang penting untuk pembuatan bahanbio kerana keunikan sifatnya. Sifat permukaan CNTs dan media nyahgerakan adalah kritikal bagi penyahgerakan enzim. Dalam kajian ini pengubahsuaian permukaan tiubnano karbon dinding berlapis (MWCNTs) dengan perlekatan kumpulan karboksilik dicapai melalui rawatan asid dan tindakbalas kalsium permanganat ( $\text{KMnO}_4$ ). Kesan dua agen pengoksidaan ini terhadap pengubahsuaian permukaan MWCNTs untuk penyahgerakan tirosinase telah dikaji. MWCNTs komersial dirawat sama ada oleh campuran asid sulfurik dan asid nitrik pada nisbah 3:1 atau dengan 0.1M  $\text{KMnO}_4$  melalui refluks, pengacauan, dan ultrasonikasi. MWCNTs dengan permukaan diubahsuai yang terhasil diuji dengan spektrofotometer FT-IR, XPS, dan FESEM. Tirosinase yang dinyahgerak diuji untuk asai penguraian dan aktiviti enzim terhadap fenol juga dianalisa. Spektra FTIR MWCNTs berfungsi menunjukkan puncak yang ketara pada julat  $1700\text{ cm}^{-1}$  hingga  $1729\text{ cm}^{-1}$  menunjukkan kewujudan ikatan berganda karboksil yang membuktikan kejayaan pengfungsian MWCNTs (FCNTs) melalui pengoksidaan kimia. Puncak karboksilik MWCNTs yang dirawat dengan  $\text{KMnO}_4$  (FCNTK) menunjukkan kekuatan yang lebih tinggi berbanding MWCNTs yang dirawat asid (FCNTA). Keputusan ini disokong oleh anjakan tenaga ikatan O 1s pada 534.9 eV dan bahu C 1s pada 289.00 eV berkait rapat dengan asid karboksilik melalui analisa XPS. Penyahgerakan tirosinase pada FCNTA adalah lebih tinggi berbanding FCNTK dengan aktiviti mangkin yang tinggi untuk penguraian fenol kepada kuinon. Kajian lanjut penyerapan menunjukkan FCNTA dengan tirosinase ternyahgerak (FCNTA-Ty) mempunyai serapan terhadap fenol yang lebih tinggi berbanding FCNTA dan MWCNTs asal. Keputusan menunjukkan FCNTA-Ty, FCNTAs dan MWCNTs mempunyai kapasiti serapan yang agak baik terhadap fenol oleh kedua-dua model Langmuir and Freundlich. Tambahan pula, kinetik serapan untuk semua CNTs ini sesuai dengan model aturan pseudo-kedua dengan pekali korelasi yang baik. Kajian ini membawa kepada kemungkinan aplikasi pembaikpuluhbio fenol dalam sampel industri dengan mencantumkan FCNTA-Ty dengan kitosan.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	<b>DECLARATION</b>	ii
	<b>DEDICATION</b>	iii
	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
	<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
	<b>ABSTRAK</b>	vi
	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	vii
	<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	x
	<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xi
	<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND SYMBOLS</b>	xiii
	<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xiv
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
	1.1 Research Background	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	4
	1.3 Objectives of the Research	5
	1.4 Scope of the Research	5
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	7
	2.1 Carbon Nanotubes	7
	2.2 General Properties and Application of Carbon Nanotubes	8
	2.3 Functionalization of Carbon Nanotubes	12
	2.4 Sorption Study	15
	2.5 Enzyme and Tyrosinase	16
	2.6 Immobilization of Tyrosinase	19

<b>3</b>	<b>EXPERIMENTAL</b>	22
	3.1 Material	22
	3.2 Functionalization and Characterization of Carbon Nanotube	22
	3.2.1 Treatment with Mixture of Acids	24
	3.2.2 Treatment with Potassium Permanganate	24
	3.2.3 Characterization by Fourier-Transform Infra-red Spectrophotometer	25
	3.2.4 Characterization by Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope-Energy Dispersive X-Ray	25
	3.2.5 Characterization by X-Ray Photoelectron Spectrophotometer	25
	3.2.6 Characterization by Back-Titration Method	26
	3.2.7 Dispersion Ability of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes	26
	3.3 Immobilization of Enzyme	26
	3.3.1 Bovine Serum Albumin Standard Curve	27
	3.4 Preparation of Stock Solution	27
	3.4.1 Phosphate Buffer pH 6.5 0.05M	28
	3.4.2 Phenol stock solution 0.1 M	28
	3.4.3 EDTA stock solution, 10mM	28
	3.4.4 Sodium carbonate 0.20% (w/v)	29
	3.5 Study of Enzymatic Activity	29
	3.5.1 Phenol Standard Curve	29
	3.5.2 Phenol Assay	30
	3.6 Sorption and Kinetic Study of Carbon Nanotubes	31
	3.7 Application of Tyrosinase Immobilized onto Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes	32
<b>4</b>	<b>EFFECT OF FUNCTIONALIZATION TECHNIQUES TOWARDS TYROSINASE IMMOBILIZATION ONTO FUNCTIONALIZED MULTI-WALLED CARBON NANOTUBE</b>	33
	4.1 Functionalization of CNTs	33
	4.2 Characterization of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by Fourier Transform-Infrared	34



4.3	Characterization of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy	36
4.4	Characterization of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by Back-titration Method	41
4.5	Characterization of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope	42
4.6	Dispersion of Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes	43
4.7	Immobilization of Tyrosinase and Enzymatic Activity	44
<b>5</b>	<b>SORPTION STUDY OF MULTI-WALLED CARBON NANOTUBES, TYROSINASE IMMOBILIZED ONTO FUNCTIONALIZED CARBON NANOTUBES TOWARDS PHENOL AND APPLICATION</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1	Adsorption Isotherm	48
5.2	The Langmuir Isotherm	50
5.3	The Freundlich Isotherm	52
5.4	Adsorption Kinetics	55
5.5	Application of Tyrosinase Immobilized onto Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes	58
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>68</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>76</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Functionalization Technique Based on CNTs Application	14
2.2	CNTs Modified Materials and Applications	14
2.3	CNTs as Adsorbent	16
2.4	Tyrosinase support materials and applications	21
3.1	Enzyme Assay Component	30
4.1	Summary of XPS spectra	37
4.2	Amount of carboxylic acid and hydroxyl on FCNTs	41
4.3	Stability of FCNTs suspension in aqueous	44
4.4	Enzymatic activity	46
5.1	Phenol removal by adsorbent	50
5.2	Langmuir constants	52
5.3	Langmuir constants	54
5.4	Kinetic parameters	56
5.5	Properties of the chitosan and CTC and chitosan beads	60
5.6	Phenol removal by CTC	62

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Stone-Wales defect	10
3.1	Operational Framework	23
3.2	Setup for formation of CNT-chitosan beads	32
4.1	FT-IR spectrum of pristine MWCNTs	35
4.2	FT-IR spectra of (a)FCNTA-reflux, (b) FCNTA-sonic, (c) FCNTA-stir, (d)FCNTK-stir, (e) FCNTK-reflux, (f) FCNTK-sonic and (g) commercial MnO <sub>2</sub>	35
4.3	XPS spectrum of pristine MWCNTs	38
4.4	XPS spectrum of FCNTA	39
4.5	XPS spectrum of FCNTK	40
4.6	FESEM micrographs of (a) pristine MWCNTs, (b) FCNTA, (c) FCNTK	43
4.7	Amount of Tyrosinase immobilized on CNTs	45
4.8	Amount of enzyme leached out from CNTs	45
5.1	Adsorption isotherm for MWCNT, FCNTA, and FCNTA-Ty towards phenol.	48
5.2	Adsorption isotherm for MWCNT, FCNTA, and FCNTA-Ty towards phenol fitting of Langmuir linear equation model	51
5.3	Adsorption isotherm for MWCNT, FCNTA, and FCNTA-Ty towards phenol fitting of Freundlich linear equation model	53

5.4	Adsorption isotherm for MWCNT, FCNTA, and FCNTA-Ty towards phenol fitting of Freundlich linear equation model	56
5.5	Bar chart of ultrasonication time taken based on percent FCNT-Ty loading	59
5.6	The chitosan beads (a) and CTC beads (b) image.	60
5.7	Adsorption capacity of phenol by FCNT-Ty and CTC beads	61
5.8	Phenol removal by CTC beads	62

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

AH2	-	Chemical reductor
BSA	-	Bovine Serum Albumin
CTC	-	FCNT-Tyrosinase-Chitosan
CNT-Ty	-	Carbon Nanotubes-Tyrosinase
C-C	-	Carbon-Carbon
DOPA	-	Dihydroxyphenylalanine
EDTA	-	Etylendiaminetetraacetic acid
FESEM-EDX	-	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope – Energy Display Xray
FCNTs	-	Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes
FCNTAs	-	Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by Acid
FCNTKs	-	Functionalized Carbon Nanotubes by Potassium Permanganate
FCNT-Ty	-	FCNTs Immobilized with Tyrosinase
FTIR	-	Fourier Transform Infrared
H <sub>2</sub> SO <sub>4</sub>	-	Sulfuric acid
HNO <sub>3</sub>	-	Nitric acid
MWCNTs	-	Multiwalled Carbon Nanotubes
MnO <sub>2</sub>	-	Manganese Dioxide
KMnO <sub>4</sub>	-	Potassium Permanganate
STM	-	Scanning Tunneling Microscopy
SWCNTs	-	Single-walled Carbon Nanotubes
TPD	-	Temperature-programmed Desorption
XPS	-	X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy
UV-Vis	-	Ultraviolet-Visible
°C	-	Degree Celcius

## LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX NO	TITLE	PAGE
1	Catalytic cycle of Tyrosinase	76
2	Lowry Assay	77

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

Nanotechnology is a strategic breakthrough technology that focused on generating, manipulating and fabricating nanomaterials at the scale of a billionth of a meter (Ratner *et al.*, 2010). This field of technology is employed into other areas to revolutionize them for a better utilization whether in fundamental studies or industrial application. Nanotechnology is a bridge to incorporate several diverse areas into one by fabricating new materials with new physical, chemical, or biological properties. One of the ultimate nanomaterials present today is carbon nanotubes (CNTs) which are carbon atoms in form of carbon tubules with hollowed centre with various special properties such as thermal conductivity, electrical conductivity, and also strength (Ebbesen, 1997).

CNTs have become the bridge in connecting material science, biotechnology and nanotechnology where their application varied from disease diagnosis, environmental analysis, to drug delivery (Pagona and Tagmatarchis, 2006). The same goes to both bioremediation and adsorption field, with research devoted to the development of surfaced-based bioremediation that enable selective remediation of biorecognition reaction. A genuine product that can be used as adsorbent and bioremediation will be very desirable. The selective remediation is achievable by using enzymes due to their reaction specificity towards certain substrates and produces few side reactions. Meanwhile, the CNTs are known for their adsorption

ability for heavy metal, aromatic compounds and dye (Lu and Chiu, 2008; Shen,*et al.*, 2009; Zhu *et al.*, 2010).

Bio-adsorbent based on immobilized enzyme on sturdy material are pursued and idea on having CNT as support becomes a starting hypothesis with their steady characteristic and morphology. However, the stable chemical structure of CNTs make them difficult to form complexes with other elements. Hence, CNTs have to be functionalized before it can be used as a support for any enzyme. Functionalization of CNTs can be achieved by attaching groups with chemical functionalities such as carboxyl group onto the carbon walls or at the end of the tubules. This step is important to ‘activate’ the CNTs and overcome their difficulty to dissolve or disperse in solvent. This difficulty has limited their applications in many fields of interest.

The functionalization of CNTs by oxidation process is accomplished either by wet chemical methods, photo-oxidation, oxygen plasma, or gas treatment (Datsyuk and Kalyva, 2008). The wet chemical methods are usually chosen based on economical factor and ease of approach as compared to others. Several techniques usually involve in wet chemical methods such ultrasonication, reflux, stirring with their own advantages and side-effects. In this study, functionalizing of CNTs will be carried out using these techniques and their subsequent effectiveness toward enzyme immobilization will be compared. The advantages of using functionalized carbon nanotubes (FCNTs) as the support for enzyme immobilization include:

- ▶ The high surface area of FCNTs can provide a good immobilization area for enzyme loading
- ▶ The surface hydroxyl and carbonyl groups present on FCNTs can be readily used for enzyme attachment
- ▶ The chemical inertness of FCNTs can provide a secured environment for enzyme especially in severe reaction condition

Immobilization of enzyme or other biological compounds into inorganic support is not a new idea and had been applied in various fields for several reasons. The reasons are to improve the stability of enzyme in adverse reaction condition or



in the presence of organic solvent, to separate the enzyme from its product stream, and also to allow repetitive usage of the enzyme. The main challenge in immobilization of biological compounds is to integrate them with the support matrix at the same time retaining most of their functions. This is because biological compounds especially enzymes, have their own special structure with specific function and to fully use these in fabricating new multifunctional nanomaterials is a great challenge.

Enzyme immobilization on support without damaging both enzyme and support will help in manufacturing adsorbent material (Xu *et al.*, 2005). Technique of immobilization would play a major role in protecting both enzyme and support during the process. Several techniques have been utilized to produce high immobilized enzyme and preserves its activity. The techniques include physical adsorption, covalent attachment, entrapment and encapsulation (de Faria *et al.*, 2007) . Physical adsorption and covalent attachment are two techniques with excellent enzyme immobilization with CNTs (Cui, 2008). Physical adsorption is the least complicated technique with adsorption occurs on the surface of support. The adsorption can be enhanced with hydrogen bonding between surface moieties of the support and the nitrogen or amine in enzyme. The covalent attachment of enzyme and CNTs only occur if the CNTs are functionalized with surface moieties that can promote covalent linkage. In FCNTs cases, usually physical adsorption and covalent attachment can occur simultaneously. However, the desirable physical adsorption can be promoted through immobilization condition. The other techniques are more suitable with polymer or inorganic support with special matrix or for short peptides only.

In this research, tyrosinase is chosen as enzyme of interest because of its wide applications especially in environmental and industrial field. Tyrosinase will be immobilized onto functionalized multi-walled carbon nanotubes to be employed as bio-adsorbent. The bio-adsorbent can be used for bioremediation of phenolic waste and its adsorption property will allow it to adsorb the waste simultaneously. Thus, it may reduce the amount of waste up to twice as much as other adsorbents. In addition, the immobilized tyrosinase with better stability in the form of bio-adsorbent can be used with highly acidic reaction condition.

## 1.2 Problem Statements

Functionalization of CNTs has been reported and it differs based on the future application purposes. For the purpose of enzyme immobilization, the frequently used functionalization is by oxidizing the CNTs through several techniques of wet chemical methods. The techniques usually involve are ultrasonication, reflux, stirring. However, each technique has its own advantages and disadvantages and the best technique of functionalization for tyrosinase immobilization is yet to be determined. Ultrasonication can produce high yield of FCNTs but at shorter length which is undesirable. Reflux and stirring can produce moderate yield of FCNTs and retain most of the CNTs physical properties. Thus, these two techniques and the mix technique of reflux and stirring will be studied in length to find the best oxidation technique of functionalization of MWCNTs for tyrosinase immobilization.

Phenol is a common pollutant found mainly in industrial effluent. The effluent has to be treated before it is discharged to avoid harmful consequences in overall water ecosystem. Phenol treatment could be achieved via bio-remediation and sorption. The remediation and sorption of phenol is accomplished by immobilizing tyrosinase onto carbon nanotubes. However, the characteristic of sorption by carbon nanotubes immobilized with tyrosinase towards phenol as its main analyte is ambivalent. As known by many CNTs also have the ability to adsorb elements and this has increased the need to identify whether decreasing amount of phenol was caused by CNTs or enzyme activity. In addition, the effect on tyrosinase activity after immobilization will be different than free enzyme. Hence, a close observation and investigation are required with stated problems as the parameters.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate techniques of functionalization of MWCNTs for tyrosinase immobilization and effect on its activity.
2. To assess sorption characteristic of immobilized tyrosinase towards phenol.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

This research will encompass functionalization technique of MWCNTs, the sorption properties of CNTs, the immobilization of tyrosinase on the CNTs, and also possible application of tyrosinase immobilized onto FCNTs (CNT-Ty) for phenol removal. The functionalization of MWCNTs is via oxidative purification method or also acknowledged as carboxylation method. This method introduces carboxylic group onto CNTs by either liquid-phase or gas-phase oxidation process. The CNTs will be treated with strong oxidative agents such as nitric acid and sulfuric or mixture of both and also with potassium permanganate. The oxidation reaction will be done through reflux, stirring, and the mix techniques of reflux and stirring. The study will focus on investigating the best technique for tyrosinase immobilization. Characterization of CNTs on different stages will be executed by using Fourier Transform-Infra Red (FT-IR) spectrophotometer, X-ray Photoelectron Spectrophotometer (XPS) and Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope – Energy Dispersive X-ray Analyzer (FESEM-EDX).

The sorption study by nanotubes will be limited only to phenol as tyrosinase's analyte or substrate. The sorption of phenol will be analyzed based on Langmuir and Freundlich isotherm. The adsorbate will be pristine MWCNTs, FCNTs, and CNT-Ty. The immobilization of tyrosinase will be done via physical adsorption onto the CNTs. Effect of parameters such as temperature; pH and

incubation time on the adsorption process will be observed. In addition, the study on catalytic activity is also significant in this research. The enzymatic activity study before and after immobilization of tyrosinase will be analyzed using Ultra-violet/visible spectrophotometer based on amount of phenol degradation.

The possible application of CNT-Ty for phenol removal will be studied by intertwines the CNT-Ty onto chitosan beads. This is important to help in retrieving the CNT-Ty during the phenol removal process due to CNT-Ty small size. The beads will be immersed in known concentration of phenol solution. The phenol sorption will be analyzed to determine the efficiency of CNT-Ty in chitosan beads in removing the phenol.

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