

SELECTION OF SUITABLE CHEMICALS FOR ACID MATRIX
STIMULATION: A MALAYSIA BROWN FIELD SCENARIO

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“In loving memory of my dad”

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ABSTRACT

Matrix acidizing in sandstone reservoirs requires a series of chemicals to dissolve the plugging materials around the near wellbore. The selection of suitable chemicals is important because it is one of the key factors to acidizing success due to the complex mineralogy of sandstone reservoirs and limited studies that have been done to compare between the chemicals selection from the industry guidelines with success rate from historical field execution especially in Malaysia oil fields. In view of the current low oil price and increasing treatment cost, the selection of the chemicals is important to maximize the oil gain. Hence, this project was embarked to develop a database of the historical acid matrix stimulation chemicals used in a Malaysia brown field and recommend the suitable acid matrix stimulation chemicals for future applications. The chemicals selection can be enhanced by using the combination of historical experience, recommendations from industry guidelines, and simulation results to provide assurance in achieving economic oil gain for future matrix stimulation candidates. There were five main steps to achieve the objectives, namely historical analysis of previous acid stimulation jobs, chemicals selection using industry guidelines, nodal analysis on current well performance using Prosper software, acid placement analysis using Stimpro software to quantify skin reduction for each case, and finally the gain quantification using Prosper software. From the project, database has been established to review the chemicals that have been applied in the selected Malaysia brown field. The oil gain formula has been identified as the success rate indicator. The comparison on skin reduction and oil gain between the three chemicals shortlisted from historical analysis and industry guidelines has been conducted using Prosper and Stimpro software which has enabled the selection of the most suitable chemicals. The most suitable chemicals were selected based on the highest average oil gain.

ABSTRAK

Pengasidan matriks terhadap reservoir batu pasir memerlukan rangkaian bahan kimia untuk melarutkan bahan pemalam di sekeliling dasar lubang. Pemilihan bahan kimia yang sesuai adalah penting kerana perkara itu ialah satu daripada faktor penentu kepada kejayaan pengasidan, berikutan mineral rencam yang terdapat pada reservoir batu pasir dan kajian yang terhad terhadap pemilihan bahan kimia daripada garis panduan industri dan kadar kejayaan daripada pengasidan yang dilakukan di medan minyak Malaysia. Memandangkan harga terkini minyak yang rendah dan kos rawatan yang terus meningkat, pemilihan bahan kimia yang sesuai adalah penting untuk memaksimumkan gandaan minyak. Oleh itu, projek ini bertujuan untuk membangunkan satu pangkalan data tentang bahan kimia yang digunakan dalam pengasidan matriks terhadap medan matang di Malaysia dan mencadangkan bahan kimia yang sesuai untuk pengaplikasian pada masa hadapan. Pemilihan bahan kimia boleh dimantapkan menerusi gabungan pengalaman lalu, cadangan daripada garis panduan industri, dan hasil penyelakuan. Sepintas lalu, terdapat lima langkah utama untuk mencapai objektif, iaitu penganalisan kerja perangsangan asid yang lalu, pemilihan bahan kimia menggunakan garis panduan industri, penganalisan nodal terhadap prestasi terkini telaga menggunakan perisian Prosper, penganalisan terhadap pelarasan asid menggunakan perisian Stimpro bagi mengira pengurangan kulit bagi setiap kes, dan pengiraan tentang gandaan minyak menggunakan perisian Prosper. Pangkalan data yang terhasil digunakan untuk mengkaji semula prestasi bahan kimia yang diaplikasikan terhadap medan minyak matang terpilih di Malaysia. Rumusan gandaan minyak telah dikenal pasti sebagai penunjuk kadar kejayaan. Perbandingan tentang pengurangan kulit dan gandaan minyak bagi ketiga-tiga bahan kimia yang disenarai pendek, hasil daripada analisis dan garis panduan industri, telah dilaksana menggunakan perisian Prosper dan perisian Stimpro bagi memilih bahan kimia yang paling sesuai. Bahan kimia yang paling sesuai dipilih berdasarkan purata gandaan tertinggi minyak.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABF	-	Ammonium bifluoride
AF	-	Ammonium fluoride
AOF	-	Absolute open flow
CTU	-	Coiled tubing unit
EDTA	-	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
EMG	-	Equivalent mud gradient
ESP	-	Electrical submersible pump
HCl	-	Hydrochloric acid
HEDTA	-	Hydroxyethylenediaminetriacetic acid
HEIDA	-	Hydroxyethyliminodiacetic acid
HF	-	Hydrofluoric acid
IPR	-	Inflow performance relationship
MASTP	-	Maximum allowable surface treating pressure
PI	-	Productivity Index
PV	-	Pore volume
SEM	-	Scanning Electron Microscope
VLP	-	Vertical lift performance
XRD	-	X-Ray Diffraction

APPENDICES

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Well stimulation is a technique which can be used to improve the flow of oil or gas from a reservoir by dissolving the plugging materials or creating new pathways around the near wellbore (Economides and Nolte, 2000; Crowe *et al.*, 1992; Schechter, 1992). The most commonly applied stimulation techniques are acidizing and hydraulic fracturing (Nitters *et al.*, 2016). In Malaysia, acidizing is the most common well stimulation method because majority of the reservoirs have moderate to very good permeability and the need to conduct acid stimulation arises when the initial rates of the wells is below expectation or when the productivity of the reservoir drops significantly.

Historically, the first acid treatment on oil well was conducted in 1895 with the use of concentrated hydrochloric acid (HCl) to stimulate producing carbonate formations in Lima, Ohio (Portier *et al.*, 2007). The first sandstone acidizing treatment using mixture of HCl and hydrofluoric acid (HF) was accomplished by Halliburton in 1933 near Archer City, Texas (Kalfayan, 2008). Unfortunately, the first attempt was very discouraging and had caused sand production into the wellbore. Dowell introduced 'mud acid' in 1939 which contained a mixture of 12% HCl – 3% HF. The chemical had been applied in the Gulf Coast area and had successfully removed damage around the wellbore (Portier *et al.*, 2007). This acid mixture is still relevant and currently known as 'regular strength' mud acid.

Numerous matrix acidizing treatments of sandstone formations have been conducted since the mid-1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, developments of 'novel' sandstone acidizing systems had aimed to provide benefits such as retarding HF spending, stabilizing fine particles, and preventing excessive acid reaction. In the 1980s and 1990s, developments in sandstone acidizing had focused on treatment execution. Fluid chemistry has stepped to the forefront in the recent years whereby old systems are further improved to enhance chemical performance (Portier *et al.*, 2007). The recent advancements are aimed to expand acid stimulation applications for high temperature (Al-Harthy *et al.*, 2009; Aboud *et al.*, 2007) and unconventional reservoirs (Houseworth *et al.*, 2016).

The number of well stimulation activities (such as acid matrix stimulation and fracturing jobs) in the recent years has doubled compared to the number of treatments performed throughout the 1990s. In 1994, 79% of the stimulation jobs were acid treatments which used only 20% of the money spent for well stimulation (Shafiq and Mahmud, 2017). This is because they are low cost and low volume operation compared to hydraulic fracturing treatments. Operators around the world have reported about 40% to 50% of their wells have significant formation damage, but only 1% to 2% of their wells are treated every year due to the rising cost of acid stimulation jobs. Hence, only promising wells are selected to be stimulated to give additional value.

The failure rate of acid jobs was 32% (Shafiq and Mahmud, 2017). Some other companies reported failure in the range from 25 to 30% of the treatments (Nitters *et al.*, 2000). The reported causes of failure are due to the poor candidate selection, lack of mineralogical information, improper chemical selection (main acid, additives, strength and volume), improper fluid placement (lack of diversion strategies) and shutting-in acid treatment for too long which caused secondary and tertiary reactions in the reservoirs (Kalfayan, 2008; Rae and Di Lullo, 2002).

There are six steps towards successful sandstone acidizing. The steps can properly select candidates and dictate whether acid removable skin is present, determine appropriate fluids treatment (acid types, concentration, and treatment volumes), establish a proper additives program, determine treatment placement

method, ensure proper treatment execution (and quality control), and evaluate the treatment (Kalfayan, 2008).

The reduction of permeability around the wellbore is usually termed as formation damage which is caused by fines migration, completion, and stimulation fluids (Al-Harbi *et al.*, 2013). The formation damage can be expressed via the introduction of skin factor where positive skin shows the occurrence of damage to the reservoir. Hence, the most vital aim of sandstone matrix acidizing is to dissolve or remove the siliceous particles (i.e., clay, feldspar, and quartz) that reduce permeability around the wellbore and consequently restrict the flow of hydrocarbons into the wellbore. After the discovery of HF acid in 1935, it was widely applied on sandstone formation to remove the near wellbore damage due to drilling and production (Shafiq and Mahmud, 2017). This can be achieved via the injection of hydrofluoric acid (HF) or its precursors (Kalfayan, 2008). There are several acids which are based on HF acid that has been widely used to stimulate sandstone formations. In fact, mud acid with different HCl-HF ratios has been used in sandstone acidizing applications with various success rates (Al-Harbi *et al.*, 2013).

The sandstone formation contains various amounts of quartz, clays (such as kaolinite or illite), alkaline aluminosilicates (such as feldspars and zeolites), carbonates (calcite, dolomite, and ankerite), and iron-based minerals (hematite and pyrite) (Hu *et al.*, 2017; Nasr-El-Din *et al.*, 2007). Hence, sandstone matrix acidizing usually requires the use of a carefully designed sequence of stages to manage the complex reactions between hydrofluoric acid (HF) and siliceous minerals in the formation. There are three main steps involved in conventional sandstone matrix treatment: preflush, main acid stage, and postflush. In the main acid stage, mixtures of mud acid have been widely employed in the field (Smith and Hendrickson, 1965; Williams *et al.*, 1979; Economides and Nolte, 2000). In mud acid, the role of hydrofluoric acid (HF) is to dissolve aluminosilicates and silica while hydrochloric acid (HCl) helps to keep reaction products soluble in spent acid. Spent acid is referred to the acid that has been reacted to the siliceous particles or acid removable particles upon contact with the formation (Economides and Nolte, 2000).

The chemicals are pumped in sequence, each with its own purposes to manage the primary, secondary, and tertiary reactions in the sandstone formations. The precipitation from reactions which produce potassium silicates, sodium silicates, calcium fluoride, and hydrated silica precipitates may lead to formation damage and reduction in permeability and effective porosity (Smith and Hendrickson, 1965).

Over the years of industry experience, various chemical formulations have been developed to suit the wide range of reservoir conditions and field applications. Numerous guidelines have been developed from field experience and laboratory data (Ali *et al.*, 2016; Economides and Nolte 2000). The guidelines were a traditional approach to avoid problems with the precipitation of spent acid when no previous experience exists in acidizing a particular formation. Although they provided a useful reference, acid formulations should be optimized on the basis of a detailed formation evaluation (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2013; Portier *et al.*, 2007). As such, the recommended acid formulations are not final as each sandstone formation has its own complex mineralogy, temperature, and permeability which require detailed analysis to determine the best chemical to be used for acid stimulation.

When actual field experience is present, the historical stimulation recipes need to be evaluated with proper success indicators. Furthermore, simulators (such as Prosper and Stimpro) can be used to further evaluate the suitable chemical concentration, establish pumping schedule, and finally evaluate the expected improvement in well performance for future candidate wells. In actual field conditions, it is also important to establish the chemical formulation for acid stimulation treatments to ensure subsequent treatments are executed using the most suitable recipe towards improving the success rate.

This research work focuses on the selection of acid stimulation chemicals using data from a Malaysia oil field. It is an offshore brown field with 150 ft water depth. The field was discovered in 1960s. Subsequent exploration wells had justified the field development which led to the first oil in 1970s. The sandstone reservoirs in the field are described as multi-stacked and thin layered, where the major hydrocarbon accumulations are located from 2000 to 5000 ft. The reservoirs are proven to have moderate to strong water drive characteristics. All wells within the major reservoirs

were completed with internal gravel pack as the main sand control mechanism. The wells are producing under gas lift.

Majority of the wells in the field suffer formation damage due to fines migration. The problem is seen to be prominent as water breaks through and the well production shows water cut increases. In some of the wells, gross production drops and water cut increases which indicate fines migration continues to affect the well productivity. Based on inflow and outflow performance analysis, the gas lift performance was found to be at optimum condition and wells are producing at maximum choke size. This concludes that the drop in the wells production is due to the skin build-up caused by formation damage.

The first acid stimulation was conducted as early as 1980s. The wells were treated with various chemical formulations throughout the early life until the recent stimulation campaigns. Some wells were stimulated during initial completion stage and acid stimulation treatments were repeated when production decline was observed. Since the brown field has experienced acid stimulation using various chemical applications, this research work is to verify the acid stimulation chemicals selection using various available data in the field; such as the analysis of actual results from field application, analysis of mineralogy data, and simulation using acid placement software.

1.2 Problem Statement

Improper chemical selection is one of the factors that reduces the success rate of sandstone acidizing treatments (Kalfayan, 2008). This is due to the lack of understanding in formation mineralogy (Hanafy and Nasr-El-Din, 2018; Economides and Nolte, 2000). Furthermore, the chemical selection for matrix acidizing in sandstone formation is challenging due to the complex mineralogy of the reservoirs. Each different type of minerals has different elements, structures, surface area and sensitivity to acids (Abdelmoneim, 2014; Portier *et al.*, 2007). In fact, the mineral components of the reservoirs throughout a field can vary greatly from one layer to

another layer due to the differences in lithology. In addition, the permeability of sandstone reservoirs derived from logs or cores throughout a field usually shows varied trends due to reservoir heterogeneity (Chavez, 2007).

Although acid selection guidelines have been established based on sandstone acidizing chemistry and industry practices, they were derived from limited research studies (Shafiq and Mahmud, 2017). Furthermore, limited studies have been done to compare the chemical selection from the industry guidelines with the success rate from historical field execution especially in Malaysia oil fields (Chavez, 2007).

Misapplied stimulation treatments are ineffective and costly, often creating more problems than they solve. In view of the current low oil price and increasing treatment cost, the selection of the best treatment chemical is important to maximize the treatment gain (Ugbenyen, 2010; Kartoatmodjo *et al.*, 2007).

1.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses on the selection of acid treatment chemicals in a matrix stimulation design process encompass the following elements:

- (1) Acidizing can improve oil and gas production via removal of skin near wellbore (Rabbani *et al.*, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2016; Gomaa *et al.*, 2013, da Motta *et al.*, 1992).
- (2) Engineers should know the composition of the formation to achieve a successful acidizing treatment. The most effective preflush, HCl-HF acid mixture, and postflush treatment chemicals are selected based on the formation mineral component, permeability and temperature (Hanafy and Nasr-El-Din, 2018; Hassan, *et al.*, 2018; Reinoso *et al.*, 2016; Portier *et al.*, 2007).
- (3) Although industry guidelines provide general recommendations, detailed analysis of formation evaluation and historical field experience are required to select the

final acid formulation (Hibbeler and Garcia, 2003; Economides and Nolte, 2000; Davies *et al.*, 1992; Nitters and Hagelaars, 1990).

- (4) Acid stimulation fluid selection depends on the type of damage, lithology, mineralogy, and well types. It is also based on field and laboratory experience and can be determined from a relevant numerical simulator (Hanafy and Nasr-El-Din, 2018; Perthuis *et al.*, 1989).
- (5) Mixtures of HCl and HF are used in sandstone matrix acidizing because they can dissolve feldspars and clays at temperatures below 200°F (Al Salmi *et al.*, 2018; Hong and Mahmud, 2017; Nitters *et al.*, 2016; Kalfayan, 2008).
- (6) The highest productivity improvement can be economically achieved by utilizing the suitable hydrofluoric acid (HF) concentration (Abdelmoneim and Nasr-El-Din, 2015; Shafiq and Shuker, 2013; Samsuri *et al.*, 1998).

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the project are listed as follow:

- (1) To develop a database of the historical acid matrix stimulation chemicals used in a Malaysia brown field.
- (2) To recommend the suitable acid matrix stimulation chemicals for future applications.

1.5 Research Scope

The scope of the project are listed as follow:

- (1) Identifying all historical acid matrix stimulation chemicals that have been applied in a selected Malaysia brown field (during preflush, main flush, and postflush stages), its chemical concentration, additives, diversion technique, deployment method and pumping strategy.
- (2) Establishing the success rate of the chemicals by using oil gain as success indicator.
- (3) Evaluating the acid matrix stimulation chemicals recommended by the industry guidelines using the relevant data from the field and comparing the guideline recommendations with the historical field performance.
- (4) Selecting the acid matrix stimulation chemicals (preflush, main flush, and postflush stages), its chemical concentration, additives and fluid diversion technique by using relevant simulators (such as Prosper and Stimpro).

1.6 Significance of Study

The project was aimed to select the best acid matrix stimulation chemicals by comparing the actual results from historical field application, analysis of field-wide mineralogy data and simulation using acid placement software. The chemicals selected from this project shall be used as reference for nearby fields or other fields with similar reservoir characteristics.

The research methods and steps to select the acid stimulation chemicals can be adapted to other fields that have experienced stimulation jobs before. For fields with limited experience, the methods implemented to model acid stimulation treatment using simulators can also be used to select the best chemicals formulation and come-up with the treatment pumping schedule.

There were a number of published papers on actual acidizing experience in other regions but none can be found for Malaysia field. In fact, there were no field-wide study on the chemicals being used throughout the years of treating the wells. Hence, this project was aimed highlight how the different chemicals contributed to the success rates of the acidizing treatments. The uniqueness of this project is that it combined the actual experience in the selected Malaysia brown field, industry guidelines and simulation analysis to provide the best chemical formulation that can be applied in the future.

Furthermore, implementing the best chemicals that is suited for the field can improve the effectiveness of matrix acidizing which also improve well productivity. In the economic perspective, evaluating the best treatment formulation shall provide the assurance on the success of future acid stimulation activities while maximizing the gain from the treatment.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the importance of acid stimulation as one of the production enhancement activities that was carried out to improve well productivity. Sandstone reservoirs usually consist of various complex minerals that make up the formation. When the mineralogical compositions were not well understood, it was often led to the improper chemical selection which affected the success rate of matrix treatments. Although there are various guidelines available in the industry, the recommended acid formulations were not absolute because each sandstone formation around the world has its own complex mineralogy, temperature, and permeability which require detailed analysis to determine the best treatment chemicals to be used. There were limited studies done to compare the chemical selection from the industry guidelines and success rate from actual field execution especially in Malaysia oil fields. For brown fields with historical stimulation activities, it is beneficial to conduct detailed analysis to establish the success rates of the chemicals that have been applied. Subsequently, the most suitable chemical recipe shall be selected via the use of simulators to improve the treatment design. Two objectives and four scopes were

outlined to realize the research work by studying the best acid stimulation chemical formulation for a selected Malaysia brown field scenario. By having the analysis, the understanding of the chemical performance in the field can be improved. The research methods and analysis also can be adapted by other brown fields. The uniqueness of this project is that it combined the actual experience in the selected Malaysia brown field, industry guidelines and simulation analysis to provide the best chemical formulation that can be applied in the future. Furthermore, evaluating the best treatment formulation shall provide the assurance on the success of future acid stimulation activities while maximizing the gain from the treatment.

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