

BIOLOGICAL HYDROGEN PRODUCTION USING AN ANAEROBIC FLUIDISED BED BIOREACTOR

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

Johannesburg 2005

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

LIAM JED THOMPSON

_____ day of _____, 2005.

PREFACE

Some aspects of the work conducted for this dissertation have or will be presented as papers or posters elsewhere.

CHAPTER 1A

Thompson, L. J., Gray, V. M., Lindsay, D., von Holy, A. (submitted). Anaerobic Fluidised Bed Reactors – A Review in the South African Context. South African Journal of Science.

CHAPTER 2B

Thompson, L. J., Gray, V. M., Lindsay, D., von Holy, A. (2004). Scanning Electron Microscopy Study of Biofilm Formation Using Different C:N:P Ratios. Microscopy Society of Southern Africa

ABSTRACT

The production of H₂ was monitored using an automated, semi-continuously fed anaerobic fluidised bed bioreactor containing 2 facultatively anaerobic bacteria, *Enterobacter cloacae* (*E. cloacae* Ecl) and *Citrobacter freundii* (*C. freundii* Cf1). Shake flask tests using Endo formulation with modified C:N:P ratios, showed that a 334:28:5.6 ratio gave the highest attached counts of *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 in both single and binary species biofilms grown on granular activated carbon. Once the reactor had achieved steady state after 30 days using the modified C:N:P ratio, pH, redox potential, temperature, volatile fatty acids and the H₂ production rate were monitored. The H₂ production rate of 95 mmol H₂ / (l x h) compared favourably with previous studies. Bacterial biofilms counts for both *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 remained high around 9.0 log cfu/g granular activated carbon, although biomass overgrowth could not be controlled in the reactor. The efficiency of converting sucrose into H₂ was calculated at 20.5%. Therefore use of this technology to power a 5.0kW proton exchange fuel cell for a single rural household is currently not feasible due to the high organic load required. Pooling of wastewater generation capacity, improvement of bacterial strain selection and feed formulation, pH control, gas removal and purification are factors that need to be considered for future improvement of conversion efficiencies. Use of this technology would be most suited for industrial processes generating large volumes of wastewater high in carbohydrates. Alternatively, municipal wastewater treatment facilities could be converted into electricity generating facilities through the combination of this technology and proton exchange membrane fuel cells.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFBR	–	Anaerobic Fluidised Bed Reactor
CSTR	–	Continuously Stirred Tank Fermentor
HRT	–	Hydraulic Retention Time
UASB	–	Upflow Anaerobic Sludge Blanket Reactor
CASBER	–	Carrier Assisted Sludge Bed Reactor
RBC	–	Rotating Biological Contactor
AEBR	–	Anaerobic Expanded Bed Reactor
GAC	–	Granular Activated Carbon
EPS	–	Exopolysaccharides
COD	–	Chemical Oxygen Demand
SRT	–	Solids Retention Time
L_{bf} / δ	–	Biofilm Thickness
r_{bp}	–	Biofilm Coated Particle Radius
r_c	–	Radius of the Biofilm Solid Support Particle
B_p	–	Dry Mass in the Biofilm Covered Particle
ρ_b	–	Biofilm Dry Mass Per Unit Wet Biofilm Particle Volume
B_c	–	Biofilm Mass Density
N_s	–	Quantity of Supporting Material
V	–	Bioreactor Volume
F_s	–	Effective Particle Weight
V_p	–	Particle Volume
ρ_s	–	Particle Density
ρ_L	–	Liquid Density
g	–	Gravitational Acceleration
F_D	–	Drag Force
C_D	–	Drag Coefficient
A_p	–	Projected Area
U_s	–	Superficial Fluid Velocity
U_t	–	Terminal Velocity
ϵ_{BR}	–	Bed Porosity
n	–	Bioreactor Expansion Index
B_s	–	Biofilm Shearing
ϵ	–	Specific Power Input
σ_{bf}	–	Mechanical Strength of Biofilm
τ_{bf}	–	Shear Stress on Biofilm

F	–	Flow Rate
L_{BR}	–	Bioreactor Height
U_s	–	Fluidisation Velocity
A_{BR}	–	Cross Sectional Area of Bioreactor
P_{rf}	–	Reactor Fluid Density
D_{bf}	–	Mass Transfer Coefficient
A_{bf}	–	Surface area of particle
K_{bf}	–	First Order Reaction Rate Coefficient
K_{bf}^L	–	Overall First Order Reaction Rate Coefficient
S_c	–	Bulk Phase Concentration of Substrate
S_{bf}	–	Substrate Concentration at Biofilm-Liquid Interface
U_{mf}	–	Carrier Fluidisation Velocity
S_i	–	Feed Concentration
Q_i	–	Feed Flowrate
L	–	Diffusion Layer
d_p	–	Carrier Particle Diameter

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the following people, without whom this study would never have been performed.

To my supervisor, Dr V. M. Gray, for his advice, faith and support. I'm particularly thankful he gave me the freedom to tackle the project as I saw fit. The philosophical discussions about religion, investing and the grand scheme of things were always thought provoking. I would also like to thank him for the reactor modeling equations presented in Chapter 1a, and the rural household electricity usage figures presented in Chapter 3.

To my co-supervisor, Prof. A. von Holy, for his humour and colourful descriptions, support, guidance and ability to remove bureaucratic red tape with a bash of his diary. For making sure that publications get published.

To Dr D. Lindsay, for her suggestions and watchful eye which kept me on the straight and narrow. For reading numerous documents, chapters and drafts, numerous times and giving constructive criticism and suggestions. I would also like to thank her for performing Confocal Scanning Laser Microscopy for me.

To Dave Amm and Basil Chassoulas for their technical expertise and advice which extended far beyond what was needed. I am sure I still have some of your tools.

To Prof. D. Glasser, Prof. D. Hildebrandt and Bukasa Kalala, for showing faith in our engineering and for helping to determine the efficiency of the system.

To my family, for their understanding of the 7 day working week and trying to understand what this project was about.

To the Monkee, for understanding the 7 day working week, helping me clean up pipe ruptures, being so interested in the project, for making sure I didn't lose my sense of humour. You are a very special person.

To Eskom TSI for project funding and showing the foresight to pursue such an important topic.

To Centre of Materials Processing and Synthesis, for helping us with funding applications. To THRIP, for the extra project funding that allowed the project and project team to expand.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) for financial support.