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BIOLOGICAL HYDROGEN PRODUCTION USING AN ANAEROBIC FLUIDISED BED BIOREACTOR

Liam Jed Thompson

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

DECALARATION

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE. i

ABSTRACT. ii

LIST OF TABLES. iii

LIST OF FIGURES. v

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS. ix

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. xi

CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW. 1

1A - ANAEROBIC FLUIDISED BED REACTORS – A REVIEW IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT. 2

1B - THE HYDROGEN ECONOMY AND FERMENTATIVE HYDROGEN PRODUCTION. 29

CHAPTER 2 ISOLATION, CHARACTERISATION AND USE OF 2 BACTERIAL ISOLATES FOR INTENDED USE IN A FLUIDISED BED REACTOR. ... 44

2A - ISOLATION AND CHARACTERISATION OF BACTERIAL ISOLATES FOR INTENDED USE IN A FLUIDISED BED REACTOR. 45

2B - CARBON : NITROGEN : PHOSPHOROUS RATIOS INFLUENCE BIOFILM FORMATION BY *ENTEROBACTER CLOACAE* AND *CITROBACTER FREUNDII*. 59

2C - PILOT STUDY OF AN ANEROBIC FLUIDISED BED BIOREACTOR: INSTRUMENTATION, CALIBRATION AND MEASUREMENT PARAMETERS. 75

CHAPTER 3 BIOHYDROGEN PRODUCTION USING AN ANAEROBIC FLUIDISED BED BIOREACTOR. 96

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARISING DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION. 132

APPENDIX 1 141

APPENDIX 2 142

APPENDIX 3 144

REFERENCES 152

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 H_2 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 H_2 production rate were monitored. The H_2 production rate of 95 mmol H_2 / (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 H_2 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.

LIST OF TABLES

PAGE

Table 1a.1: Comparison of anaerobic and aerobic systems. 22

Table 1a.2: A comparison of the reactor loading rates in the mesophilic temperature range for several types of wastewater treatment reactors (kg.COD.m-3.d-1). 22

Table 1a.3: A comparison of the specific surface area and the biomass holdup of different reactor configurations. 23

Table 1a.4: Examples of startup times for various AFBR setups. 23

Table 1a.5: Advantages of a 2-stage AFBR configuration over a 1 stage configuration AFBR for treatment of organic waste. 23

Table 1a6: Data showing the different flow rates used to achieve fluidisation in different reactor setups of AFBRs. 24

Table 1a.7: Reaction and standard changes in free energy for methanogenesis. 25

Table 1b.1: Figures of worldwide fossil consumption and environmental damage cost due to fossil fuel usage for 1998. Costing is in American Dollars due to its global applicability. 41

Table 1b.2: Comparison of the different energy densities of various fossil fuels compared to H_2 on both a mass (kg) and volumetric (m) basis. 42

Table 1b.3: Recent studies conducted on fermentative production if H_2, the different reactor types employed, the optimisation attempt, feed substrate used and maximum H_2 yield. 43

Table 2a.1: The following growth parameters were calculated using direct data, or log cfu/ml for both *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 isolates. 55

Table 2b.1: Concentration of media used in the higher concentration Endo formulations. The higher concentration C:N:P ratios contained 17.65g/l sucrose. 71

Table 2b.2: Concentration of media used on the lower concentration Endo formulations. The lower concentration of sucrose was 8.84g/L. Ratios were worked out from this concentration. 71

Table 3.1: Variables used for the calculation of the process efficiency of converting sucrose into H_2 gas at the 2.4 hour HRT. 119

Table 3.2: The H_2 synthesis rate from the present study compared to synthesis rates from other hydrogen production studies. All rates have been converted to common units and corrected to STP (30^oC and 101.3kPa). Rate was calculated per area of uncolonised GAC bed which was $1.154dm^3$. 120

Table 3.3 Different sizes of Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cells (PEMFC) and H_2 flow

rate required to run them. 120

Table 3.4: Approximate sizes of biological reactor required to run a 1.0, 1.5, 2.5 and 5.0 kW PEMFC fuel cell. 121

Table 3.5: The average rural South African household has the following electricity consumption pattern. 122

LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE

Figure 1a.1: A standard design for a fluidised bed bioreactor system showing the process of actual fluidisation through the distributor section showing the variables such as flow rate (U_{mf}) or minimum fluidisation velocity, feed addition concentration (S_i) and flowrate (Q_i), recycle flow (Q_r) as well as properties of the carrier particle such as biofilm thickness (δ), carrier particle diameter (d_p) and the diffusion layer (L) which would affect reactor performance. 26

Figure 1a.2: This diagram shows the process of anaerobic degradation from the depolymerisation of polymers down into the subcomponents by certain groups of bacteria in different phases and the by-products that are produced as a result. An example of the breakdown of whey is given on the right. 27

Figure 1a.3: Diagram showing the effect of shear stress on biofilm thickness and density. 28

Figure 1b.1: The simple schematic representation of the breakdown pathway of glucose and the points at which H_2 is generated. 43

Figure 2a.1: pH growth range profile of the bacterial isolates (A) *C. freundii* Cf1 and (B) *E. cloacae* Ecl grown overnight at 37^{o}C in nutrient broth at pH values ranging from 4.0 to 10.0. 56

Figure 2a.2: Growth curve representing the increase in viability count (log cfu/ml) for bacterial isolates *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 grown in nutrient broth over a period of 7 hours. Standards deviations not shown as it averaged at 0.14 log cfu/ml for *E. cloacae* Ecl and 0.11 log cfu/ml for *C. freundii* Cf1. 57

Figure 2a.3: Gram stain images of both *E. cloacae* Ecl (left) and *C. freundii* Cf1 (right) showing gram negative rods of size 2-3µm in length. (Magnification 1000x oil immersion). 58

Figure 2b.1: Graph representing the attachment (log cfu/g) of *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 in single species and *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 in binary biofilms to 1g granular activated carbon in higher concentration Endo formulation (sucrose at 17.65g/L). 72

Figure 2b.2: Graph representing the attachment (log cfu/g) of *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 in single species *E. cloacae* Ecl and *C. freundii* Cf1 binary biofilms to 1g granular activated carbon in lower Endo formulation concentration (sucrose at 8.84g/L). 72

Figure 2b.3: Scanning electron micrographs of GAC grown in different C:N:P ratio Endo formulations (A-F). (A-B) shows biofilm grown in a 334:84:16.8 ratio, (C-D) shows biofilm grown in the unmodified Endo formulation (334:42:1), (E-F) showing biofilm grown in the 334:28:5.6 ratio. (A-B) shows little biofilm

development, with uncharacteristic cell morphologies (B). (C-D) shows an increase in biofilm coverage, however cells are still present in small groups and show no large surface coverage. (E-F) shows large biofilm growth over the activated carbon surface. Cells are present not only in the protected crevices, but also on the more exposed flat surfaces. 73

Figure 2b.4: Scanning electron micrographs of GAC grown in different C:N:P ratio Endo formulations (A-F). (A-B) shows biofilm grown in a 334:84:3 ratio, (C-D) shows biofilm grown in the unmodified Endo formulation (334:42:1), (E-F) showing biofilm grown in the 334:28:1 ratio. (A-B) shows little biofilm development, with the presence of elongated cells. (C-D) shows an increase in biofilm coverage, however cells are still present in small groups and are largely scattered. (E-F) shows large biofilm growth over the activated carbon surface. The presence of biofilm microcolonies is noted in E and F. 74

Figure 2c.1: Schematic showing the setup of the reactor system and all the components. 1 – reactor, 2 – electrode box, 3 – recycle reservoir, 4 – data logger and controller, 5 – feed reservoir, 6 – HCl reservoir, 7 – NaOH reservoir, 8 – dosing pumps, 9 – feed pump, 10 – recycle pump, 11 – bypass service line, 12 – backwash line, 13 – solid-liquid separator, 14 – waterjacket, 15 – circulating waterbath, 16 – magnetic stirrer, 17 – overflow outlet, 18 – strainer filter. 92

Figure 2c.2: Technical drawing of the reactor control and monitoring unit. (1) and (2) are for the environmental and reactor temperature respectively. The pH, ORP and conductivity transmitters each pass signal through a 120Ω resistor to decrease voltage going into the logger (3) was the attachment for the conductivity sensor, (4) for the ORP sensor and (5) for the pH sensor. (6) was the point connecting the relays to the digital output function of the logger, which are in turn connected to the peristaltic feed and pH dosing pumps through (8). (7) represent the ground point through which all the electrodes are placed. The logger was connected to the computer via the RS232 port on the logger. 93

Figure 2c.3: Combined graph showing the relationship of both environmental () and reactor temperature () on the change of conductivity ($\mu S.cm^{-2}$) () of the wastewater within the reactor. Also noted is the influence of the environmental temperature on the internal temperature of the reactor as well as the effect of the reactor temperature on the conductivity of the wastewater. 94

Figure 2c.4: Combined graph showing the similar trends of pH () and ORP () over the reactor monitoring period of 27 days. 95

Figure 3.1: Schematic description of the fluidised bed for continuous hydrogen production. .. 123

Figure 3.2: Variations in bioreactor of (a) oxidation reduction potential (ORP) (b) pH, (c)

biogas hydrogen content (%) , (d) hydrogen production rate (mmol H_2 / l culture x h) and (e) change in VFA content: propionic acid , butyric acid , acetic acid. The detection limit was 17ppm (f) HRT, during gas analysis over a period of 17 days. 124

Figure 3.3: Representation of the number of cells (log cfu/g GAC) attached to the GAC through the period of bioreactor biogas measurements. *E. cloacae* Ecl, *C. freundii* Cf1, and the total count showed similar trends. The period of gas analysis is indicated. The point at which the HRT was changed from 4.6 to 2.4 hours is indicated. 125

Figure 3.4: Numbers of planktonic cells present within the reactor system during the period of biogas measurement. *E. cloacae* Ecl, *C. freundii* Cf1, and the total count should similar trends. The period of gas analysis is indicated by. The point at which the HRT was changed from 4.6 to 2.4 hours is indicated by. 126

Figure 3.5: Phase contrast microscope image showing GAC particles covered in biofilm (magnification = 160x). 127

Figure 3.6: Biofilm development on GAC particles in the AFBR. 127

Figure 3.7: Scanning electron micrographs of suggested fungal contamination of reactor (A) observed after 10 days. (B) shows the presence of cocci shaped bacteria present in the biofilm. 128

Figure 3.8: Series of scanning electron micrographs showing the development of biofilm on granular activated carbon from the fluidised bed bioreactor after 1 day, (A1-A3), 11 days, (B1-B3), and 25 days (C1-C3). 129

Figure 3.9: D1-D3 on Day 39 shows increasingly mature biofilm structure with Day 51 (E1-E3) showing segments of GAC exposed due to biofilm sloughing. 130

Figure 3.10: Confocal scanning laser microscope images of GAC particles taken at the 4.6 hour HRT (A1-A3) and the 2.4 hour HRT (B1-B3). Live cells are indicated with green whereas dead cells are shown in red. Injured cells are orange/yellow. 131

Figure c1: Technical schematic of entire fluidised bed reactor. Reactor was constructed from 5mm perspex unless otherwise stated. 142

Figure c2: Dimensions of the conical diffuser portion of the fluidised bed reactor. The bottom section of the diffuser was machined out of a solid perspex rod. Double O-rings were included to prevent any escape of liquid from within the reactor. 143

Figure c3: Technical schematic of the gas-solid separator portion of the fluidised bed. The glass cone is inserted and glued through the lid of the reactor. The glass cone is positioned so that it is able to catch all gas coming out of the central core of the reactor from the GAC bed. 144

Figure c4: Technical schematic of portion A of the gas collector in which the acidified water from Standard Methods is placed. The internal diameter of the vessel is 77mm

making every 2.18cm equal to 100mL based on the calculation of ($100cm^3$)/π$(3.8)^2$). 145

Figure c5: Technical schematic of portion B of the gas collector in which the acidified would flow into from portion A. 146

Figure c6: Technical schematic of portion C of the gas collector in which portion B would be placed while suspended on water. This portion is placed inside a bucket to collect the water that flows out of the top of the vessel. 147

Figure c7: Dimensions of the electrode vessel used to house the monitoring electrodes. 148

Figure c8: Top view of the electrode vessel used to house the electrodes. 148

Figure c9: Lid of the electrode vessel into which the electrodes were fitted during the monitoring process. 149

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
Sc	–	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

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