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Effect of SO\textsubscript{2} and steam on CO\textsubscript{2} capture performance of biomass-templated calcium aluminate pellets

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Four types of synthetic sorbents were developed for high-temperature post-combustion calcium looping CO\textsubscript{2} capture using Longcal limestone. Pellets were prepared with: lime and cement (LC); lime and flour (LF); lime, cement and flour (LCF); and lime, cement and flour, doped with seawater (LCFSW). Flour was used as a templating material. All samples underwent 20 cycles in a TGA under two different calcination conditions. Moreover, the prepared sorbents were tested for 10 carbonation/calcination cycles in a 68-mm-internal-diameter bubbling fluidized bed (BFB) under three environments: with no sulphur and no steam; in the presence of sulfur; and with steam. When compared to limestone, all the synthetic sorbents exhibited enhanced CO\textsubscript{2} capture performance in both a TGA and BFB, with the exception of the sample doped with seawater. In the BFB tests, the addition of cement binder during the pelletisation process resulted in the increase of CO\textsubscript{2} capture capacity from 0.08 gCO\textsubscript{2}/g\textsubscript{sorbent} (LC) to 0.15 gCO\textsubscript{2}/g\textsubscript{sorbent} (LCF) by the 10\textsuperscript{th} cycle. The CO\textsubscript{2} uptake in the presence of SO\textsubscript{2} dramatically declined by the 10\textsuperscript{th} cycle; for example, from 0.22 gCO\textsubscript{2}/g\textsubscript{sorbent} to 0.05 gCO\textsubscript{2}/g\textsubscript{sorbent} in the case of the untemplated material (LC). However, as expected all samples showed improved performance in the presence of steam and the decay of reactivity during the cycles was less pronounced. Nevertheless, in the BFB environment, the templated pellets showed poorer CO\textsubscript{2} capture performance. This is presumably because of material loss due to attrition under the FB conditions. Namely, by contrast, the templated materials performed better than untemplated materials under TGA conditions. This indicates that reduction in attrition is critical in the case of employment of templated materials in realistic systems with FB reactors.

1 Introduction

It is widely accepted that CO\textsubscript{2} emissions are the most contributing factor affecting climate change. Decreasing the anthropogenic CO\textsubscript{2} emissions, especially from the power sector, which accounts for at least one third of the total greenhouse gas emissions in 2010,\textsuperscript{1} is one of the main goals of climate change mitigation strategies. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) has been proposed to mitigate CO\textsubscript{2} emission from power plants.\textsuperscript{2-5} Currently, the carbon capture technology that is the closest to the market is amine scrubbing\textsuperscript{6} with its first commercial-scale plant opened in October 2014 in Canada.\textsuperscript{6} However, there are many problems associated with this technology such as degradation of the expensive solvent and the corrosive nature of typical solvents such as monoethanolamide (MEA).\textsuperscript{7-13} Due to these challenges other options are being increasingly explored for CO\textsubscript{2} capture such as calcium looping (CaL).\textsuperscript{14}

The CaL systems comprises of two interconnected fluidised beds which function as a carbonator and calciner respectively. The CO\textsubscript{2} is captured by a lime-based sorbent in the carbonator at 600-700°C, and a high-purity CO\textsubscript{2} stream is produced in the calciner at 850-950°C. This process has many advantages; such as, the use of a cheap natural sorbent\textsuperscript{15,16} and a low energy penalty.\textsuperscript{17} However, there are two major challenges associated with this technology: the sorbent reactivity decay over reaction cycles, and the attrition of the particles due to mechanical and thermal stresses experience in a fluidized bed environment. These challenges demand increasing sorbent makeup (i.e. the use of fresh sorbent).\textsuperscript{18}

Considerable research effort has been made to develop new sorbents that have a more stable reactivity over many cycles, using techniques such as sol-gel combustion,\textsuperscript{19-27} organic/acid modifications,\textsuperscript{28-34} calcium carbonate precipitation\textsuperscript{33,35,36} and granulation\textsuperscript{37-44} among others. Most of these methods have proven to produce materials that have higher capture capacity than natural sorbents. However, although these modifications can result in a better sorbent performance, they are potentially expensive due to the cost of the materials required and the use of multiple process steps.\textsuperscript{45,46}

Granulation is a promising technique for the preparation of sorbents; it allows the chemical doping and also the improvement of mechanical strength using binders such as bentonites, kaolin, alumina and calcium aluminate cements and it appears to be easily scalable. Recently, Ridha et al.\textsuperscript{43} explored the templating of pellets using cheap biomass sources; the
resulting sorbent displayed a higher pore volume and CO₂ capture than biomass-free pellets.

Doping has also been previously explored as a mean to reduce the decay of activity of natural materials. Salvador et al. demonstrated that NaCl improved the relative capture capacity by maintaining it at 40% after 10 cycles due to resulting changes in the pore structure for TGA tests. However, NaCl markedly decreased the CO₂ capture of the treated lime when tested in a FBC compared to the untreated material. Other materials such as KCl and K₂CO₃, manganese salts, MgCl₂ and Mg(NO₃)₂, and CaBr₂ have also produced improvement in pore structure, pore volume and pore size. However, in some cases, alkali-metal precursors used as dopants, such as, lithium chloride produced poorer performance in the treated sample than for natural limestone.

The reduction in reactivity over many cycles is aggravated by the presence of SO₂, due to the irreversible reaction between CaO and SO₂ to form CaSO₄. Unfortunately, Calcium sulphate is stable at the typical CaL temperatures, which leads to a dramatic decay in carbonation conversions during the cycling due to the formation of a CaSO₄ layer. Pacchiani et al. discovered that sulfation is enhanced in carbonation/calcination cycles for synthetic sorbents. Stanmore and Gilot reviewed that the simultaneous capture of CO₂ and SO₂ causes more sintering than SO₂ capture alone.

The use of pelletised material in the presence of SO₂ has been studied by Manovic and Anthony. They found the particles composed of lime and calcium aluminate cement exhibited a higher sulfation rate (89%) than that of natural limestone (30%). Ridha et al. also studied the effect of sulfation in pelletised particles prepared using kaolin as a binder; and the results showed strong deactivation of all sorbents tested, but it was more pronounced in the case of the pelletised material, which is in agreement with previous results from the same group.

Steam is always present in flue gas due to the combustion process and it was experimentally simulated by, for example, 15%vol steam addition during the carbonation stages of the CO₂ capture experiments. These studies show that the presence of steam increased the CO₂ uptake substantially in a bench-scale FBC possibly due to enhanced solid-state diffusion in the product layer.

This work explores the effect of SO₂ and steam on calcium aluminate pellets, as cheap synthetic CaL sorbents templated by biomass and doped by seawater. CO₂ uptake was measured during the carbonation/calcination cycles of the sorbent performed using a TGA, and a bubbling FB to provide realistic test conditions and allow us to study the effects of attrition.

2 Experimental

2.1 Materials

Longcalc limestone from United Kingdom was used as a lime precursor. Commercial calcium aluminate cement, CA-14, manufactured by Almantis, was used as a binder in the pelletisation process and as a source of Al₂O₃. Commercial flour was used as the biomass templating material. Artificial seawater (Complete Aquatics) was used for doping purposes; this water is treated with NaOCl, to leave only a small additional amount of Na and Cl.

2.2 Pellet preparation procedure

Four types of materials were prepared: (i) 10% calcium alumina cement and 90% calcined limestone (LC) (ii) 10% flour and 90% calcined limestone (LF), (iii) 10% flour, 10% calcium alumina cement and 80% calcined limestone (LCF), and (iv) 10% flour, 10% calcium aluminate cement and 80% calcined lime doped with seawater (LCFSW). The pellets were prepared in Glatt TMG 1/6 granulator. The desired powder proportional quantities (1 kg batches) were introduced into the pelletizer vessel (6 L) and mixed. The mixing was carried out inside the vessel by two sets of blades (the chopper and the agitator) while continuously spraying water (ca. 1 L during the procedure) for pelletisation. A more detailed explanation of this procedure can be found in the work done by Manovic et al. The particles were then sieved and the size fraction 0.3-0.6 mm was collected. The material was air dried for 24 h before storage and the samples produced are described in Table 1.

2.3 CO₂ capture cycles

A Perkin Elmer Diamond TG/DTA thermogravimetric analyser (TGA) was used for repeated carbonation/calcination cycles. The samples were tested under two conditions; in the first one, carbonation was performed during 20 min at 650°C under 15% CO₂, while the calcination was done for 10 min at 850°C under 100% N₂. In the second round of tests, the calcination was performed during 20 min at 650°C under 15% CO₂, and the calcination was carried out for 10 min at 950°C under 100% CO₂. Under the later conditions, during the transition between carbonation and calcination, the atmosphere was switched to 100% N₂ below 900°C to avoid carbonation at non-desired conditions. The heating ramp was set to 40°C/min for the heating stage and 20°C/min for the cooling stage. All the sorbents underwent 20 cycles.

In addition to the TGA, a lab-scale bubbling fluidised bed (BFB) was used for testing carbonation/calcination cycles to ensure testing under more realistic conditions. The BFB is 68 mm ID; it was operated at atmospheric pressure and heated to the desired temperature by means of an external electric furnace. The distributor plate consists of four bubble cups and a cyclone downstream of the fluidised bed is used to avoid excessive particle concentration in the flue gas. After the cyclone, the gas...
was filtered and cooled. A fraction of the exhaust gas was continuously sampled to measure CO₂ and SO₂ concentration with ABB EL3020 with infrared (CO₂ and SO₂) photometers in order to monitor the progress of the reactions. The layout of the experimental equipment used is exhibited in Figure 1.

For the BFB tests, 100 g of sorbents were diluted in 1.5 kg of silica sand to avoid excessive increase of temperature in the bed during carbonation. Due to the temperature change limitations caused by the thermal inertia of the BFB, all the experiments were performed isothermally at 850°C with 90% vol. CO₂ during the carbonation and 20% vol. CO₂ during the calcination. The duration of both calcination and carbonation was 15 min.

The effects of sulfur and steam were also investigated in the BFB following the same procedure as above with a sand-diluted bed and isothermal conditions for carbonation/calcination at 850°C. To measure the effect of SO₂ a new series of experiments were performed. For these tests, the concentration of CO₂ was maintained constant and at 3% vol.

During carbonation, the CO₂ concentration was set to 1500 ppm for both carbonation and calcination. The SO₂ concentration during calcination was maintained to 20% vol. on a wet basis. For all the fluidised-bed experiments, 10 cycles were performed while maintaining the bed velocity at 0.5 m/s (bubbling regime) during the whole duration of each experiment.

2.4 Sample characterization

Elementary analysis of the samples was performed using ICP-OES (inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry). Compression strength tests were performed using the FGE-5XY Digital Force Gauge. For each sample, 31 measurements were made to ensure the validity of the data for raw material. Mercury porosimetry was performed using the AutoPore IV 9500 for analyses of the total pore area and porosity.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Sorbent characterization

The ICP-OES (inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry) and carbon analyses of the limestone and the samples are given in Table 2.

Raw pellets made from calcined limestone and 10% alumina cement (LC) show the highest crushing strength than non-cement containing particles (LF) due to the presence of cement. However, LCFSW was also prepared with a cement containing mixture and its crushing strength is very low. It is possible that the lower crushing strength is due to negative effects of the seawater doping, probably caused by the excess of NaCl in the dopant media. Limestone was not tested for crushing strength due to the small particle size (average size of 180 μm) when compared to the size range of materials produced (300-600μm).

Table 2: Elementary analysis of the sorbents used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component (wt %)</th>
<th>Limestone</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>LF</th>
<th>LCF</th>
<th>LCFSW</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al₂O₃</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>5.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>BaO</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaO</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe₂O₃</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K₂O</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MgO</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MnO₂</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na₂O</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P₂O₅</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO₃</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiO₂</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SrO</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TiO₂</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total oxides</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 3, the results for the mercury porosimetry for LC and LCF are shown in order to compare the effect that the addition of flour has on the sorbent pore size. As expected the addition of flour has a positive effect increasing both the porosity and the total pore area of the resulting material.

### 3.2 Reactivity test

#### 3.2.1 TGA tests

The final TGA results during 20 cycles under the previously mentioned conditions are shown in Figure 3 (samples calcined at 850°C in pure N₂ and Figure 4 (samples calcined at 950°C in pure CO₂). The main aim of these tests was to compare the synthetic sorbents prepared using the pelletisation method in order to assess if flour or any similar material used as a biomass-templating material would be suitable for calcium looping processes.

The carbonation conversion of all pellets was higher, when they were calcined at 950°C in pure CO₂ (Figure 4) compared to the first case (calcination at 850°C in pure N₂; Figure 3). The use of seawater (LCFSW) instead of deionized water (LCF) during the pelletisation process had a very dramatic effect in terms of decreasing the carbonation conversion from 21% to less than 5% in the 20th cycle (and from 41% to 10% in the case of calcination with pure CO₂ in Figure 4). The other samples showed quite uniform behaviour for the calcination in pure N₂ and CO₂ atmospheres.

#### 3.2.2 BFB tests

The behaviour of the pellets compared to the original limestone in a real BFB during 10 cycles is given in Figure 5. It can be seen that all of the pellets performed better than the initial limestone after the third cycle. The sorbent performance was increased from 0.03 gCO₂/gsorbent for the limestone to 0.22 gCO₂/gsorbent for LC, 0.07 gCO₂/gsorbent for LF, 0.12 gCO₂/gsorbent for LCF and 0.05 gCO₂/gsorbent for LCFSW in the 10th cycle.

It can be observed that the addition of calcium aluminate cement has a clear effect on the biomass-doped pellets increasing their CO₂ uptake by 71% (LCF compared to LF). This phenomenon can be attributed to the presence of the mesoporous Al₂O₃ phase, which increases the porosity of the sample, and to the increased attrition resistance and decreased elutriation rate.

LCFSW pellets exhibited only a marginal improvement of 0.02 gCO₂/gsorbent by the 10th cycle (compared to the limestone),
indicating that doping with seawater did not increase the performance of the sorbent. It was also apparent that the addition of biomass to LC reduced the CO₂ uptake from 0.22 gCO₂/gsorbent to 0.12 gCO₂/gsorbent by the 10th cycle. This suggests that flour templating of the pellets did not improve the resistance towards degradation experienced over the carbonation-calcination cycles.

Figure 6 shows how the sorbents behaved under high SO₂ concentration conditions (1500 ppm). Here, all sorbents behaved poorly when compared to the results without SO₂ addition (Figure 5). Even in the case of the best sorbent, LC there was significant loss of activity. Thus, in this case, the CO₂ capture capacity declined from 0.22 gCO₂/gsorbent to 0.05 gCO₂/gsorbent by the 10th cycle. This highlights the need to desulfurizing flue gas specially when dealing with synthetic sorbents.

For the biomass-containing materials (LF, LCF and LCFSW) the capacity after 10 cycles was found to be very similar at around 5% carbonation, which also represents (when compared to Figure 5) a very dramatic decline especially in LCF that had 31% carbonation degree in the 10th cycle without SO₂ addition. These results can be explained by the progressive build-up of a sulfate layer that reduces CO₂ diffusion in the pores of the pellets and limestone particles.

The effect of steam addition to the Xcarb is shown in Figure 7. The addition of steam increased the degree of carbonation of all the sorbents. In accordance with previous observations, such as Ridha et al., the drastic decline observed in the first cycle when cycling without steam is no longer observed when the steam is introduced.

In the 10th cycle LC had a CO₂ uptake of 0.25 gCO₂/gsorbent, which is 14% more than in the case without steam. LCF adsorbed 25% more of CO₂ (0.12 gCO₂/gsorbent to 0.15 gCO₂/gsorbent) in the 10th cycle. The other sorbents (Limestone, LF and LCFSW) also improved their capture capacity but their CO₂ uptake is still below 0.1 gCO₂/gsorbent.

Conclusions

This work examined the CO₂ capture performance of CaO-based sorbents (limestone, calcium aluminate pellets, biomass-doped pellets with and without binder, and biomass-templated pellets doped with seawater). All of the biomass-containing pellets were made from flour chosen as a cheap biomass source to enhance the CO₂ uptake. The biomass-free pellets showed superior capture capacity compared with the biomass-containing pellets when cycles were performed in a BFB; and the non-biomass-containing sample (LC) had the highest capacity in all cases. However, when pellets were tested in a TGA (calcination 950°C 100% CO₂), the biomass and cement-containing pellets (LCF) had the highest conversion. It appears that the biomass-containing pellets are more subjected to attrition, so their mechanic strength needs to be improved during the preparation process. This increased attrition agrees with the crushing strength results where the biomass-containing particles showed markedly lower results than biomass-free particles. The CO₂ uptake by the biomass-free pellets (LC) in the 10th cycle was of 0.22 gCO₂/gsorbent under normal conditions, 0.25 gCO₂/gsorbent with 15% vol of steam and 0.05 gCO₂/gsorbent.
under 1500 ppm of SO₂ in carbonation and calcination, indicating a very dramatic effect with sulfur addition. It most important difference between the biomass-containing material (LF) and the biomass and cement containing material (LFC) is the presence of a binder (10% calcium aluminate cement in LCF), which has a great impact with a 71.4% higher CO₂ uptake for the cement-containing sample under normal conditions and a 87.5% increase of CO₂ uptake for the same pellets with a 15% vol and around the same conversion for the high sulphur conditions. Although biomass-templating for pelletising Ca-based sorbents could be a beneficial technique to improve reactivity, it is clear that a way of increasing mechanical strength is required and that attrition for these systems needs to be better understood.

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