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Transforming Pollution through Sonoelectrochemistry: Innovations in the Degradation of Persistent Organic Pollutants

Wei Lun Ang*

Department of Chemical and Process Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract

The electrochemical and ultrasonic inputs into a son electrochemical pollutant degradation process are found to be synergistic, producing a faster rate of degradation than that produced by the sum of the purely electrochemical or purely sonochemical inputs on their own. The combination of electrochemistry and ultrasonic irradiation has gained increasing attention in recent years as a method for removing dissolved pollutants from water. This interest stems from the potential for son electrochemical approaches to completely mineralise dissolved pollutants, converting them into harmless mineral species such as water and carbon dioxide. Persistent organic pollutants, often present in industrial wastewater, are perhaps of the most concern, and have been linked to a number of chronic and acute medical conditions, including cancers, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, suppression of the immune system, adverse effects on cognitive and neurobehavioral function, and disruption of the function of sex steroids and the thyroid gland.

Keywords: Sonoelectrochemistry; Ultrasound; Electrochemical oxidation; Water treatment; Persistent organic pollutants

Introduction

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) pose significant environmental and health risks due to their persistence, toxicity, and bio accumulative nature [1]. Traditional methods for their remediation have proven to be inadequate in effectively eliminating these pollutants from the environment. However, recent advancements in the field of sonoelectrochemistry have offered promising solutions for the degradation of POPs. This article explores the innovative applications of sonoelectrochemical processes and their potential to transform pollution by efficiently eliminating persistent organic pollutants. One effective route to radical generation in liquids is through the application of ultrasonic radiation. When ultrasound is applied to a liquid medium, it gives rise to pressure differentials. Due to the sinusoidal nature of the applied ultrasonic field, points in the medium may be subject to successive periods of positive pressure and negative pressure .During periods of rarefaction, gaseous bubbles form which can increase in size with successive cycles; this process occurs on the microsecond timescale and culminates in violent bubble collapse. These collapses are extremely high energy events and can yield temperatures and pressures calculated to exceed 2000 K and 500 bar .The volatized molecules within these bubbles are subject to such harsh conditions during cavitation that their molecular bonds can be cleaved, yielding radicals. In addition, the operating parameters of the ultrasonic irradiation can be tuned so as to maximize cavitation, allowing the optimization of radical production. Furthermore, it has been shown that application of an ultrasonic field to a liquid medium may lead to enhanced mass transport, thermal variations caused by cavitation, and shear forces which can affect large molecules, particles, and surfaces. Electro-oxidation of aqueous solutions is also known to bring about generation of hydroxyl radicals at the anode. With this in mind, it has long been understood that the coupling of ultrasonic radiation with other methods for radical production can be beneficial, with a synergistic relationship observed in many cases. Many of the inhibiting factors associated with electrochemistry, such as electrode passivation and mass transport at the electrode–electrolyte interface, are lessened under the action of an ultrasonic field [2].

Understanding sonoelectrochemistry

Sonoelectrochemistry combines ultrasound waves and electrochemical reactions to enhance the degradation efficiency of pollutants. Ultrasound waves create cavitation bubbles in the reaction medium, generating intense localized heating, pressure, and turbulence. These effects significantly enhance the mass transfer, accelerate chemical reactions, and facilitate the breakdown of complex organic compounds [3].

Advancements in sonoelectrochemical systems

Electro-Fenton Sonoelectrochemistry: The combination of Fenton chemistry and sonoelectrochemistry has demonstrated exceptional pollutant degradation capabilities. The electro-Fenton process utilizes electrochemically generated hydroxyl radicals (•OH) for the oxidation of POPs. The simultaneous application of ultrasound waves enhances the generation of •OH radicals, leading to accelerated degradation rates [4].

Sonoelectro-Fenton Coupling: The integration of sonochemistry and electro-Fenton reactions has shown remarkable potential for the degradation of persistent organic pollutants. The synergistic effects of sonochemistry and electro-Fenton chemistry result in improved pollutant removal efficiencies, shortened treatment times, and reduced energy consumption.

***Corresponding author:** Wei Lun Ang, Department of Chemical and Process Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia, E-mail: Anglunang345@gmail.com

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Sonophotocatalysis: Sonoelectrochemistry can be combined with photocatalytic processes to create sonophotocatalytic systems. These systems utilize semiconductors, such as titanium dioxide (TiO_2), as catalysts that produce reactive oxygen species (ROS) under ultraviolet (UV) light irradiation. The application of ultrasound waves in these systems enhances the dispersion of photocatalysts, promotes the formation of ROS, and facilitates the degradation of POPs [5].

Benefits and advantages

The utilization of sonoelectrochemical processes for the degradation of POPs offers several advantages over traditional methods:

Enhanced degradation efficiency: The synergistic effects of ultrasound waves and electrochemical reactions significantly enhance the degradation rates of persistent organic pollutants, ensuring more efficient removal [8].

Selective degradation: Sonoelectrochemical processes can be tailored to target specific POPs, allowing for selective degradation while minimizing the impact on non-targeted compounds [7].

Reduced energy consumption: The accelerated reaction rates and improved mass transfer achieved through sonoelectrochemistry reduce the energy requirements for pollutant removal, making the process more energy-efficient [8].

Environmental compatibility: Sonoelectrochemical processes operate under mild reaction conditions, minimizing the production of harmful by-products and reducing the environmental impact of pollutant remediation [9].

Challenges and future directions

Despite the significant advancements, there are still challenges to overcome in the field of sonoelectrochemistry for POP degradation. These challenges include optimizing reactor design, exploring novel catalyst materials, and understanding the complex mechanisms involved. Additionally, further research is needed to assess the long-term environmental impacts and scalability of sonoelectrochemical processes [10].

Conclusion

Sonoelectrochemistry has emerged as a promising approach for the degradation of persistent organic pollutants, offering innovative solutions to transform pollution. The combination of ultrasound waves and electrochemical reactions enhances the degradation efficiency, selectivity, and environmental compatibility of pollutant removal processes. With continued research and development, sonoelectrochemical processes hold tremendous potential for addressing the persistent organic pollutant problem and ensuring a cleaner and healthier. Sonoelectrochemical oxidation for the degradation of pollutants is a growing field which is garnering ever increasing interest. In this review, we have introduced not only the core concepts behind this technique, but also the key factors behind its effectiveness, such as electrode materials, reactor design, choice of electrolyte, and operational parameters.

This may be abated to some extent by advancements in electrode technology, but in any case such issues will need to be thoroughly investigated and addressed before widespread application of this technique can be achieved. These obstacles will no doubt be focal points for future study, and we hope that this review will go some way towards inspiring further strides in this field in the coming years.

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