

Innovative Reactors and Process Intensification

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Abstract

Process intensification (PI) is a specific term used in regard to an industrial process for a measure, which targets at innovation or improvements in the equipment and/or manufacturing/processing systems through redesigning of the existing equipment and/or operation methodologies. In chemical industry, PI can be applied in all stages of the process such as: a) raw materials & their handling/transportation/storage; b) chemical reaction/s; c) separation step/s; d) heat-transfer system/s & heat-integration; e) product/s isolation & purification; f) product/s packaging & storing; etc., etc. Basic PI objectives include reduction in the size & number of devices, improvement in heat- and mass-transfer by advanced mixing technologies and shorter diffusion pathways, miniaturization, novel energy techniques, new separation approaches, integrated optimization, control strategies, etc. PI results in a substantially smaller, or more energy-efficient, or cleaner (less waste-producing), or safer process. These PI benefits may come in any combination. The end result is – economic savings.

This Process Economics Program (PEP) report is written on the subject of application of some of the abovementioned PI tenets in production of commercially important chemicals on industrial scales. This is an update of our previous report (PEP Report 226) that was published about 20 years ago. The current report presents technoeconomic analysis of the following three technologies.

- Methyl acetate production using a reactive distillation column system
- Synthesis gas (H_2 and CO) production using a microchannel reactors system (syngas is reckoned as an intermediate product for a Fischer-Tropsch process)
- Ethyl tertiary butyl ether based on a reactive distillation column system

Apart from above, this report also presents a technical review of various aspects of the process intensification (PI) schemes, which are important from the standpoint of application of its (PI) techniques in chemical, pharmaceutical, and bio-based industries. The same chapter also presents a description of the functional principles of innovative reactors and some other process equipment, hitherto developed, and are used in the chemical and bio industry.

Our evaluation of the above process-intensified technologies show that they offer a good amount of economic savings relative to the conventional production technologies for the three products.

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Contents

1	Introduction	7
	Report Focus	7
	Report Structure	7
2	Summary	9
	Process Intensification—Concept	9
	Elements of Process Intensification	9
	Report Structure	10
	Process Intensification Reactive Equipment	11
	Intensified Processes Flow Diagrams	11
	Process Economics	15
	Economic Benefit of Process-intensified Processes	18
3	Technical review	20
	Process intensification	20
	Conceptual definition of PI	20
	Elements of Process Intensification	20
	Process Intensification Potential	22
	Examples of areas where process intensification can be applied	23
	Process intensification by heat-integration through a heat-exchange network system	24
	Process intensification through heat-integration in reactive distillation system	28
	Process intensification equipment	31
	Reactors	32
	Microreactors	32
	Oscillatory Flow Mixing Reactors	33
	Spinning Disc Reactors	34
	Rotor-Stator Spinning Disc Reactors	34
	Rotating Packed Beds	35
	Membrane Reactors	35
	Packed-bed Membrane Reactors	36
	Fluidized-bed Membrane Reactors	37
	Monolith Reactors	37
	Tube-in-a-Tube Reactors	38
	Catalytic Endo/Exo Reactors	39
	Distillation Columns	39
	Reactive Distillation Columns	39
	Industrial Application of Reactive Distillation	42
	Divided-wall Columns	44
	Compact Heat Exchangers	46
	Plate & Frame Heat-exchangers	47
	Plate Finned-tube Heat-exchangers	47
	Spiral Heat-exchangers	47
	Mini-channel Heat-exchangers	48
	Static Mixers	48
4	Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation Column System—Eastman Process	50
	Process Overview	52
	Process Description	53
	Process Discussion	55
	Methyl Acetate Production	55
	Materials of Construction	56

Cost Estimates	60
Fixed-Capital Costs	60
Production Costs	60
5 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System	66
Technical Review of Microchannel SMR Reactors	66
CompactGTL SMR Reactor Technology	67
Velocys SMR Reactor Technology	70
Process Description	77
Process Discussion	80
Feedstock	80
Natural Gas-Steam Blending	81
Steam-Methane Reformer	81
CO ₂ Removal from Syngas	81
Waste Heat Recovery	82
Water Recovery for Recycle	82
Materials of Construction	82
Cost Estimates	86
Fixed-Capital Costs	86
Production Costs	87
6 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation Column System	92
Process Description	95
Process Discussion	97
Ethanol Recovery in Process	97
RD Column Catalyst	97
Materials of Construction	98
Cost Estimates	101
Fixed-Capital Costs	101
Production Costs	102
Appendix A—Cited references	107
Appendix B—Design and cost basis	111
Appendix C—Process flow diagrams	115

Tables

Table 2.1 Plant Total Fixed Capital Costs—Capital Cost Elements	15
Table 2.2 Production Costs—Production Cost Elements	15
Table 2.3 Production Costs—Production Cost Elements of a 35 Million Gallons/Annum ETBE Plant	19
Table 3.1 Potential of PI Technologies in different Areas of Process Improvement	23
Table 3.2 Simulation Conditions for a Mixture consisting of Cyclopentane (A), Benzene (B) and Toluene (C)	26
Table 3.3 Simulation Conditions for a Mixture consisting of Cyclopentane (A), Benzene (B) and Toluene (C)	35
Table 3.4 Main Industrial Applications of Reactive Distillation	43
Table 3.5 Reported Applications of Dividing-wall Distillation Columns	46
Table 4.1 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Design Bases and Assumptions)	55
Table 4.2 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Main Stream Flows)	57

Table 4.3 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Major equipment)	58
Table 4.4 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Utilities Summary)	59
Table 4.5 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Total Fixed Capital)	61
Table 4.6 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation System—Eastman Process (Production Costs)	62
Table 5.1 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System—Design Bases and Assumptions	79
Table 5.2 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System (Major Stream Flows)	83
Table 5.3 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System (Major equipment)	85
Table 5.4 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System (Utilities Consumption Summary)	86
Table 5.5 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System (Total Fixed Capital)	88
Table 5.6 Synthesis Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System (Production Costs)	89
Table 6.1 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Design Bases and Assumptions)	96
Table 6.2 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Main Stream Flows)	99
Table 6.3 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Major equipment)	100
Table 6.4 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Utilities Summary)	101
Table 6.5 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Total Fixed Capital)	103
Table 6.6 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System (Production Costs—continued)	104

Figures

Figure 2.1 Elements of Process Intensification	10
Figure 2.2 Process Configuration/Scheme of an Intensified Methyl Acetate Production Process	12
Figure 2.3 Process Configuration/Scheme of an Intensified Synthesis Gas Production Process	13
Figure 2.4 Process Configuration/Scheme of an Intensified Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production Process	14
Figure 2.5 Effect of Acetic Acid Price on the Production Cost & Product Value of Methyl Acetate	16
Figure 2.6 Effect of Methanol Price on the Production Cost & Product Value of Methyl Acetate	17
Figure 2.7 Effect of Natural Gas Price on the Production Cost & Product Value of Synthesis Gas	17
Figure 2.8 Effect of C4 Hydrocarbons Feed Price on the Production Cost & Product Value of ETBE	18
Figure 3.1 Elements of Process Intensification	21
Figure 3.2 Simplified Illustration of a Heat-exchange System	25
Figure 3.3 Heat Integration Options for Separation of Components from a Mixture consisting of Cyclopentane (A), Benzene (B) and Toluene (C)	27
Figure 3.4 Methyl Acetate Hydrolysis Process using Reactive Distillation (Base Case)	29
Figure 3.5 Methyl Acetate Hydrolysis Process using Reactive Distillation (RD with a Sidedraw Column)	30
Figure 3.6 Methyl Acetate Hydrolysis Process using Reactive Distillation (Thermally-coupled Design of RD with a Sidedraw Column)	31
Figure 3.7A Schematic of a Reactive Distillation Column—Single Reactive Section	40
Figure 3.7B Schematic of a Reactive Distillation Column—Double Reactive Section	40

Figure 3.8 Schematic of a Conventional Two-column Distillation System	44
Figure 3.9 Schematic of a Divided-wall Column Distillation System	45
Figure 4.1 Schematic of a Conventional Methyl Acetate Process by Reactive Distillation	51
Figure 4.2 Schematic of Eastman Methyl Acetate Reactive Distillation Column	53
Figure 4.3 Effect of Methanol Price on Production Cost & Product Value of Methyl Acetate	64
Figure 4.4 Effect of Acetic Acid Price on the Production Cost & Product Value of Methyl Acetate	65
Figure 5.1 Schematic of CompactGTL Modular GTL Process	68
Figure 5.2 Cutaway View of a CompactGTL SMR Reactor Channels	69
Figure 5.3 Schematic of Velocys Microchannel SMR Reactor	70
Figure 5.4 Schematic of Velocys Microchannel SMR Reactor	71
Figure 5.5 Schematic of an experimentally-tested Single-channel Microreactor	73
Figure 5.6 Measured Thermal Profile of a Microchannel SMR Device	74
Figure 5.7 Flow Orientation and Zones in a Velocys Microchannel SMR Reactor	75
Figure 5.8 Picture of a Conceptual Commercial SMR Reactor—Velocys 2009	76
Figure 5.9 Effect of Natural Gas Price on Production Cost & Product Value of Syngas	91
Figure 6.1 Schematic of a Conventional Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Process by Reactive Distillation	93
Figure 6.2 Schematic of a Process-intensified Version of the Conventional Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Process	94
Figure 6.3 Catalyst Arrangement inside the ED Column	98
Figure 6.4 Effect of C ₄ Feed Price on Production Cost & Product Value of ETBE	106

Appendix C Figures

Figure 4.5 Methyl Acetate Production through a Reactive Distillation Column System—Eastman Process	116
Figure 5.10 Synthetic Gas Production from Natural Gas through a Microchannel Reactor System	117
Figure 6.5 Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether Production through a Reactive Distillation System	118

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