Temperature programmed retention indices: calculation from isothermal data Part 1: Theory

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Temperature Programmed Retention Indices: 
Calculation from Isothermal Data

Part 1: Theory

J. Curvers, J. Rijks, and C. Cramers
Eindhoven University of Technology, Department of Chemistry, Laboratory for Instrumental Analysis, P.O. Box 513, 5600 MB Eindhoven, The Netherlands

K. Knauss and P. Larson
Hewlett Packard, Avondale Division, Avondale, PA 19311, USA

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Summary

Direct conversion of isothermal to temperature programmed indices is not possible. In this work it is shown that linear temperature programmed retention indices can only be calculated from isothermal retention data if the temperature dependence of both the distribution coefficients and the column dead time are taken into account.

Procedures are described which allow calculation of retention temperatures and from these, accurate programmed retention indices. Within certain limits the initial oven temperature and programming rate can be chosen freely. The prerequisite for this calculation is the availability of reliable isothermal retention data (retention times, retention factors, relative retention times, or retention indices) at two different temperatures for one column.

The use of compiled isothermal retention indices at two different temperatures for the calculation of retention temperatures and thus temperature programmed indices is demonstrated. For the column for which programmed retention indices have to be determined, the isothermal retention times of the n-alkanes and the column dead time as a function of temperature have to be known in addition to the compiled data for a given stationary phase.

Once the programmed retention indices have been calculated for a given column the concept allows the calculation of temperature programmed indices for columns with different specifications. The characteristics which can be varied are: column length, column inner diameter, phase-ratio, initial oven temperature, and programming rate.

1 Introduction

Since the beginning of gas chromatography numerous authors and committees have discussed and made proposals on the best way to express retention data, to enable the general use of published retention data for the identification of individual compounds and the characterization of stationary phases.

The Kovats retention index, introduced in 1958 [1] and widely accepted today, has a number of distinct advantages in isothermal gas chromatography over the relative retention time. The retention behavior of the compounds is expressed on a uniform scale, the retention index depends linearly on the column temperature, and the position of a compound in the chromatogram is known from its retention index.

It is evident that the applicability of the retention index as a means of identification greatly depends on the availability of reliable retention data, column stability, reproducibility of column polarity, and the quality of sample introduction, detection, and interfacing. Although much progress has been made with peak identification by means of compilations of retention indices in isothermal gas chromatography (table matching), most analyses are performed preferably with linear temperature programming. Therefore, there was a great need to develop a practical method for identification using temperature programmed retention indices, a concept introduced by Van der Dool and Kratz in 1963 [2].

Prediction or calculation of temperature programmed retention indices from isothermal retention data, which are available in large quantities, is of course attractive. The first attempts to predict programmed indices using isothermal retention data were made by Guiochon [3], Habgood and Harris [4], and Giddings [5]. Their approximations did not account for the influence of the initial oven temperature, programming rate, and column dimensions. Golovnya and Uraletz [6] and Erdey et al. [7] calculated temperature programmed indices taking into account the temperature dependence of the isothermal index. Although they stated the temperature programmed index to be a complex function of experimental conditions, these conditions were not accounted for in the calculations.

Another way of correlating isothermal and temperature programmed indices is the prediction of the retention time
or temperature in a temperature programmed run from iso-
thermal retention data. Elaborating the model of Grant and
Hollis [8], this paper presents a procedure for calculation of
retention temperatures.

This study is directed towards the development of a
theoretical concept for the calculation of temperature
programmed retention indices from isothermal retention
data. The concept is based also on the conversion of
programmed retention indices between columns of
different dimensions (length, inner diameter), phase ratio,
initial temperature, and programming rate. The results will
be reported in a series of publications.

This paper deals with the theoretical concept and the
procedure for the calculation of programmed retention
indices from isothermal data. The reliability of the method
in terms of reproducibility and accuracy as well as its
applicability for the conversion of tabulated programmed
indices to columns of different dimensions and operating
conditions will be discussed in part 2.

2 Theoretical Concept

In the first instance, the isothermal retention index
depends on column temperature and structure and purity
of the stationary phase. In practice, however, many other
factors such as the nature of the carrier gas, column
pressure, inertness of the column wall, and instrument
quality may cause secondary but significant variations of
the retention index. The temperature programmed index is
also affected by the initial temperature, the programming
rate, the temperature dependence of the distribution
coefficient, and the carrier gas velocity. Therefore, high
demands on the GC equipment with respect to tempera-
ture, column pressure, and flow control are expected.
Obviously, the retention behavior of different columns with
the same stationary phase must be sufficiently
reproducible.

2.1 The Retention Index Concept

The Kovats retention index [1], which is generally accepted
as a means of characterizing the separated substances
and the column polarity, is defined as:

\[ I = 100z + 100 \log \frac{t'_{R_1}}{t'_{R_2}} \]

where \( t'_{R_1} < t'_{R_2}, t'_{R_1} \) is the adjusted retention time
of a component \( i \), and \( z, z+1 \) are the numbers of carbon
atoms of the \( n \)-alkanes.

The retention index equals 100 times the carbon number of
a hypothetical \( n \)-alkane with the same adjusted retention
time. The adjusted retention times may be replaced by the
corresponding retention factors.

The linear temperature programmed index was defined by
Van der Dool and Kratz [2] as:

\[ I_T = 100z + 100 \frac{T_i - T_z}{T_{z+1} - T_z} \]  

where \( T_z < T_i < T_{z+1} \) and \( T_i, T_z, T_{z+1} \) are the retention
temperatures of component \( i \) and of the bracketing
\( n \)-alkanes with \( z \) and \( z+1 \) carbon atoms respectively. The
retention temperatures can be replaced by the corre-
sponding retention times or the retention factor.

To enable direct conversion of isothermal into programm-
ed retention indices one should consider that the iso-
thermal retention index is a relation between distribution
coefficients (\( K \)) which are constant for a given temperature.
The programmed retention index, however, is calculated
from temperature dependent variables (e.g. distribution
coefficients and carrier gas viscosity and velocity,
respectively) which changes continuously during a
temperature programmed run. Furthermore, the
temperature variation of the distribution coefficient is
different for the \( n \)-alkanes and the different types of
solutes. The isothermal index is a relation between
adjusted retention times. The adjusted retention time,
which is the time period during which the solute is retained
by the stationary phase, cannot easily be calculated for
temperature programming because of varying column
dead time. From the above it can be concluded that a direct
conversion of isothermal to temperature programmed
indices is not feasible. For an accurate calculation of
programmed retention indices from isothermal retention
data (retention time, retention factors, relative retention
times, or retention indices), the actual dead times and
distribution coefficients should be used in the calculations.

2.2 Calculation of the Retention Temperature

The velocity of a specific segment in an open tubular
column depends on the oven temperature, \( T \), and the linear
carrier gas velocity, \( u_x \). Suppose the segment is transport-
ated over a distance of \( dx \) cm in \( dt \) seconds, then:

\[ dt = \frac{dx}{u_x} \left( 1 + \frac{K(T)}{\beta} \right) \]

where \( u_x \) is the linear gas velocity at a position \( x \) in the
column, \( K(T) \) the distribution coefficient of the solute at a
temperature \( T \), \( \beta \) the column phase ratio, and \( K(T)/\beta \) the
retention factor (k).

The distribution coefficient can be expressed as:

\[ K(T) = \exp \left( \frac{-\Delta G}{RT} \right) = a \exp \left( \frac{-\Delta H}{RT} \right) \]

where \( \Delta G \) is the molar free energy of solution, \( R \) the ideal
gas constant, \( a = \exp (\Delta S/R) \), \( \Delta H \) is the molar enthalpy
of solution (expressed positive), and \( \Delta S \) the molar entropy
of solution.
In isothermal gas chromatography, the mean linear gas velocity is \( u = L/t_0 \), \( L \) being the column length and \( t_0 \) the column dead time. A combined substitution of this relation and Eq. (4) in Eq. (3) and integration over the column length yields:

\[
\tau_{R,i} = t_0 \left[ 1 + \frac{a}{\beta} \cdot \exp \left( \frac{\Delta H}{RT} \right) \right]
\]  

(5)

This equation can be rearranged to give:

\[
\ln k = \ln \frac{a}{\beta} + \frac{\Delta H}{RT}
\]  

(6)

Eq. (6) describes isothermal gas chromatography in terms of the distribution coefficient. By plotting the retention factor versus the reciprocal temperatures the values for \( a/\beta \) and \( \Delta H/R \) can be obtained.

In linear temperature programmed gas chromatography, the oven temperature increases during the analysis according to:

\[
T = T_0 + r \cdot t
\]  

(7)

where \( T_0 \) is the initial oven temperature and \( r \) the programming rate.

Differentiation and substitution in Eq. (3) together with Eq. (4) yields:

\[
\frac{dT}{1 + \frac{a}{\beta} \cdot \exp \left( \frac{\Delta H}{RT} \right)} = r \cdot \frac{dx}{u_x}
\]  

(8)

After integration of Eq. (8), the left-hand side between the initial temperature \( T_0 \) and the elution temperature \( T_R \), and the right-hand side over the column length \( L \), an expression describing linear temperature programmed gas chromatography is obtained:

\[
\int_{T_0}^{T_R} \frac{dT}{1 + \frac{a}{\beta} \cdot \exp \left( \frac{\Delta H}{RT} \right)} = \int_0^L r \cdot \frac{dx}{u_x}
\]  

(9)

At this point, various simplifications have been introduced in the literature to simplify the calculation of the retention temperatures. The following assumptions have been proposed [8]: during a period corresponding to the column dead time, the solute is transported a negligible distance along the column and the dead time is assumed constant during temperature programming. Clearly, the first assumption will not hold for components with relatively short retention times except when an extremely low (subambient) initial temperature is used. The second assumption is not valid due to changes in the carrier gas viscosity and thermal expansion of the carrier gas. We continue the treatment without any simplifications.

In Eq. (9), \( dx/u_x \), integrated over the column length, represents the column dead-time, \( t_0 \), which is temperature dependent. Transferring the dead time to the left-hand side leads to an equation suitable for calculating elution temperatures in temperature programmed gas chromatography:

\[
\int_{T_0}^{T_R} \frac{dT}{t_0 (T) \left[ 1 + \frac{a}{\beta} \cdot \exp \left( \frac{\Delta H}{RT} \right) \right]} = r
\]  

(10)

The denominator of the left-hand side represents the retention time under isothermal conditions at temperature \( T \) (cf. Eq. (5)).

### 2.3 Calculation of \( t_0 (T) \)

The mean carrier gas velocity can be described (9) by:

\[
u = \frac{3 \cdot \rho_o (P^2 - 1)^2}{4 \cdot \eta \cdot L \cdot (P^3 - 1)} \frac{d_0^2}{32}
\]  

(11)

where \( u \) is the mean carrier gas velocity, \( \rho_o \) the column outlet pressure, \( P \) the pressure ratio (in/out), \( d_0 \) the column inner diameter, \( \eta \) the dynamic carrier gas velocity, and \( L \) the column length.

Combination with \( t_0 = L/u \) yields an expression for the temperature dependence of the column dead time:

\[
t_0 (T) = \frac{4 \cdot L^2 \cdot (P^3 - 1)}{3 \cdot \rho_o \cdot (P^2 - 1)^2} \cdot \frac{32}{d_0^2} \cdot \eta (T)
\]  

(12)

According to Ettre [11], the relation between viscosity and temperature is linear in the range normally used in gas chromatography, so the relation between column dead time and temperature may be assumed linear also. The applicability of Eq. (12) will be discussed in part 2.

### 2.4 Procedure for Calculation of Retention Indices

The retention temperature can be computed from Eq. (10) using the ‘Simpson-rule’, if \( T_0, r, t_0 (T) \), the entropy-term \( a/\beta \), and the enthalpy-term \( \Delta H/R \) are known. The initial temperature, \( T_0 \), and programming rate, \( r \), can be chosen in accordance with the required separation and the boiling range of the sample components. The column dead time as a function of temperature, \( t_0 (T) \), must either be determined experimentally or calculated according to Eq. (12). The entropy- and enthalpy-terms are obtained according to Eq. (6) after determination of the retention factors at two or more temperatures.

Finally, when the retention temperatures of the solutes and the appropriate \( n \)-alkanes are known, linear temperature programmed indices are calculated according to Eq. (2). The applicability of the concept is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. Three main procedures, differing with respect to the manner in which the isothermal retention information is...
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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chromatographic conditions chosen</th>
<th>Experimental data obtained from column A</th>
<th>Compiled isothermal data</th>
<th>Calculated for column A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) $T_0$ r</td>
<td>$t_n(T)$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\Delta H/R, a/\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k n-alkanes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k solutes (at 2 or more temperatures)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) $T_0$ r</td>
<td>$t_n(T)$ relative retention at temp. T_1</td>
<td>$t_n(T)$ relative at temp. T_1, T_2</td>
<td>$t_n(T)$ relative retention at temp. T_1, T_2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$t_n$ n-alkanes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at temp. T_1, T_2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled entropy- and enthalpy terms obtained by procedure 1 or 2 for one column allow direct calculation for other columns with different column dimensions and/or phase ratios. Except for the determination of the column dead time as a function of temperature, which could also be calculated, the only additional experimental effort is establishing a retention factor for one specific component to correct the entropy term ($a/\beta$) for a different phase ratio.

Within certain limits the initial oven temperature and programming rate may be chosen freely. The initial oven temperature should preferably be below the boiling point of the first eluting component. The programming rate must be selected such that all components elute during the linear temperature rise.

The difference between calculated and experimental data is about 0.4 $10^3$ units for most solutes. The accuracy depends on the selected temperatures at which the entropy and enthalpy terms are obtained. The selection criteria will be discussed in part 2. Tabulated entropy- and enthalpy-terms can also be used to calculate isothermal retention indices for all temperatures within the appropriate temperature range.

References