Numerical solution of stiff parabolic differential equations describing gas fluidized beds with a two-phase model

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NUMERICAL SOLUTION OF STIFF PARABOLIC DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS DESCRIPTION GAS FLUIDIZED BEDS WITH A TWO-PHASE MODEL

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Abstract—A model for the non-steady-state description of gas fluidized beds is derived, based on the bubble dispersion model. For the solution of the (parabolic) differential equations describing the non-steady- and steady-state situations, a new method is used: the decoupling method. It is mathematically and numerically not complex and good results are obtained.

INTRODUCTION

Residence time distribution (RTD) measurement is a strong and (experimentally) relatively simple method in determining physical parameters, such as mass transfer or mixing coefficients. Therefore, the RTD curve has to be measured experimentally and fitted numerically. In principle, this method can also be applied to chemical reacting systems. For example, in gas fluidized beds, information can then be subtracted from the start up period, combined with the steady-state and/or shut down period. In both cases the system in consideration must be described mathematically. It is not unlikely one obtains a system of equations that is not solvable analytically and sometimes even not numerically.

The numerical methods that are used most for non-steady-state problems are the Crank-Nicholson technique [for instance Eigenberger and Butt (1976)] and orthogonal collocation (Villadsen and Stewart, 1967). Both methods can lead to erroneous answers and/or excessive calculation time for stiff problems (Hlavacek and van Rompay, 1981).

Van Loon (1987) obtained good results for steady-state stiff boundary value problems using the decoupling method. We examined whether this approach could be employed for non-steady-state equations. It could then be used for a sensitivity analysis.

A numerical method is described for solving a set of (stiff) parabolic differential equations describing the non-steady-state behavior of gas fluidized beds. This method decouples the equations into a "decoupled space". There the solution is calculated and by back transformation the final solution is obtained (analogous to Laplace transformation).

MODEL DESCRIPTION

Several models have been proposed for describing gas fluidized beds. The van Deemter (1961) model and the bubble dispersion model [for instance Dry and Judd (1985)] give a good insight into mass transfer and mixing. Both are simple physical descriptions of a gas fluidized bed with just a few (unknown) fitted parameters. Results when using this model have been good [see, for instance, van Swaaij and Zuiderweg (1972), Werther (1978), Bauer (1980), Dry and Judd (1985) and van Lare et al. (1990)]. They are mostly used for describing the behavior of A- or B-type powders, according to the Geldart (1973) classification. We describe both the bubble and the dense phase as plug flow reactors with axial dispersion, and allow mass transfer between both phases (Fig. 1).

Here we have the superficial velocity $U$ with regard to the cross-sectional area $A$ of the reactor. The gas flows through the dense phase with a volumetric flow rate of $\rho U_{mf} A$. The factor $\rho$ accounts for the fact that more gas can flow through the dense phase than is described by the two-phase theory (where $\varphi = 1$). Especially for D-type powders, values of $\varphi$ greater than 1 are important because of the relatively small $U/(\varphi U_{mf})$ values. Even for A-type powders several values of $\varphi$ are reported (Grace and Clift, 1974). However these deviations are not that important because of the large $U/(\varphi U_{mf})$ values.

Furthermore, we define a mass transfer coefficient $K_e$ (that can be regarded as $k_a$) and Eddy dispersion coefficients for the bubble phase ($E_b$) and dense phase ($E_d$). The bubble hold up $\delta$, the dense-phase porosity $\varphi$, $K_e$, $E_b$ and $E_d$ are taken to be independent of the height $h$, implying that height-averaged values are used. By definition reaction can only take place in the dense phase, because there are no (catalyst) particles in the bubble phase. A rate constant $k_m$ is defined, based on catalyst mass. We consider a first-order reaction.

Taking a mass balance over a slice $dh$ leads to

$$\delta \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial t} = - (U - \varphi U_{mf}) \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial h}$$

$$- K_e (C_b - C_d) + E_d \delta \frac{\partial^2 C}{\partial h^2} \quad (1a)$$
Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of flow division in a gas fluidized bed.

\[ (1 - \delta)e_d \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial t} = - \varphi U_{mf} \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial h} - K_d(C_d - C_b) \]

with boundary conditions:

for \( t < 0 \) there is no (tracer) gas in the reactor:

\[ C_b(0, h) = 0 \] (2a)
\[ C_d(0, h) = 0 \] (2b)

injection at distributor \((h = 0)\) and backmixing from column:

\[ C_b(t, 0) = C_f(t) + \frac{1}{f_b \rho b \rho_e} \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial h} \bigg|_{h=0} \quad (t > 0) \] (2c)
\[ C_d(t, 0) = C_f(t) + \frac{1}{(1 - f_b) \rho d \rho_e} \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial h} \bigg|_{h=0} \quad (t > 0) \] (2d)

no concentration gradient at fluid bed surface:

\[ \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial h} \bigg|_{h=H} = 0 \] (2e)
\[ \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial h} \bigg|_{h=H} = 0. \] (2f)

We define an average residence time \( \tau \) based on the total fraction of gas in the reactor and not only on the fraction of gas in the bubble phase. For A/B-type powders the difference is very small. However, for D-type powders it is essential to take the fraction of gas in the dense phase into account. Furthermore, we define an average residence time for the bubble phase \((\tau_b)\) and for the dense phase \((\tau_d)\):

\[ \tau = \frac{H}{u_b} \]

(with \( u_b \) = bubble velocity) (3a)

\[ \tau_d = \frac{H}{u_d} \]

(with \( u_d \) = dense-phase gas velocity) (3b)

\[ \tau = f_b \tau_b + (1 - f_b) \tau_d = \frac{H\zeta}{U}, \] with \( \zeta = \delta + (1 - \delta)\xi_d \)

and

\[ f_b = \frac{(U - \varphi U_{mf})/U}{\text{fraction of gas in}} \]

the bubble phase. (3c)

For A/B-type powders \( f_b \approx 1 \), and therefore \( \tau \approx \tau_b \), which is a common assumption. Making eqs (1) and (2) dimensionless leads to

\[ \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial \theta} + \beta \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \frac{\xi}{\delta} (C_b - C_d) - \frac{1}{\rho b \rho_e} \frac{\xi}{\delta} \frac{\partial^2 C_b}{\partial \sigma^2} = 0 \]

\[ \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial \theta} + \gamma \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \frac{\xi}{\delta} (C_d - C_b) - \frac{1}{\rho d \rho_e} \frac{\xi}{\delta} \frac{\partial^2 C_d}{\partial \sigma^2} \]

\[ + \frac{N_r}{\rho b \rho_e} \frac{\xi}{(1 - \delta)\xi_d} C_d = 0 \]

(4)

(5)
Numerical solution of stiff parabolic differential equations

Substitution in eqs (4) and (5) leads to

\[
\frac{\partial^2 C_{b,i}}{\partial \sigma^2} = f_b \cdot Pe_b \cdot \frac{\partial C_{b,i}}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \cdot Pe_b \cdot (C_{b,i} - C_{d,i}) + \frac{C_{b,i} - C_{b,i-1}}{\Delta \sigma} Pe_b \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \sigma}
\]

Writing these equations in matrix form gives

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
\frac{\partial C_{b,i}}{\partial \sigma} \\
\frac{\partial C_{d,i}}{\partial \sigma}
\end{bmatrix}
= \begin{bmatrix}
0 & 0 \\
0 & 0
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
N_k + \delta/((\xi \cdot \Delta \sigma)) \\
-N_k \cdot Pe_d
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
Pe_b \cdot (N_k + N_r + (1 - \delta) \epsilon_d/((\xi \cdot \Delta \sigma))) \\
(1 - f_b) Pe_d
\end{bmatrix}
\]

In short:

\[
\frac{d}{d \sigma} X^i(\sigma) = A \cdot X^i(\sigma) + F^{-1}(\sigma). \tag{18}
\]

This equation is similar to equations describing dynamic systems (Palm, 1983). This is, of course, not very surprising, because we are regarding a non-steady-state (and therefore dynamic) system.

Due to matrix A several \(x^i\)-terms are coupled. A small computational error will accumulate and be amplified because of the iteration process that is necessary for calculating the solution at every time step. This is the well-known problem of stiffness. If we can find a diagonal matrix \(D\) instead of matrix \(A\), we will get a set of ordinary differential equations. Therefore we define matrices \(A\) and \(Q\), and vector \(Y\) such that the following holds:

\[
A Q = Q D \quad \text{and} \quad X = Q Y \iff Y = Q^{-1} X. \tag{19}
\]

Matrix \(D\) contains the eigenvalues of matrix \(A\). Matrix \(Q\) contains the eigenvectors of \(A\):

\[
D = \begin{bmatrix}
d_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & d_2 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & d_3 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & d_4
\end{bmatrix}
\]

\[
Q = \begin{bmatrix}
q_{1,1} & q_{1,2} & q_{1,3} & q_{1,4} \\
q_{2,1} & q_{2,2} & q_{2,3} & q_{2,4} \\
q_{3,1} & q_{3,2} & q_{3,3} & q_{3,4} \\
q_{4,1} & q_{4,2} & q_{4,3} & q_{4,4}
\end{bmatrix}. \tag{20}
\]

Two negative and two positive eigenvalues were always found, due to the definition of the \(A\) matrix.

The Crank–Nicholson technique uses a finite difference in the space variable \(\sigma\). We, however, use an Euler approximation for the time variable \(\theta\):

\[
\frac{\partial C_x}{\partial \theta} \approx \frac{C_{x,i} - C_{x,i-1}}{\delta_t - \delta_{t-1}} = \frac{C_{x,i} - C_{x,i-1}}{\Delta \theta},
\]

with \(x = b, d\). \tag{14}

The decoupling method

The Crank–Nicholson technique uses a finite difference in the space variable \(\sigma\). We, however, use an Euler approximation for the time variable \(\theta\):

\[
\frac{\partial C_x}{\partial \theta} \approx \frac{C_{x,i} - C_{x,i-1}}{\delta_t - \delta_{t-1}} = \frac{C_{x,i} - C_{x,i-1}}{\Delta \theta},
\]

with \(x = b, d\). \tag{14}
We chose to take \( d_1, d_2 < 0 \) and \( d_3, d_4 > 0 \). This is however not important, as long as the boundary conditions are correctly evaluated.

The eigenvector \( Q(i, j) \) belongs to the eigenvalue \( d_j \) \((i = 1, 2, 3, 4)\). Substitution of eq. (19) in eq. (18) yields

\[
Q \cdot \frac{d}{d\sigma} Y^i(\sigma) = A \cdot Q \cdot Y^i(\sigma) + F^{i-1}(\sigma) \quad (21)
\]

\[
\Rightarrow Q \cdot \frac{d}{d\sigma} Y^i(\sigma) = Q \cdot D \cdot Y^i(\sigma) + F^{i-1}(\sigma) \quad (22)
\]

\[
\Rightarrow \frac{d}{d\sigma} Y^i(\sigma) = D \cdot Y^i(\sigma) + F^{i-1}(\sigma)
\]

with \( F^{i-1}(\sigma) = Q^{-1} \cdot F^{i-1}(\sigma) \). (23)

Due to matrix \( D \) the \( y_j \)-terms are now decoupled. Equation (23) can be solved by standard procedures for the solution of inhomogeneous differential equations. First we define a homogenous solution \( Y_h(\sigma) \):

\[
Y_h^i(\sigma) = \begin{bmatrix}
e^{-d_1 \sigma} & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & e^{-d_2 \sigma} & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & e^{-d_3 \sigma} & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & e^{-d_4 \sigma}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

(24)

The \((\sigma - 1)\) terms has been chosen to make sure that the solution can easily be calculated at \( \sigma = 1 \), as will be shown later.

The particular solution can be determined using the following equations:

\[
d_j p_j(\sigma) = d_j . p_j(\sigma) + \tilde{f}_j^{-1}(\sigma) \quad (j = 1, 2, 3, 4)
\]

with \( p_1(0) = 0, p_2(0) = 0, p_3(1) = 0, p_4(1) = 0 \). (25)

For the complete solution we get

\[
Y^i(\sigma) = c^i . Y_h^i(\sigma) + P^i(\sigma).
\]

(26)

Here vector \( P^i(\sigma) \) contains the \( p_j^i(\sigma) \) terms defined in eq. (25). The constant vector \( c^i \) can be found by evaluating the boundary conditions. Writing eqs (8)–(11) in \( x_j^i \)-terms, we get

\[
x_1^i(0) = c_f + \zeta_1 . x_4^i(0) \quad \text{with} \quad \zeta_1 = 1/(f_b . P_e)
\]

(27)

\[
x_2^i(0) = c_f + \zeta_2 . x_4^i(0) \quad \text{with} \quad \zeta_2 = 1/[(1 - f_b ) P_e]
\]

(28)

\[
x_3^i(1) = 0
\]

(29)

\[
x_4^i(1) = 0.
\]

(30)

This leads to

\[
\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & -\zeta_1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} . \begin{bmatrix} X(0) \end{bmatrix} = c_f
\]

(31)

\[
\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 & -\zeta_2 \end{bmatrix} . \begin{bmatrix} X'(0) \end{bmatrix} = c_f
\]

(32)

\[
\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} . \begin{bmatrix} X'(1) \end{bmatrix} = 0
\]

(33)

\[
\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} . \begin{bmatrix} X'(1) \end{bmatrix} = 0.
\]

(34)

Substitution of \( X = Q . Y \) gives

\[
\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & -\zeta_1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} . Q . Y'(0) = c_f, \text{ etc.}
\]

Evaluating these equations with eq. (26) leads to

\[
E \cdot c^i = g^i
\]

(35)

with

\[
E = \begin{bmatrix}
q_{11} - \zeta_1 q_{31} & q_{12} - \zeta_1 q_{32} & (q_{13} - \zeta_1 q_{33}) e^{-d_3} & (q_{14} - \zeta_1 q_{34}) e^{-d_4} \\
q_{21} - \zeta_2 q_{41} & q_{22} - \zeta_2 q_{42} & (q_{23} - \zeta_2 q_{43}) e^{-d_3} & (q_{24} - \zeta_2 q_{44}) e^{-d_4} \\
q_{31} e^{d_1} & q_{32} e^{d_2} & q_{33} & q_{34} \\
q_{41} e^{d_1} & q_{42} e^{d_2} & q_{43} & q_{44}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

(36a)

and

\[
g^i = \begin{bmatrix}
c_f - p_3^i(0) . (q_{13} - \zeta_1 q_{33}) - p_4(0) . (q_{14} - \zeta_1 q_{34}) \\
c_f - p_3^i(0) . (q_{23} - \zeta_2 q_{43}) - p_4(0) . (q_{24} - \zeta_2 q_{44}) \\
-p_1^i(1) . q_{31} - p_2^i(1) . q_{32} \\
-p_1^i(1) . q_{41} - p_2^i(1) . q_{42}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

(36b)

The following holds:

\[
c^i = E^{-1} . g^i.
\]

(37)

Because the inverse matrix \( E^{-1} \) can introduce some computational inaccuracies (NAG, 1980), it was always checked whether the constant vector \( c^i \) calculated by eq. (37) fulfilled eq. (35). This was always the case.

For \( p_j^i(\sigma) \) eq. (25) holds. In finding \( p_3^i(\sigma) \) and \( p_4^i(\sigma) \) the end conditions for these variables have to transformed into initial conditions. We have

\[
dp_j^i(\sigma)/d\sigma = d_j p_j^i(\sigma) = \tilde{f}_j^{-1}(\sigma) \quad \text{with} \quad p_j^i(1) = 0
\]

(38)
We now define
\[ t_j'(\sigma) = p_j'(1 - \sigma) \quad (j = 3, 4). \] (39)

This leads to
\[ dt_j'(\sigma)/d\sigma = -dp_j'(1 - \sigma)/d\sigma = -d_j, p_j'(1 - \sigma) - \tilde{f}_j^{-1}(1 - \sigma) \quad (j = 3, 4). \] (40)

Therefore
\[ dt_j'(\sigma)/d\sigma = -d_j, t_j'(\sigma) - \tilde{f}_j^{-1}(1 - \sigma) \]
with \( t_j'(0) = 0 \quad (j = 3, 4). \) (41)

The end condition is now transformed into an initial condition and computation is possible. When \( t_j'(\sigma) \) has been calculated, \( p_j'(\sigma) \) can be found by interchanging the values according to eq. (39).

In calculating \( p_j'(\sigma), f_j^{-1}(\sigma) \) has to be known. This means that an \( f_j^{-1} \) value has to be known at every possible \( \sigma \). This is done by curve-fitting the concentration profile of the preceding time step \((i - 1)\) with a cubic-spline fit (Hayes, 1974). The integration routine can calculate every \( f_i^{-1} \) value at every desired \( \sigma \) value, and not only at the points specified by the user.

A semi-analytical solution of eq. (25) is also possible. Then a polynomial curve fit of the concentration profiles has to be substituted in the analytical solution. Of course this is only possible if the curve fit can describe the actual curve with high enough accuracy. To start with and for simplicity, we have used a numerical solution using the Gear method.

For calculational purposes (stability) the equations for \( \tilde{P}^i(\sigma) \) have been changed somewhat by eliminating \( \Delta \sigma \). By means of vector \( \tilde{F}^{i-1} \Delta \sigma \) is introduced [eq. (17)]. Multiplying by \( \Delta \sigma \) leads to
\[ d\tilde{P}^i(\sigma)/d\sigma = D \cdot \tilde{P}^i(\sigma) + \tilde{F}^{i-1}(\sigma) \] (42)

with
\[ \tilde{P}^i(\sigma) = \Delta \sigma \cdot P^i(\sigma) \text{ and } \tilde{F}^{i-1}(\sigma) = \Delta \sigma \cdot \tilde{F}^{i-1}(\sigma). \] (43)

With vector \( \tilde{F}^{i-1} \Delta \sigma \) is now eliminated. This does not change anything about the preceding.

The same derivations can of course be used when neglecting one or two of the axial dispersion coefficients \( E_b \) and/or \( E_d \). The resulting matrices for \((E_b = 0, E_d \neq 0)\) and \((E_b = 0, E_d = 0)\) are given in Appendix A. It is furthermore stressed that with this method it is necessary for the parameters to be independent of height (except for the concentrations of course). Otherwise the decoupling with the matrices can not be performed.

**Algorithm**

Calculations were done with the NAG library (1980–1989). Computation can of course also be done with other libraries and if necessary routines can be written by the user himself.

The accuracy of the calculation can be controlled in three ways. First of all, the integration routine [for \( \tilde{P}^i(\sigma) \)] requires a tolerance. Secondly, the user can specify many or few \( \sigma \) points at which a solution is desired. Thirdly, the \( \Delta \sigma \) value has a direct control over matrix \( A \) and therefore also over matrices \( Q \) and \( D \).

A flow sheet is given in Fig. 2. Eigenvalues and eigenvectors are calculated with the NAG routine F02AGF, and inverse matrix with the routine F01AAF. A cubic-spline fit is done with E02BAF, and an evaluation of the fit is done with E02BBF. Furthermore we used the integration routine D02EBF (Gear method routine).

All used routines will be given at every step. A summary of all the major steps is:

1. Find \( Q \) and \( D \), such that \( AQ = QD \) (eigenvalues and eigenvectors).
2. Define \( Y^i(\sigma) = Q^{-1} \cdot X^i(\sigma) \), leading to \( dY^i(\sigma)/d\sigma = D \cdot Y^i(\sigma) + \tilde{F}^{i-1}(\sigma), \) with \( \tilde{F}^{i-1}(\sigma) = Q^{-1} \cdot F^{i-1}(\sigma). \)
3. Compute \( Y^i(\sigma) \) from the homogeneous and particular solution: \( Y^i(\sigma) = c^i \cdot Y^i_h(\sigma) + P^i(\sigma), \) with \( c^i = E^{-1} g^i. \)
4. The final solution is found by back-transformation: \( X^i(\sigma) = Q \cdot Y^i(\sigma). \)
**Definition of feed and end conditions**

For the RTD the injection pulse has been defined as a Dirac pulse:

\[ C_f(t) = a_d \exp \left[-\pi^2 a_d^2 (t - t_{step})^2\right]. \tag{44} \]

The \( t_{step} \) value has been introduced to make sure that the pulse is injected completely and gradually (numerically speaking). For the final RTD curve this \( t_{step} \) value has to be subtracted from the \( t \) values. The response on a Dirac pulse with \( t_{step} \) equal to zero will be known.

Making eq. (44) dimensionless yields

\[ C_f(\theta) = a_d \exp \left[-\pi^2 a_d^2 (H \xi/U)^2 (\theta - \theta_{step})^2\right]. \tag{45} \]

Because the surface under a Dirac pulse equals unity this leads to

\[ \int_0^\infty C_f(\theta) d\theta = 1/\tau = C_0 \tag{46} \]

with \( \tau \) being the average residence time, and \( C_0 \) the total amount of tracer gas injected.

The total amount of tracer gas entering the reactor has to leave the reactor (no reaction) and therefore

\[ \int_0^\infty C_{out}(\theta) d\theta = \int_0^\infty C_{in}(\theta) d\theta = 1/\tau. \tag{47} \]

Because \( C_{in} \) equals 1/\( \tau \), this also leads to the condition that the surface under the \( E(\theta) \) curve (which is the dimensionless response), equals unity:

\[ \int_0^\infty C_{out}(\theta) d\theta = 1/\tau = C_0 \Rightarrow \int_0^\infty \frac{C_{out}(\theta)}{C_0} d\theta = \int_0^\infty E(\theta) d\theta = 1. \tag{48} \]

We checked whether the calculations fulfilled these conditions by taking a summation value according to

\[ \sum_{\theta} C_{out}(\theta) \Delta \theta = 1/\tau = U/H \xi. \tag{49} \]

The \( \theta_{stop} \) value has always been taken large enough to acquire a constant summation value, implying that \( \theta_{stop} \rightarrow \infty \).

Another check was performed by calculating the average residence time from the simulated curves. This value has to be equal to \( \theta = 1 \).

To fulfill eq. (44) numerically, we computed an \( a_d \) value according to

\[ \text{minimize} \left\{ \left[ \sum_{\theta} C_f(\theta) \Delta \theta \right] - (1/\tau) \right\}. \tag{50} \]

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The program was written in FORTRAN and run on VAX/VMS. The CPU time was in the order of 1–5 min, depending upon matrix type, step sizes and tolerance used with the calculations. For all calculations the input parameters listed in Table 1 were used. As an example we used these values because they are usually encountered in laboratory scale reactors. Fan and Fan (1979, 1980) for instance used the same order of values. They also showed that \( Pe \) could be taken independent of height. Computation is, of course, also possible with values that refer to commercial units.

We defined a relative error in the following way:

\[ e_{rel} = \frac{|\text{value calculated} - \text{value wanted}|}{\text{value wanted}} \times 100\%. \tag{51} \]

Relative errors based on residence time and surface beneath the curve were calculated. The best \( \Delta \theta \) and \( \Delta \sigma \) values, as well as knots for the cubic-spline fit, were determined by taking those values that gave stable solutions with a small relative error. The boundaries for the integration routine were taken to be \( \sigma = 0 \) and \( \sigma = 1 \). All solutions were calculated with \( \Delta \sigma = 0.01 \) and \( \Delta \theta = 0.01 \). The step size in placing the knots was taken to be 0.02.

The tolerance in calculating \( \tilde{\rho}(\sigma) \) was \( 10^{-5} \). If necessary \( 10^{-7} \) was taken. This way, a maximum relative error of \( \pm 5\% \) was always found. Most calculations gave a relative error of 1–3%.

First of all a comparison was made between the finite-difference method (NAG routine D03PGF) and the decoupling method. Results for \( Pe_b = 20 \), \( Pe_d = 20 \) and \( N_k = 2 \) are shown in Fig. 3. This shows that both methods lead to the same result. The difference only occurs in the height of the top. The place and shape of the first peak, caused by the bubbles, are equal. Dense-phase gas leaves the reactor more slowly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. List of parameter values used in computation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( U = 0.1 \text{ m/s} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( U_{inp} = 0.01 \text{ m/s} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \delta = 0.05 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( u_0 = 0.40 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( H = 1.0 \text{ m} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \varphi = 1.0 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 3. Comparison of residence time distributions of finite-difference method and decoupling method.](image)
Numerical solution of stiff parabolic differential equations

and gradually, giving the tail. The shape and place of the tail are again the same for both methods.

Due to the stiffness the finite-difference method often gave erroneous answers, particularly at somewhat “low” \( P e (< 10) \) and “high” \( N_r (> 5–10) \). The decoupling method always returned a stable solution with a relative error of less than 5%.

Computations were also made with the non-steady-state reaction system. The height concentration profile and resulting conversion were the same as for the steady-state reaction system, using the decoupling method and analytical solutions.

Various computations were made with different parameter values. Neglecting one or two \( Pe \) terms leads, in principle, to difference systems. This is because the resulting matrices are completely different. Yet comparable solutions were obtained, as is shown in Figs 4–10. This indicates the stability of the decoupling method.

All this shows that the decoupling method is a stable method leading to good results.

Figure 4 shows results for the \((2 \times 2)\) matrix, with \( Pe_b \to \infty, Pe_d \to \infty \) and \( N_r \) as the parameter. At \( N_r = 2\) gas exchange is relatively small and, because bubbles rise much more faster than the dense-phase gas, a peak occurs. When the gas exchange increases the curve maximum shifts more towards \( \theta = 1\), because more gas is transported upwards in the relatively slow dense phase. If the exchange would get

Fig. 4. Residence time distribution with fixed \( Pe_b \) and \( Pe_d \) and variable \( N_r \) \([(2 \times 2)\) matrix].
Fig. 10. Residence time distribution with fixed $N_k$ and $Pe_d$ and variable $Pe_b$ [(4 x 4) matrix].

infinite great, equilibrium would be reached and the gas would rise in plug flow. Therefore there will be a Gaussian peak at $\varrho = 1$ for large $N_k$. The average residence time of the total gas is described with eq. (3c) and of the bubble phase with eq. (3a). This shows that $\tau_b/\tau \approx \delta/\zeta \approx 0.12$ (with $\delta = 0.05$ and $\zeta_d = 0.4$). This value is indeed found from Fig. 4.

Comparable results were obtained with the (3 x 3) matrix, with $Pe_b \rightarrow \infty$, $Pe_d = 10$ and $N_k$ as the parameter (Fig. 5). As can be seen from Figs 4 and 5, the influence of $N_k$ is sufficient to obtain a reliable $N_k$ value from RTD measurements.

The influence of $Pe_d$ is shown in Fig. 6. At $N_k = 2$ the influence is not that obvious because most gas flows through the reactor in the bubble phase. With $N_k = 10$ (Fig. 7), the influence is much more obvious, due to the higher exchange to the dense phase. At low $Pe_d$ the dense phase approaches an ideal mixed system. Therefore, the top of the curve will shift towards $\varrho = 0$. Similar results for the (4 x 4) matrix are shown in the Figs 8–10.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We deduced equations from the bubble dispersion model that can be used for all types of powders.

A finite difference was taken in the time variable instead of in the space variable. After rewriting these equations, using rather elementary mathematics, the equations were decoupled. Comparable computations were performed with the standard Crank–Nicholson technique and the decoupling method. This showed that both methods gave the same results if calculation was possible with the Crank–Nicholson technique.

The advantages of the decoupling method are that it is straightforward, mathematically not very complex, and leads to good and stable solutions. Of course it should be possible to use the decoupling method for other non-steady- and steady-state systems. In principle it can be used for a system of many equations, as long as it is possible to calculate the eigenvectors, eigenvalues and inverse matrices with high enough accuracy. An example can be found in Tuin (1989).

To start with we have taken a grid with uniform spacing. It will, of course, be economically more efficient if a non-uniform spacing is used. For simplicity we have not yet done that. This does however not affect the decoupling method itself. A semi-analytical solution for eq (25), describing the particular part, might also give some improvement. This, however, is only the case if an accurate polynomial curve fit is possible. This means that many fluctuations in the curve should give problems. More research is needed in these areas.

RTD analysis for all types of powders is now possible, if sufficient data on the hydrodynamics are available. In our future research, hydrodynamics will be measured and RTD measurements will be performed.

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NOTATION

$\alpha$ specific bubble surface, $m^2/m^3$
$\alpha_b$ coefficient in Dirac pulse [eq. (44)]
$A$ cross-sectional area of reactor, $m^2$
$C_b$ gas concentration in bubble phase
$C_d$ gas concentration in dense phase
$C_0$ total amount of gas injected
$C_{out}$ average concentration of gas leaving the reactor
$E_{kb}$ Eddy dispersion coefficient for bubble phase, m$^2$/s
$E_{kd}$ Eddy dispersion coefficient for dense phase, m$^2$/s
$E(\varrho)$ dimensionless response ($C_{out}/C_0$).
$f_j$ fraction of gas in the bubble phase
$f_j$ elements vector $\mathbf{F}^{-1}$
$h$ differential bed height, m
$H$ total bed height, m
$i$ subscript
$j$ subscript
$K_{ed}$ mass transfer coefficient based on total gas volume, s$^{-1}$
$k_m$ reaction constant based on catalyst mass [eq. (2)], kg/(m$^3$s)
$k_g$ mass transfer coefficient, m/s
$N_k$ number mass transfer units
$N_r$ number of reaction units
$Pe_b$ Peclet number for bubble phase
$Pe_d$ Peclet number for dense phase
$P_j$ elements of particulate vector $\mathbf{P}^j$($\sigma$)
$t_j$ transformation elements for $P_j$ elements [eq. (39)]
$U$ superficial velocity, m/s
$u_b$ bubble velocity, m/s
$u_d$ dense-phase gas velocity, m/s
$U_{mf}$ minimum fluidization velocity, m/s

Greek letters
$\beta$ gas parameter for bubble phase [eqs (4) and (12)]
gas parameter for dense phase [eqs (5) and (12)]

\( \gamma \) bubble hold up

\( \varepsilon_d \) dense-phase porosity

\( \varepsilon_{rel} \) relative error [eq. (51)]

\( \zeta \) parameter for boundary conditions

\( [eqs (27) \text{ and } (28)] \)

\( \mu \) average residence time calculated by program simulation

\( \varphi \) through flow factor for dense phase

\( \rho_p \) particle density, kg/m\(^3\)

\( \vartheta \) dimensionless time \((t/\tau)\)

\( \Delta \vartheta \) step size for dimensionless time

\( \sigma \) dimensionless height \((h/H)\)

\( \Delta \sigma \) step size for dimensionless height

\( \tau \) average residence time based on total amount of gas in reactor, s

\( \tau_b \) average residence time based on gas in bubble phase, s

\( \tau_d \) average residence time based on gas in dense phase, s

\( \xi \) total gas fraction in reactor \([\delta + (1 - \delta)\varepsilon_d]\)

Matrices/vectors

\( A \) matrix containing original parameters [eqs (17) and (18)]

\( c \) constant vector for homogeneous solution [eq. (26)]

\( D \) diagonal matrix containing the eigenvalues of \( A \) [eqs (19) and (20)]

\( E \) matrix obtained by evaluating the boundary conditions [eq. (35)]

\( F \) vector containing concentrations from time step \( i - 1 \) [eq. (18)]

\( \tilde{F} \) "decoupled" vector \( F (= Q^{-1}F) \) [eq. (23)]

\( g \) vector obtained evaluating the feed and boundary conditions [eq. (27)]

\( P \) matrix for particular solution [eq. (26)]

\( \tilde{P} \) matrix \( P \) with extracted \( \Delta \vartheta \) values [eq. (42)]

\( Q \) matrix containing the eigenvectors of \( A \) [eq. (19)]

\( \tilde{R} \) vector \( F \) with extracted \( \Delta \vartheta \) values [eq. (42)]

\( X \) original vector containing bubble and dense phase concentrations [eqs (17) and (18)]

\( \chi \) "decoupled" vector \( \chi (= Q^{-1}X) \) [eq. (19)]

\( \chi_h \) homogeneous part of solution differential equation [eq. (24)]

REFERENCES


\[
\frac{\partial^2 C_{d,i}}{\partial \sigma^2} = (1 - f_b) Pe_d \frac{\partial C_{d,i}}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \cdot Pe_d \cdot (C_{d,i} - C_{b,i}) + N_r \cdot Pe_d \cdot C_{a,i} + \frac{C_{d,i} - C_{d,i-1}}{\Delta \eta} \frac{Pe_d (1 - \delta) \xi}{\xi} \] (A9)

Taking \( N_r = 0 \) (no reaction) leads to

\[
\frac{d}{d\sigma} \left[ \begin{array}{c} C_{b,i} \\ C_{d,i} \\ \partial C_{a,i}/\partial \sigma \end{array} \right] = \left[ \begin{array}{ccc} -N_k/f_b - 1/(\beta \cdot \Delta \eta) & N_k/f_b & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ -N_k \cdot Pe_d & Pe_d (N_k + (1 - \delta) \xi/(\xi \cdot \Delta \eta)) & (1 - f_b) Pe_d \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} C_{b,i} \\ C_{d,i} \\ \partial C_{a,i}/\partial \sigma \end{array} \right]
\]

(A10)

**Matrix definition when neglecting \( Pe_b \) and \( Pe_d \) terms**

Original equations:

\[
\frac{\partial C_b}{\partial \sigma} + \beta \frac{\partial C_b}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \frac{\xi}{\delta} (C_b - C_d) = 0 \] (A11)

\[
\frac{\partial C_d}{\partial \sigma} + \gamma \frac{\partial C_d}{\partial \sigma} + N_k \frac{\xi}{(1 - \delta) \xi_d} (C_d - C_b) + N_r \frac{\xi}{(1 - \delta) \xi_d} C_d = 0 \] (A12)

Taking an Euler approximation in the time variable and \( N_r = 0 \):

\[
\frac{\partial C_{b,i}}{\partial \sigma} = -\frac{N_k}{f_b} (C_{b,i} - C_{d,i}) - \frac{C_{b,i} - C_{b,i-1}}{\Delta \eta} \frac{1}{\beta} \] (A17)

\[
\frac{\partial C_{d,i}}{\partial \sigma} = -\frac{N_k}{(1 - f_b)} (C_{d,i} - C_{b,i}) - \frac{C_{d,i} - C_{d,i-1}}{\Delta \eta} \frac{1}{\gamma} \] (A18)

Writing in matrix form yields

\[
\frac{d}{d\sigma} \left[ \begin{array}{c} C_{b,i} \\ C_{d,i} \end{array} \right] = \left[ \begin{array}{cc} -(N_k/f_b + 1/(\beta \cdot \Delta \eta)) & N_k/f_b \\ N_k/(1 - f_b) & -(N_k/(1 - f_b) + 1/(\gamma \cdot \Delta \eta)) \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} C_{b,i} \\ C_{d,i} \end{array} \right] + \left[ \begin{array}{c} 1/\beta \cdot \Delta \eta \cdot C_{b,i-1} \\ 1/\gamma \cdot \Delta \eta \cdot C_{d,i-1} \end{array} \right] \] (A19)