



Current advancements towards the use of nanofluids in the reduction of CO₂ emission to the atmosphere



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ABSTRACT

Development of novel, efficient and cost-effective strategies to diminish the permanent emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to the atmosphere has been an indisputable concern for scientists. CO₂ is known as the most prominent GHG, which its abnormal amount in the atmosphere accelerates the occurrence of unfavorable environmental events such as acid rain, ocean acidification, global warming, and soil degradation. Nowadays, application of various nanofluids for increasing separation efficiency of CO₂ has been an attractive subject due to their certain privileges such as chemical compatibility and great specific area. This paper tries to provide an up-to-date overview of the commonly-employed nanofluids accompanying with their properties and applications to enhance the separation efficiency of CO₂. Moreover, important mechanisms toward improving the mass transfer rate and the separation proficiency of CO₂ through the nanofluids are comprehensively discussed and summarized. Single material nanofluids (SMNFs) and hybrid nanofluids (HNFs) are considered as major categorizations of commonly-employed nanofluids in the scientific scope of membrane-based gas separation process (MGSP), which are aimed to be discussed in this paper. True recognition of nanofluids application in the CO₂ separation process leads to finding its advantages/disadvantages in comparison with other conventional procedures.

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1. Introduction

In current decades, the immethodical anthropogenic release of greenhouse gases (GHGs) all has exacerbated the global warming phenomenon, which is a serious barrier towards achieving sustainable development all over the world [1–4]. It is estimated that the emission of GHGs (especially CO₂) is predicted to be enhanced by 170 % until the end of 2030 [5]. CO₂ can be regarded as the most prominent that allocates nearly 80 % of GHGs. The existence of this detrimental acidic contaminant in industrial-based activities results in the occurrence of serious challenges like corrosion of pipelines and the decrement of the heating value of gaseous fuels. In doing so, finding efficient, reliable, and cost-effective approaches for separating CO₂ from disparate industrial gaseous flows is of prime importance [6–8].

The prominent separation techniques of GHGs are mainly on the basis of physical and chemical processes like cryogenic distillation, adsorption and spray tower. Despite prevalence of operation, these separation techniques encounter with different functional/operational/economic difficulties like channeling, flooding, liquid hold up and significant capital costs [9–12]. Thus, numerous scientists are doing their best to replace conventional technologies with state-of-the-art ones to increase efficiency and solve their operational shortcomings. Membrane-based gas separation process (MGSP) is known as a reliable and promising approach for the separation of disparate greenhouse pollutants. Owing to carrying the advantages of both membrane technology and gas absorption (i.e., MGSP has shown brilliant potential of use in the mitigation of major greenhouse gases. The appearance of brilliant advantages such as the non-existence of holdup has made the use of MGSP reliable in separation industries [13–17].

Selection of efficient liquid absorbents is an important milestone in MGSP. In recent years, the use of chemical absorbents in MGSP has been more attractive owing to unacceptable absorption efficiency of water and physical absorbents [18]. Disparate amine-based absorbents like monoethanolamine (MEA), methyldiethanolamine (MDEA), triethanolamine (TEA) ethyl-ethanolamine (EEA), 4-diethylamino-2-butanol (DEAB) and ethylenediamine (EDA) have been vastly applied for the efficient removing of CO₂ from industrial gases [19–22]. In a numerical investigation, Shirazian et al. found that DEAB was the most efficient absorbent with the capability of separating approximately 100 % of CO₂ absorption from gaseous mixture [23]. Despite great efficiency and rapid reaction rate, the existence of some operational shortcomings such as great corrosion and low capacity have motivated the researchers to make more efforts for finding novel class of chemical absorbents [24,25].

Ionic Liquids (ILs) (i.e., [Bmim][BF₄], [Emim][BF₄]), amino acid salt solutions, K₂CO₃ aqueous solution and alkali solutions (i.e., NaOH) are the other classifications of chemical absorbents, which have shown excellent performance for the separation of various types of GHGs [26–31]. Despite great efficiency of all above mentioned absorbents in GHGs separation, their comprehensive evaluation is being continued with the aim of finding their operational/functional obstacles related to cost, energy consumption as well as their utilization for different industries [32–34].

In recent years, the separation of GHGs (mainly CO₂) applying nanofluids has been of paramount attention due to their precious positive points in regulating physical and chemical properties and their high specific area. It is strongly believed that the incorpo-

ration of nanofluids to base liquids significantly enhances the solubility of gases and gas-liquid reaction rate, which eventuates in increasing the separation yield of GHGs [35,36]. Nano-based materials like nano-sized zeolites, carbon nanotubes (CNTs), silica and covalent organic frameworks (COPs) have been able to significantly improve the efficiency of CO₂ separation [37,38].

The prominent purpose of this article is to review different nanofluids following with their properties and applications to enhance the separation efficiency of CO₂. As the novelty, major mechanisms toward enhancing mass transfer of GHGs in nanofluids and important parameters influencing the separation performance of CO₂ inside the nanofluids are comprehensively discussed and summarized. At the end, the employed nanofluids are classified into two prominent classes including single material nanofluids (SMNFs) and hybrid nanofluids (HNFs) and their characteristics are interpreted in detail. Explanation of the nanofluids application in the CO₂ separation process results in helping the true recognition of this new technology and finding its advantages/disadvantages in comparison with conventional procedures.

2. Definition of nanofluids and their different types

Nanofluids belongs to a novel classification of nanotechnology-based heat/mass transfer fluids, which are fabricated via the dispersion of nano-sized particles (the size range of 1–50 nm) in basic fluids such as water and amine solutions [39–42]. In recent years, various international researchers all over the world have reported the significant enhancement in the thermal and mass transfer properties of basic fluids after the addition of small number of nanoparticles [43–46]. Energy analysis of nanofluids is an important aspect, which has recently increased the motivation of scientists to study it. It is worth mentioning that the incorporation of nanoparticles to base fluids can significantly improve the thermal conductivity/stability and homogeneity compared to base fluids [47,48]. True identification of thermophysical properties of disparate types of nanofluids can be of prime importance for evaluating the feasibility of their application and their efficiency in different heat transfer systems like minichannel and heated pipes [49,50]. In an investigation, Khaleduzzaman et al. studied the effect of incorporating Al₂O₃ nanoparticles (with the concentration of 0.1 to 0.25 vol%) to water on the outlet exergy. They concluded the greatest enhancement in the outlet exergy (60.86 %) was achieved for the incorporation of 0.25 vol% Al₂O₃ in water at the flow rate of 1 l/min [47].

Nanofluids have attracted numerous attentions in various industrial activities such as reaction engineering, thermal engineering, MGSP, adsorption/extraction and pharmaceuticals due to enjoying disparate advantages such as high specific surface area and superior single-phase heat/mass transfer coefficient [49,51–54]. Disparate types of nanofluids have been currently fabricated by the incorporation of single-element nanoparticles (i.e., Cu and Ag), single-element oxide (i.e., CuO and Al₂O₃), alloys (i.e., Cu-Zn and Ag-Cu) and carbon materials (i.e., CNTs) dispersed in basic fluids like water, amines, ethanol and refrigerants [55–57]. Table 1 aims to comprehensively review various nanoparticles applied in MGSP.

Nanofluids can be categorized in two prominent classes including SMNFs and hybrid HNFs. SMNFs are known as the most conventional type of employed nanofluids, which was used by Choi to manufacture the suspension by means of various preparation

Table 1
Applied nanoparticles for the separation of greenhouse pollutants.

Nanoparticle	CAS Number	Appearance	Basic fluid	Morphology	Average particle size (nm)	Separation improvement	Refs.
CNT	308068-56-6	-	MDEA H ₂ O	Cylindrical	10-20	23 % 32 %	[51,58,59]
SiO ₂	7631-86-9	White/whitish yellow powder	DEA H ₂ O Methanol	Spherical	10-15	40 % 24 % 9.7 %	[18,60-63]
TiO ₂	13463-67-7	White solid	MDEA	Spherical	Less than 50	11.5 %	[64-66]
Fe ₃ O ₄	1317-61-9	Solid black powder	MDEA	Spherical	40-60	92.8 %	[67,68]
MWCNT	308068-56-6	-	H ₂ O	Tubular	10-20	38 %	[64,68]
Al ₂ O ₃	1344-28-1	White solid	DEA	Spherical	Less than 40	33 %	[34,69,70]

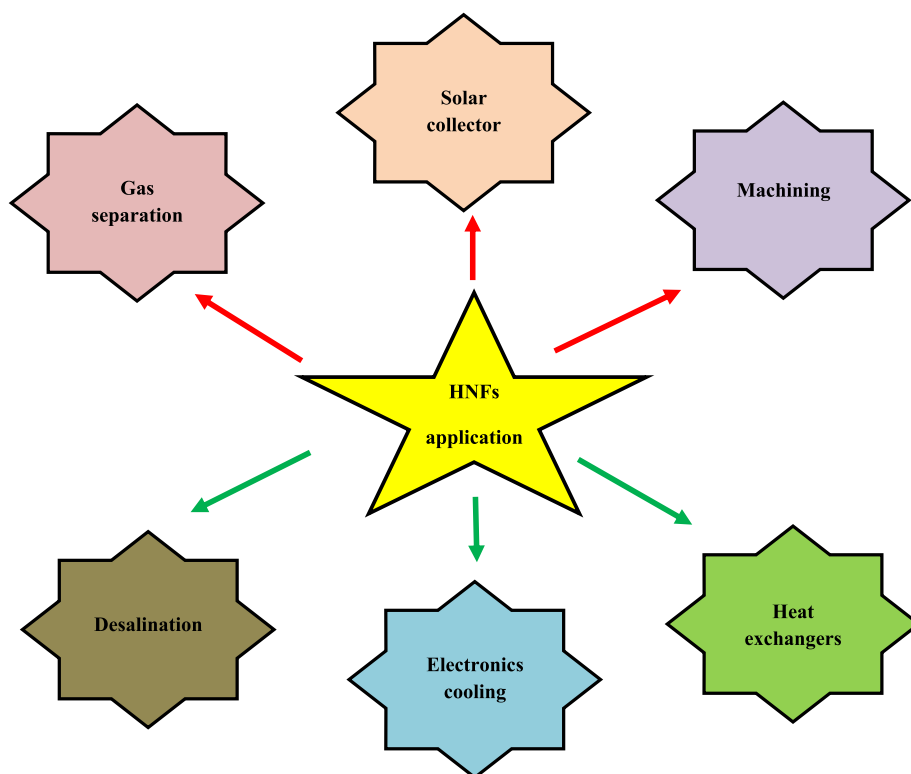


Fig. 1. Various applications of HNFs in industrial-based activities. Adapted and re-designed from [78] with permission from Elsevier.

techniques [71,72]. Numerous researchers all over the world have corroborated that SMNFs possess superior efficiency because of having more desirable thermophysical properties than their basic fluid [73-76]. HNFs belong to the modern class nanofluids, which are fabricated via the combination of more than one suspended nanoparticle in a basic fluid. Experimental investigation about the feasibility of HNFs was first conducted by Jana et al. with the aim of improving the fluid properties. They perceived that the stability of the CNT-Cu/H₂O nanofluid was greater than the other types of nanofluids [77]. Fig. 1 demonstrates the application of HNFs.

3. Enhancement mechanisms

There are disparate mechanisms for improving the separation efficiency of CO₂ from various mixtures by affecting mass transfer rate and diffusion of CO₂ in the liquid absorbents. This section aims

to present prominent mechanisms of CO₂ separation enhancement in various types of nanofluids.

3.1. Grazing effect

This phenomenon was initially offered by Kars et al. [79]. Theoretically, grazing effect is defined as the absorption process of gaseous molecules via nanoparticle surfaces at the bubble interface following to the removal of adsorbed gas from the surface of particles to the fluid phase [80,81]. On the basis of the grazing effect, the separation rate of GHGs through the nanofluid increases substantially by the presence of solid particles in a gas-liquid-solid system. Vigorous adsorption of the diffusing gas phase component through the dispersed particles results in reducing the concentration amount of gas phase reactant in the liquid near the interface and consequently an improvement in the absorption rate. By passing a determined contact time, the withdrawal of solid nanoparticles to the liquid bulk causes the regeneration of particles. This

occurrence dramatically enhances the mass transfer coefficient [82–84].

3.2. Bubble breaking effect and inhibition of bubble coalescence

Krishnamurthy et al. have perceived by the conduction of their experiment that the velocity field (due to the movement of solid particles in nanosize) is the prominent cause of mass transfer enhancement in nanofluid systems [85]. The nanoparticles collision following with nanoparticles-bubbles collision takes place in the bubble absorption process. By the motion of solid nanoparticles toward the interface, nanoparticles strike the gas–liquid interface and causes the breaking of bubbles, which considerably enhances the diffusion area, mass transfer and consequently CO₂ separation efficiency [86,87]. By colliding two bubbles in the liquid phase, the liquid film between gases drains to submicron size by passing the time [87]. The inhibition of coalescence among the bubbles through the gas–liquid dispersions is done via a mixed liquid phase. This technique focuses on this reality that very small solid particles possess great potential to modify the interfacial area and influence the overall mass transfer coefficient [88].

3.3. Brownian motion and hydrodynamic effect in the gas–liquid boundary layer

Brownian motion of nano-sized particles inside a base fluid is regarded as a noteworthy mechanism for increasing the thermal conductivity and mass transfer performance of nanofluids. Brownian motion can be defined as the random movements of nanoparticles, which may result in the enhancement of velocity and the induction of micro-convection around the nanoparticles [58,89,90]. Combination of the gas–liquid boundary layer is defined as hydrodynamic effect mechanism. According to this mechanism, those nano-based materials encompassing the bubbles break the diffusion boundary layer, which eventuates in the creation of a thin effective layer. Preparation of thinner effective layer significantly improves the diffusion of gas into the liquid film due to the existence of the nanoparticles in the vicinity of the bubble–liquid interface, which increases the mass transfer rate and

turbulence of the flow and as the result, separation efficiency of acidic gas [91]. Fig. 2 presents a schematic illustration of three major mechanisms for the enhancement of CO₂ separation efficiency inside the nanofluids.

4. Modeling and simulation approaches

In recent years, various mathematical models and computational simulation have been conducted to predict the separation performance of CO₂ pollutant applying different types of nanofluids inside various gas–liquid contactors such as hollow fiber membrane contactors (HFMCs) and wetted wall columns (WWCs) [59,92–98]. Schematic depiction of a HFMC following with its geometrical domains and Happel's free surface model is presented in Fig. 3. As can be seen, by moving the gaseous flow in the shell section and nanofluid in the tube compartment, the occurrence of concentration gradient results in the diffusion of CO₂ molecules from the shell to the hollow fibers' micropores and then its separation via the flowing nanofluid in the tube compartment. Indeed, concentration gradient is main cause of the CO₂ molecular separation in the gas–liquid HFMC [99]. In a theoretical investigation, Ghasem developed a mathematical-based simulation to evaluate the separation performance of CO₂ from CO₂/N₂ gaseous mixture using water-based CNT nanofluids in gas–liquid HFMC. He concluded from his study that at a constant value of inlet gas flow rate, increment of the concentration of CNT nanofluid from 0.1 to 0.25 wt% almost doubled the CO₂ separation percentage from about 20 to 45 % [92].

Pahnavar et al. computationally analyzed the separation enhancement of CO₂ from CO₂/air gaseous flow by the incorporation of 0.5 wt% CNT and silica to base fluid. They perceived that the addition of 0.5 wt% CNT and silica to base fluid significantly enhanced the absorption rate by 47.6 and 39.6 %, respectively [100]. In another mathematical study, Rashidi and Mamivand evaluated the addition of Al₂O₃ nanoparticle to water base fluid to improve the mass transfer and separation efficiency of CO₂ in a WWC. They corroborated that the incorporation of 0.0125 and 0.025 %v/v Al₂O₃ substantially increased mass transfer rate by 40.3 % and 67.16 %, respectively [97]. Rasaie et al. studied the role of functionalized Fe₃O₄ nanoparticles on increasing the physical/chemical separation of CO₂ through a polypropylene HFMC. They achieved this result that the application of Fe₃O₄, Fe₃O₄-proline, Fe₃O₄-lysine, Fe₃O₄@SiO₂-proline and Fe₃O₄@SiO₂-lysine resulted in a considerable increment in the CO₂ separation performance by about 27.5, 57.14, 64.28, 72.8, and 96.42 %, respectively [95]. Taheri et al. evaluated addition of silica and alumina nanoparticles to DEA absorbent on the separation enhancement of CO₂ from natural gas. Based on their result, incorporation of 0.05 wt% of Al₂O₃ and SiO₂ increased carbon dioxide separation performance by 33 and 40 %, respectively [69].

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) have been taken into consideration as a trustworthy alternative procedure for computational fluid dynamics (CFD) approaches [101–103]. This technique has great potential to overcome the prevalent disadvantages of CFD approaches like the restrictions of CPU time and great computational requirements for solving complex stiff/non-stiff problems in various scientific scopes like nanofluids, thermal engineering, drug delivery, membrane-based GHGs removal and reaction engineering. and are becoming more and more popular at present [104,105]. For instance, Babanezhad et al. developed a CFD-AI based hybrid technique to simulate an air–water bubble column reactor. They found that the best accuracy of model prediction when the input numbers and cross-over are 4 and 0.2, respectively [76].

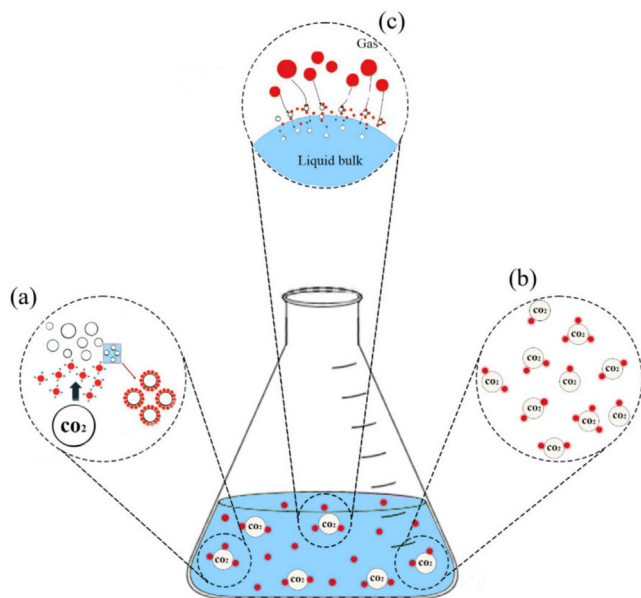


Fig. 2. Major mechanisms for the enhancement of CO₂ separation efficiency inside the nanofluids. A) Bubble breaking mechanism, (b) Brownian motion mechanism, and (c) Grazing effect mechanism [62].

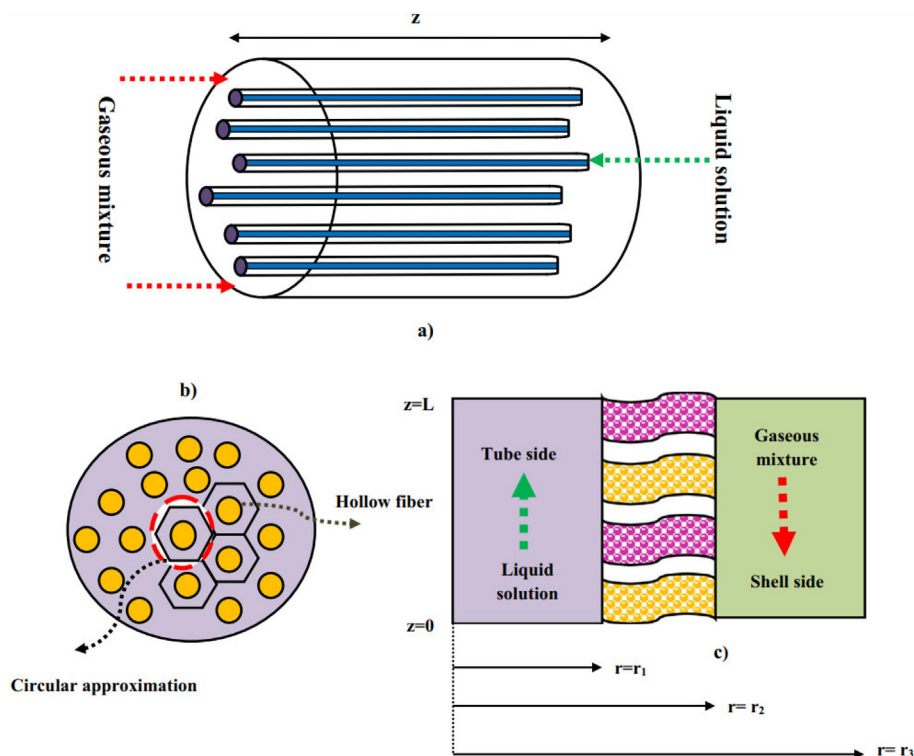


Fig. 3. Schematic demonstration of a) a HFMC, b) Happel's free surface model and c) the geographical domains of HFMC. Reprinted from [37] with permission from Elsevier.

5. Conclusion and future perspectives

In recent decades, numerous efforts have been made by various scientists to employ high-tech, promising, cost-effective and efficient strategies to mitigate the anthropogenic emission of deleterious GHGs, especially CO₂, with the aim of hindering their negative effects on environment such as ocean acidification, global warming, soil degradation, acid rain and water pollution. Application of nanofluids for enhancing the separation efficiency of CO₂ has been recently of great interest owing to their valuable advantages compared with conventional liquid absorbents like higher surface area, superior heat conductivity and greater mass transfer rate. This paper aims to present a comprehensive review on the application of different types of nanofluids to improve the separation performance of CO₂ from disparate gaseous flows. Evaluating the role of three prominent mechanisms (bubble breaking, Brownian motion and grazing effect) on increasing the mass transfer rate and consequently separation efficiency of CO₂ inside the nanofluids is another important aspect of this review paper. Based on the results, Fe₃O₄, SiO₂ and CNT are introduced as the most efficacious nanofluids for GHGs separation. As future perspectives, more theoretical/experimental studies must be conducted to evaluate the effect of base fluids and operational parameters such as gas/liquid flow rate, nanoparticles concentration on the separation efficiency of CO₂ and other GHGs. Moreover, investigating on the use of novel nanoparticles needs to be done to introduce more promising nanoparticles for enhancing the separation performance of GHGs. Ultimately, more analysis needs to be done for studying the feasibility of using nanofluids for the separation of other types of GHGs such as NO₂ and SO₂.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Ying Chen: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing. **Azher M. Abed:** Supervision, Resources, Writing

– original draft. **Al-Behadili Faisal Raheem:** Writing – review & editing, Resources, Formal analysis. **Abdulmalik S. Altamimi:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis. **Yaser Yasin:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Resources, Methodology. **Waheed Abdi Sheekhoo:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Resources, Methodology. **Ghassan Fadhil Smaism:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Funding acquisition. **Amer Ali Ghabra:** Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis. **Nesreen Ahmed Naseer:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Supervision.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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