

Thesis Title Numerical Modeling of Heat Transfer in Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell

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Abstract

The proton exchange membrane fuel cell (PEMFC) has been increasingly used as power source for the automobile. The cooling system is considerably the important part of PEMFC to enhance efficient operation. This research focused on the investigation of the temperature and heat distribution inside PEMFC, both of the single and stack cell having 5 cells. The reactive area was about 50 cm². The numerical model was solved using computational fluid dynamics program, to predict the influence of PEMFC's cooling system. Therefore, this could be the guideline for the design of external cooling system for PEMFC.

The simulation compared efficiency of fuel cell in case of with and without cooling system. The numerical models showed that the maximum fuel cell operating temperature of single cell and 5-cells stack PEMFC were 39°C and 91 °C, respectively. The operating temperature of stack cell was obviously higher than single cell and also the appropriated operating temperature, which should be under 80 °C. Thus, cooling system must be employed. The cooling plates were made of rectangular aluminum fins having size of width x length x height about 3 cm x 3.5 cm x 7.5 cm, and 0.16 cm fin thickness. Two sets of fins were installed at the left and right side of stack cell. The predicted results showed that the operating temperature of stack cell was controlled to below 65 °C under the wind speed of 5 m/s. In comparison of PEMFC's efficiency in case of with and without cooling system, the power density was 632.80 mWatt/cm² and 455.80 mWatt/cm², respectively. In brief, the use of cooling system could increase PEMFC efficiency by 20%.