

# Study on the Electro-Coagulation Treatment of a Pulp and Paper Mill Wastewater

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## ABSTRACT

Large domestic industrial paper mills wastewater after secondary biological treatments generally attain discharging regulations. However, due to the high residual electrical conductivity ( $> 2000 \mu\text{s/cm}$ ) and the amber coloration, the effluents are suspected to upset the stability of paper machine wet-end chemistry and are inductive to bacterial slime formation if reused, thus leading to unnecessarily high discharging amounts. If water right and effluent discharging fees are imposed by the Environmental Protection Administration, the large amounts of discharging effluent will cause jump in the operational costs. A pilot pulsed electrocoagulation (EC) unit capable of treating 0.5 to 1.0 m<sup>3</sup>/h wastewater and having hydraulic retention time (HRT) of 0.2 to 0.25 h comprised of a homogenizing tank, a reaction tank, an aeration tank, a flocculation tank, and a sedimentation tank was used for treatment of the wastewaters. The experimental mills selected include a speciality paper mill at Puli (A), with capacity of 5 t/d and effluent discharging amount of 1300 m<sup>3</sup>/d; a paper core mill at Kuangyin (B) with capacity of 150 t/d and effluent discharging amount of 1800 to 2000 m<sup>3</sup>/d; and an integrated pulp and paper mill at Hsinyin (C) with capacities for pulp, paper and chemicals at 400, 235, and 110 tons/d, respectively, and an effluent discharging amount of 25000 m<sup>3</sup>/d. A lab EC unit with a total volume of 3700 mL using either aluminum or iron as electrodes and electrode spacing of 5 mm, comprised of a homogenizing tank, reaction vessel, and sedimentation tank was also constructed and tested. The effluent treated came from mill D at Houli, which produces mainly core tubes, coated whiteboard, corrugating medium, liners, printing and writing paper and art paper with capacities of 110, 115, 650, 540, 300 and 220 t/d and an effluent discharging amount of 20000 m<sup>3</sup>/d. The study was conducted in 2 parts, the first used the pilot reactor fitted with either iron or aluminum electrodes to treat mill effluents, and in the second, the lab EC unit was used. In the second part, the work entails first design and construct the unit, then use the unit to treat mill D effluent for treatment efficacies. Then ion chromatography (IC), and inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP) was used to analyze the ionic species in the effluent before and after treatment and understand the fundamental properties of the effluent. Finally, the operational parameters of the lab EC unit was compared for the treatment efficacies and establishment of reaction mechanism. The results indicate that the pilot pulsed EC system compared with the traditional effluent treatments could effectively enhance removal of electrical conductivity, SS, COD, and true color. The case of mill A white water during its production of a black-colored speciality paper resulted in electrical conductivity, SS, COD and true color removal of 21.4%, 97.1%, 58.8% and 58.9%, respectively when aluminum electrodes were used. As its white specialty paper production, the aluminum electrode enabled 4.3%, 98.6%, 50.0% and 0% of the above variables. For the mill B effluent, the aluminum electrodes allowed removal of 1.5%, 98.4%, 25.4% and 48.9% of the electrical conductivity, SS, COD and hardness, respectively. The iron electrode, on the other hand, enabled removal of 19.6%, 93.8%, 30.9%, and 47.9% of the same variables, respectively of the same mill effluent. As for the mill C, the aluminum electrode removed 63.5%, 92.9%, 75.7% and 86.4% of the electrical conductivity, SS, COD and true color for its EO stage wastewater. The corresponding values for iron electrode were 70.1%, 96.4%, 81.1% and 86.6% for the variables, respectively. In order to reduce potential treatment cost, in all cases, no supplemental coagulant polymer was added. Hence, if equipment depreciation rate and personnel costs were discounted, then when the aluminum electrode was used, it required NT\$ 2,47/t to treat the mill A's wastewater. The same for mill B would require NT\$ 11.6/t for the case of iron electrode and NT\$ 12.4/t for the aluminum electrodes. For the mill C, the same costs were NT\$ 0.72 and 1.64, respectively for the iron and aluminum electrodes. Lab experiments indicated that the lab reactor could effectively increase the removal rates of electrical conductivity, SS, COD, true color, cations and anions. The results for the mill D under the best treatment conditions achieved removal of the first 4 variables at 21.6%, 91.4%, 48.2%, 53.7% efficacies, respectively. Then 49.4% of the effluent hardness, 12.9% of chloride, 15.5% of sulfate, 9.9% of potassium, 6.9% of sodium, 50.0% of aluminum and 0% of ferric/ferrous ions were removed. The possible reaction mechanism of the treatment entails: 1. Establishment of an electrical field In the lab reactor, the electrical current generated a field among the alternating anodes and cathodes. Which induced charges in the impurity particles in the effluent. Meanwhile, the electrode plates released ferrous/ferric ions. 2. Charge coupling of impurity particles and aggregation Establishment of an electrical field enabled the impurity particles to bear induced charges which attracted oppositely charge ions in the water. The charge coupled particles adsorbed or attached to the floc forming ferrous/ferric ions then allowed removal of the pollutants. 3. Formation of flocs The polarized impurity particles collided repeatedly in the aeration tank with the activated ions of ferric and aluminum ions to allow flocculation and formed flocs.

Keywords : pulsed electrocoagulation method, electrocoagulation, electrooxidation, paper mill effluents, lab-scale unit, evaluation of efficiency.

## Table of Contents

封面內頁 簽名頁 授權書.....	iii	中文摘要.....	iv	英文摘要.....	vii
謝.....	x	目錄.....	xi	圖目錄.....	xvi
表目.....					
錄.....	xx	第一章 前言.....	1	1.1 研究緣起.....	1
機.....	2	1.3 研究目的.....	4	1.2 研究動.....	1
性.....	6	第二章 研究內容及背景.....	6	2.1 造紙廠廢水水質特.....	6
廠.....	10	2.2 造紙廠之廢水處理單元流程.....	7	2.2.1 A廠.....	7
.....	17	2.2.3 C廠.....	13	2.2.2 B.....	7
.....	19	2.2.4 D廠.....	15	2.3 循環伏安法(CV , cyclic.....	17
.....	20	2.4 電化學方法及優點.....	19	2.4 電化學處理反應主要機制.....	20
.....	20	2.4.1 電化學處理反應主要機制.....	20	2.4.1.1 陽極之氧化.....	20
.....	20	2.4.1.2 陰極之還原作用.....	21	2.4.1.2 陰極之還原作用.....	21
.....	22	2.4.1.3 溶液中之凝聚、水解、浮除作用.....	21	2.4.1.3 溶液中之凝聚、水解、浮除作用.....	21
.....	22	2.5 電化學處理技術.....	22	2.5 電化學處理技術.....	22
.....	24	2.5.1 電解氧化法.....	22	2.5.2 電解浮除法.....	23
.....	24	2.5.2 電解浮除法.....	23	2.5.3 電解膠凝.....	23
.....	25	2.5.3 電解膠凝.....	23	2.5.4 電解沉積法.....	24
.....	25	2.5.4 電解沉積法.....	25	2.5.5 其他電化學技術.....	25
.....	30	2.6 脈衝電凝法.....	30	2.6 脈衝電凝法.....	30
.....	30	2.6.1 脈衝電凝法之原理.....	30	2.6.2 脈衝電凝法之處理流程.....	31
.....	33	2.6.2 脈衝電凝法之處理流程.....	31	第三章 文獻回.....	33
.....	33	3.1 電氧化處理技術.....	33	3.2 脈衝電凝系統.....	44
.....	44	3.2 脈衝電凝系統.....	44	3.2.1 脈衝電凝法之反.....	44
.....	44	3.2.1 脈衝電凝法之反.....	44	3.2.2 假設反應機構.....	45
.....	45	3.2.2 假設反應機構.....	45	3.3 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	47
.....	49	3.3 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	47	第四章 實驗設計及方.....	49
.....	49	4.1 現場試驗及實驗室實驗紙廠介紹.....	49	4.1 現場試驗及實驗室實驗紙廠介紹.....	49
.....	50	4.1.1 脈衝電凝系統.....	49	4.1.2 電凝反應.....	49
.....	50	4.1.2 電凝反應.....	49	4.2 實驗設計.....	51
.....	54	4.2 實驗設計.....	51	4.2.1 操作參數及檢測項目.....	54
.....	54	4.2.1 操作參數及檢測項目.....	54	4.2.1.1 脈衝電凝系.....	54
.....	55	4.2.1.1 脈衝電凝系.....	54	4.2.1.2 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	55
.....	56	4.2.1.2 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	55	4.2.2 實驗設備.....	56
.....	56	4.2.2 實驗設備.....	56	4.2.2.1 脈衝電凝系.....	56
.....	62	4.2.2.1 脈衝電凝系.....	56	4.2.2.2 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	62
.....	67	4.3 實驗方法.....	67	4.3 實驗方法.....	67
.....	67	4.3.1 實驗流程及步.....	67	4.3.1 實驗流程及步.....	67
.....	72	4.3.1 實驗流程及步.....	67	4.3.1.1 脈衝電凝系統.....	67
.....	72	4.3.1.1 脈衝電凝系統.....	67	4.3.1.2 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	70
.....	72	4.3.1.2 實驗室級電凝反應器.....	70	4.3.2 檢測方.....	72
.....	72	4.3.2 檢測方.....	72	4.3.3 實驗設備.....	72
.....	72	4.3.3 實驗設備.....	72	4.3.4 實驗材料.....	74
.....	74	4.3.4 實驗材料.....	74	第五章 實驗結果與討.....	75
.....	75	5.1 廢水基本資料.....	75	5.1 廢水基本資料.....	75
.....	75	5.1.1 廢紙種類及化學藥劑分析.....	75	5.1.1 廢紙種類及化學藥劑分析.....	75
.....	76	5.1.1 廢紙種類及化學藥劑分析.....	75	5.1.2 廢水水質分.....	75
.....	76	5.1.2 廢水水質分.....	75	5.2 以鐵板或鋁板為電極處理製程廢水.....	78
.....	78	5.2 以鐵板或鋁板為電極處理製程廢水.....	78	5.2.1 各廠操作參數之變化.....	79
.....	80	5.2.1 各廠操作參數之變化.....	79	5.3 電流密.....	80
.....	80	5.3 電流密.....	80	5.3.1 A廠實驗結果.....	80
.....	80	5.3.1 A廠實驗結果.....	80	5.3.1.1 對電導度之影響.....	81
.....	81	5.3.1.1 對電導度之影響.....	81	5.3.1.2 對SS之影響.....	83
.....	83	5.3.1.2 對SS之影響.....	83	5.3.1.3 對COD之影響.....	86
.....	86	5.3.1.3 對COD之影響.....	86	5.3.1.4 對真色色度之影響.....	89
.....	89	5.3.1.4 對真色色度之影響.....	89	5.3.2 B廠.....	94
.....	94	5.3.2 B廠.....	94	5.3.2.1 對電導度之影響.....	94
.....	94	5.3.2.1 對電導度之影響.....	94	5.3.2.2 對SS之影響.....	96
.....	96	5.3.2.2 對SS之影響.....	96	5.3.2.3 對COD.....	96
.....	98	5.3.2.3 對COD.....	96	5.3.2.4 對硬度之影響.....	100
.....	98	5.3.2.4 對硬度之影響.....	100	5.3.3 C廠實驗結果.....	104
.....	104	5.3.3 C廠實驗結果.....	104	5.3.3.1 對電導度.....	104
.....	104	5.3.3.1 對電導度.....	104	5.3.3.2 對SS之影響.....	108
.....	108	5.3.3.2 對SS之影響.....	108	5.3.3.3 對COD之影響.....	112
.....	116	5.3.3.3 對COD之影響.....	112	5.3.3.4 對真色色.....	116
.....	116	5.3.3.4 對真色色.....	116	5.4 經濟效益評估及處理成本估算.....	122
.....	122	5.4 經濟效益評估及處理成本估算.....	122	5.4.1 A廠.....	123
.....	123	5.4.1 A廠.....	123	5.4.2 B.....	123
.....	125	5.4.2 B.....	123	5.4.3 C廠.....	128
.....	125	5.4.3 C廠.....	128	5.5 實驗室模擬廢水基本資料.....	135
.....	128	5.5 實驗室模擬廢水基本資料.....	135	5.5.1 實驗室模.....	135
.....	135	5.5.1 實驗室模.....	135	5.5.2 加壓浮除後的廢水水質分析.....	136
.....	135	5.5.2 加壓浮除後的廢水水質分析.....	136	5.6 以鐵板或鋁板為電極處理製程廢.....	138
.....	138	5.6 以鐵板或鋁板為電極處理製程廢.....	138	5.6.1 D廠操作參數之變化.....	138
.....	138	5.6.1 D廠操作參數之變化.....	138	5.7 預備實驗.....	139
.....	139	5.7 預備實驗.....	139	5.7.1 D廠預備實驗結.....	139
.....	139	5.7.1 D廠預備實驗結.....	139	5.7.1.1 對電導度之影響.....	141
.....	141	5.7.1.1 對電導度之影響.....	141	5.7.1.2 對SS之影響.....	142
.....	142	5.7.1.2 對SS之影響.....	142	5.7.1.3 對COD之影.....	143
.....	142	5.7.1.3 對COD之影.....	143	5.7.1.4 對真色色度之影響.....	143
.....	142	5.7.1.4 對真色色度之影響.....	143	5.7.1.5 對總硬度之影響.....	143
.....	143	5.7.1.5 對總硬度之影響.....	143	5.8 實驗室模擬.....	146
.....	146	5.8 實驗室模擬.....	146	5.8.1 變異數分析.....	146
.....	146	5.8.1 變異數分析.....	146	5.8.2 實驗模擬結果.....	157
.....	157	5.8.2 實驗模擬結果.....	157	5.8.2.1 對電導度之.....	157
.....	157	5.8.2.1 對電導度之.....	157	5.8.2.2 對SS之影響.....	160
.....	160	5.8.2.2 對SS之影響.....	160	5.8.2.3 對COD之影響.....	162
.....	162	5.8.2.3 對COD之影響.....	162	5.8.2.4 對真色色.....	162
.....	164	5.8.2.4 對真色色.....	162	5.8.2.5 對總硬度之影響.....	166
.....	164	5.8.2.5 對總硬度之影響.....	166	5.8.2.6 對Cl <sup>-</sup> 之影響.....	168
.....	166	5.8.2.6 對Cl <sup>-</sup> 之影響.....	168	5.8.2.7 對SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>2-</sup> .....	168
.....	170	5.8.2.7 對SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>2-</sup> .....	168	5.8.2.8 對K <sup>+</sup> 之影響.....	170
.....	170	5.8.2.8 對K <sup>+</sup> 之影響.....	170	5.8.2.9 對Na <sup>+</sup> 之影響.....	172
.....	172	5.8.2.9 對Na <sup>+</sup> 之影響.....	172	5.8.2.10 對Al <sup>3+</sup> .....	174
.....	174	5.8.2.10 對Al <sup>3+</sup> .....	174	5.8.2.11 對Fe <sup>2+</sup> /Fe <sup>3+</sup> 之影響.....	176
.....	176	5.8.2.11 對Fe <sup>2+</sup> /Fe <sup>3+</sup> 之影響.....	176	5.9 反應機構.....	182
.....	182	5.9 反應機構.....	182	第六章 結論與.....	197
.....	197	6.1 結論.....	197	6.2 建議.....	199
.....	197	6.2 建議.....	199	參考文.....	199
.....	200	附錄.....	205		

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