

**TRANSESTERIFICATION OF CRUDE PALM OIL TO FATTY ACID
METHYL ESTERS (FAME) MEDIATED BY LIPASE IN BATCH AND
CONTINUOUS SYSTEMS**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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CONTINUOUS SYSTEMS**

by

SIM JIA HUEY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF PLATES	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xix
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xxi
ABSTRAK	xxiv
ABSTRACT	xxvi
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Biodiesel fuel: a clean and promising renewable energy sources	1
1.2 Biodiesel developments to meet energy challenges	4
1.3 Prospects of biodiesel from palm oil	6
1.4 Problem statement	9
1.5 Objectives	12
1.6 Scope of the study	13
1.7 Organization of the thesis	15
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Biodiesel production routes	17
2.1.1 Pyrolysis	17
2.1.2 Microemulsion	18
2.1.3 Transesterification	18
2.2 Transesterification in biodiesel production	19
2.2.1 Chemical-catalyzed transesterification	19
2.2.2 Supercritical transesterification	20
2.2.3 Enzymatic transesterification	21
2.3 Biogreen technology: enzymatic transesterification	22
2.4 Key operational parameters for enzymatic transesterification	30

2.4.1	Lipids	31
2.4.1(a)	Biodiesel feedstock: crude palm oil (CPO)	33
2.4.1(b)	Properties of crude palm oil (CPO)	34
2.4.1(c)	Biodiesel fuel standards	37
2.4.2	Types of lipases	38
2.4.2(a)	Immobilized <i>Thermomyces lanuginosus</i> (Lipozyme TL IM)	39
2.4.3	Types of acyl alcohol	40
2.4.3(a)	Methanol	41
2.4.4	Transesterification in solvent-free system	42
2.4.4(a)	Step-wise methanol addition method	44
2.4.5	Transesterification in solvent-mediated system	46
2.4.5(a)	Tert-butanol	49
2.4.6	Operating temperature	51
2.4.6(a)	Effect of temperature on lipase catalytic activity	52
2.4.6(b)	Effect of temperature on lipase kinetics	55
2.4.7	Glycerol concentration	58
2.4.8	Water content	59
2.5	Statistical optimization	63
2.5.1	Experimental design	63
2.5.1(a)	Factorial experimental design	64
2.5.1(b)	Crossed mixture design (CMD)	65
2.5.2	Response surface methodology	69
2.6	Enzyme kinetics	71
2.6.1	Kinetic mechanism for bi-substrate reaction	71
2.6.2	Enzyme inhibitions	73
2.6.3	Kinetic studies	79
2.7	Enzymatic transesterification in continuous flow reactors	81
2.7.1	Continuous stirred tank reactor (CSTR)	81
2.7.2	Packed bed reactor (PBR)	82
2.7.2(a)	Enzymatic transesterification in continuous PBR	84
2.7.3	Comparison between PBR and CSTR	86
2.7.4	Enzymatic transesterification: modes of operation	88

CHAPTER 3 – MATERIALS AND METHODS	92
3.1 Chemicals, lipases and equipments	92
3.1.1 Materials and chemicals	92
3.1.2 Types of lipases	94
3.1.3 Equipments	95
3.2 Overview of the experimental studies	96
3.3 Pretreatment on crude palm oil (CPO)	99
3.4 Transesterification in batch system	100
3.4.1 Free and immobilized lipases screening for high catalytic activity	101
3.4.1(a) Critical methanol to oil molar ratio on enzymatic transesterification	103
3.4.2 Feed composition optimization via crossed mixture design (CMD)	103
3.4.2(a) Transesterification reaction under CMD	103
3.4.2(b) Statistical modeling	104
3.4.2(c) Crossed mixture-process design (CMD)	106
3.4.2(d) Statistical analysis	109
3.4.3 Process optimization on enzymatic transesterification of CPO	111
3.4.3(a) CPO transesterification	111
3.4.3(b) Statistical modeling	112
3.4.3(c) Transesterification with factorial design	112
3.4.3(d) Statistical analysis	113
3.4.4 The feasibility study of CPO transesterification at 30°C operation	114
3.4.4(a) CPO transesterification	114
3.4.4(b) Statistical modeling	115
3.4.5 Thermal effects on lipase kinetics	116
3.4.5(a) Thermal effects on lipase catalytic activity	116
3.4.5(b) Thermal effects on lipase stability	117
3.4.6 Kinetic studies	119
3.4.6(a) Kinetic mechanism without accounting inhibition effects	119
3.4.6(b) Identification on types of inhibitions	120
3.4.7 Roles of water content in CPO transesterification	121
3.5 Transesterification in continuous packed bed reactor (PBR) system	122
3.5.1 System configurations for continuous PBR	123

3.5.2	Enzymatic transesterification in continuous mode	130
3.5.3	Process optimization in a continuous PBR system	132
3.5.4	CPO transesterification operation in recycle mode	134
3.5.5	Catalytic stability of Lipozyme TL IM	134
3.6	Fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) analysis and characterization	135
3.6.1	Sample preparation for characterization	135
3.6.2	Gas Chromatography (GC) Assay	136
3.6.3	Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS)	138
3.6.4	Fourier Transformed Infra Red (FTIR) Spectroscopy	138
3.6.5	Karl-Fischer (KF) Titrator	139
3.6.6	Viscometer	140
3.6.7	Fuel characterization	140
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION		142
4.1	Lipases screening	142
4.1.1	Free and immobilized lipases in catalyzing crude palm oil (CPO) transesterification	142
4.1.1(a)	Effect of methanol to oil molar ratio	144
4.1.1(b)	Effect of temperature	147
4.1.2	Comparison of FAME productivity between free and immobilized lipases	148
4.2	Optimization of mixture composition for transesterification via crossed mixture design (CMD)	152
4.2.1	Phases distribution over different mixture blends	153
4.2.2	Statistical analysis on crossed mixture-process design (CMD)	158
4.2.2(a)	Correlation between parameters with FAME yield response	161
4.2.2(b)	Graphical identification of important factors	166
4.2.2(c)	FAME yield in ternary diagram	168
4.2.2(d)	Correlation between parameters with initial reaction rate response	173
4.2.2(e)	Initial reaction rate in ternary diagram	176
4.2.3	Optimization in crossed mixture-process design (CMD)	179

4.2.3(a)	Optimum FAME yield	180
4.2.3(b)	Optimum FAME yield at minimum energy input	183
4.3	Optimization on transesterification of CPO via factorial design	184
4.3.1	Statistical analysis on FAME yield	185
4.3.2	Statistical analysis on initial reaction rate	190
4.3.3	Graphical evaluation of FAME yield and initial reaction rate	192
4.3.4	Process optimization	197
4.4	The feasibility study of CPO transesterification at room temperature operation, 30°C	199
4.4.1	Effects of agitation speed, enzyme loading and reaction time on the CPO transesterification at 30°C	200
4.4.2	Statistical analysis on FAME yield	204
4.4.3	Statistical analysis on initial reaction rate	208
4.4.4	Process optimization	210
4.5	Thermal effects on lipase kinetics	211
4.5.1	Effect of temperature on Lipozyme TL IM-catalyzed transesterification	211
4.5.2	Effect of heat treatment on Lipozyme TL IM-catalyzed transesterification	213
4.5.3	Thermal effects on activity and stability of Lipozyme TL IM	215
4.5.4	Modeling thermal stability and activity of Lipozyme TL IM	220
4.6	Comparison on process efficiencies between 30°C and 40°C	227
4.6.1	FAME yield and initial reaction rate comparison between 30°C and 40°C	227
4.6.2	Effect of temperature variations on dynamic viscosity	230
4.6.3	Comparison of thermal activity and stability of Lipozyme TL IM at 30°C and 40°C	233
4.7	Kinetic studies	236
4.7.1	Kinetic modeling without accounting inhibition effects	236
4.7.2	Identification on types of inhibitions	240
4.8	Roles of water content	243
4.9	Transesterification of CPO in a continuous packed bed reactor (PBR) System	246
4.9.1	Effect of weight hourly space velocity (<i>WHSV</i>)	253

4.9.2	Process optimization in continuous PBR system	255
4.9.3	CPO transesterification operation in recycle mode	264
4.9.4	Catalytic stability of Lipozyme TL IM	266
4.10	Characterization on CPO and FAME	268
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		277
5.1	Conclusion	277
5.2	Recommendations for future work	280
REFERENCES		281
APPENDICES		298
Appendix A	Properties for CPO, methanol, tert-butanol, glycerol and standard reference for FAME	299
Appendix B	Calculation of free lipase concentration using BCA protein assay kits	300
Appendix C	Sample calculation for methanol to oil molar ratio	301
Appendix D	GC Chromatogram for FAME standard and FAME sample	304
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS		305

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1.1	List of advantages and disadvantages of biodiesel as engine combustion fuel compared to petrodiesel. (Meher <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Demirbas, 2009)	3
Table 2.1	Comparison between chemical catalysis, supercritical alcoholysis and lipase-catalysis methods for biodiesel fuel production. (Fukuda <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Ganesan <i>et al.</i> , 2009)	22
Table 2.2	Enzymatic transesterification reactions with promising FAME yield.	24
Table 2.3	Progress and technologies developed in enzymatic transesterification.	27
Table 2.4	Effects of lipids' properties on enzymatic transesterification.	36
Table 2.5	EU, US and Malaysia Quality Standard for biodiesel. (Malaysia Palm Oil Board 2005; Demirbas, 2009)	37
Table 2.6	Comparison in the catalyzing efficiency for transesterification conducted in solvent-free system, system mediated with polar solvents and non-polar solvents.	45
Table 2.7	Role of water content in enzymatic transesterification.	60
Table 2.8	The selected experimental design and independent variables for process optimization in transesterification reaction.	66
Table 2.9	Effects of inhibitors on Michaelis-Menten reactions. (Voet <i>et al.</i> , 2002)	78
Table 2.10	Types of kinetic mechanisms used in esterification and transesterification reactions together with the defined kinetic parameters.	80
Table 2.11	List of advantages and disadvantages with process operation in PBR system together with proposed methods for process improvements. (Trevan, 1980; Robles-Medina <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Lilly and Dunhill, 1976; Shimada <i>et al.</i> , 2002)	85
Table 2.12	Comparison of different reactor configurations for continuous production via immobilized lipase-catalyzed reactions.	89
Table 2.13	Modes of operations with effective methanolysis processes.	90

Table 3.1	Specifications of crude palm oil (CPO) obtained from M.P. Mathew Palm Oil Mill Sdn. Bhd., Nibong Tebal, Malaysia.	92
Table 3.2	List of chemicals and reagents.	93
Table 3.3	Properties of commercial free and immobilized lipases.	94
Table 3.4	List of equipment.	95
Table 3.5	Parameters selected for lipase screening with respective studied levels used.	102
Table 3.6	Spreadsheet for single batch of crossed mixture design (CMD) at operating temperature of 30°C.	105
Table 3.7	The imposed constraints on compound A, B, C and ABC during crossed mixture design (CMD).	107
Table 3.8	Mixture blends and studied ranges for process variables corresponding to designated candidate points.	108
Table 3.9	Dependent variables and independent variables with corresponding studied range used in factorial design.	113
Table 3.10	Water additions (wt% of substrate) into mixtures with corresponding moisture contents values measured using Karl Fischer (KF) Titrator.	122
Table 3.11	The equipments specifications and characteristics of the immobilized enzyme particles for continuous PBR system.	125
Table 3.12	Designated candidate points for process variables with corresponding studied ranges.	133
Table 4.1	Comparison in catalyzing efficiency among <i>C. antarctica</i> , <i>T. lanuginosus</i> and <i>R. miehei</i> in free and immobilized forms.	143
Table 4.2	The range of FAME yield obtained with different types of lipases.	147
Table 4.3	The different mixture blends with its respective phase number presence in reaction mixture at 0 hr and 24 hr reaction time.	155
Table 4.4	The different mixture blends with its physical appearance of reaction mixture. The mixture blends were listed in sequence from maximum FAME yield, ranked as no. 1 to zero FAME yield produced, ranked as no. 13.	159
Table 4.5	Summary of ANOVA on the significance of FAME yield model and initial reaction rate model.	163

Table 4.6	Comparison in FAME yield and initial reaction rate achieved between 30°C with 40°C.	181
Table 4.7	Summary of ANOVA on the significance of FAME yield model and initial reaction rate model.	186
Table 4.8	Comparison in FAME yield achieved in current study with experimental works cited from literature on enzymatic transesterification mediated by Lipozyme TL IM.	200
Table 4.9	Summary of ANOVA on the significance of FAME yield model.	204
Table 4.10	Half-life of Lipozyme TL IM as a function of temperature.	219
Table 4.11	Initial guess values and the model parameters determined using non-linear regression analysis.	224
Table 4.12	Experimental data and model predictions of reaction rate for transesterification reaction-catalyzed by Lipozyme TL IM.	224
Table 4.13	Comparison in FAME productivity and thermal stability for transesterification at 30°C and 40°C.	235
Table 4.14	Comparison in kinetic constants of transesterification reaction between current studies and previous researches.	238
Table 4.15	Comparison in the determination coefficient (R^2) and kinetic constants (V_{max} , K_m , K_i) between competitive, uncompetitive and noncompetitive inhibition mechanisms for CPO, methanol and glycerol.	241
Table 4.16	List of operating conditions found in PBR system that contributed to the high FAME yield.	252
Table 4.17	Summary of ANOVA on the significance of FAME yield model.	256
Table 4.18	Characteristics for CPO and FAME product compared to biodiesel specifications of EN 14214 standards.	270
Table A.1	Physical properties of organic compounds and FAME standards.	299
Table C.1	The amounts of CPO, methanol and tert-butanol used corresponding to different methanol to oil molar ratio.	301

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1	Annual energy consumption values for selected countries. (Adapted from Energy Information Agency, 2007)	2
Figure 2.1	Transesterification of triglycerides with alcohol R_1 , R_2 , R_3 and R' represent alkyl groups.	23
Figure 2.2	Transesterification process in (a) biphasic tert-butanol system and (b) triphasic solvent-free system.	47
Figure 2.3	Augmented simplex-centroid design in the constrained region. (Cornell, 2002)	68
Figure 2.4	The Cleland notation for ping-pong bi bi mechanism. (Cleland, 1963)	72
Figure 2.5	Descriptions of ordered bi-bi mechanism for enzyme kinetics. (Segel, 1975)	73
Figure 2.6	Kinetics mechanism of enzymatic reaction with competitive inhibition. (Voet <i>et al.</i> , 2002)	74
Figure 2.7	Kinetics mechanism of enzymatic reaction with uncompetitive inhibition. (Voet <i>et al.</i> , 2002)	75
Figure 2.8	Kinetics mechanism of enzymatic reaction with noncompetitive inhibition. (Palmer, 1991)	76
Figure 2.9	Lineweaver-Burk plots for the presence of (a) competitive inhibitor, (b) uncompetitive inhibitor and (c) noncompetitive inhibitor. (Palmer, 1991)	77
Figure 2.10	PBR for continuous biodiesel production using step-wise methanol addition and glycerol removal between columns (Shimada <i>et al.</i> , 2002).	87
Figure 3.1	Research flowchart for batch and continuous transesterification.	97
Figure 3.2	Schematic diagram of continuous FAME yield from CPO transesterification reaction mediated by Lipozyme TL IM packed-bed immobilized enzyme reactor.	124
Figure 4.1	FAME yield achieved under the variation of methanol to oil molar ratio and at 30°C.	145

Figure 4.2	Equilibrium FAME yield achieved using free and immobilized lipases of <i>C. antarctica</i> , <i>T. lanuginosus</i> and <i>R. miehei</i> at (a) temperature 30°C, substrate molar ratio methanol: CPO 3:1; (b) temperature 30°C, substrate molar ratio methanol: CPO 4:1; (c) temperature 40°C, substrate molar ratio methanol: CPO 3:1; (d) temperature 40°C, substrate molar ratio methanol: CPO 4:1 and (e) temperature 40°C, substrate molar ratio methanol: CPO 35:1.	150
Figure 4.3	Model diagnostic plots of FAME yield model in (a) residual normal probability plot, (b) predicted versus actual values plot and (c) outlier T.	166
Figure 4.4	Trace plots display the influential mixture variables for FAME yield at temperature (a) 30°C, (b) 40°C, (c) 50°C and (d) 60°C.	168
Figure 4.5	Perturbation plot displays the influential process variables for FAME yield.	169
Figure 4.6	Ternary contour plots for FAME yield at temperature (a) 30°C, (b) 40°C, (c) 50°C and (d) 60°C.	170
Figure 4.7	Isocontour plots display the significant mixture variables for FAME yield at (a) 4.33 hr and (b) 8.17 hr.	173
Figure 4.8	Model diagnostic plots of initial reaction rate model in (a) residual normal probability plot, (b) predicted versus actual values plot and (c) outlier T.	175
Figure 4.9	Perturbation plot displays the influential process parameter for initial reaction rate.	176
Figure 4.10	Ternary contour plots for initial reaction rate at temperature (a) 30°C, (b) 40°C, (c) 50°C and (d) 60°C.	177
Figure 4.11	Overlay plots showing region with optimum mixture blends at (a) 30°C (b) 40°C and (c) 50°C.	182
Figure 4.12	Perturbation plot displays the influential process variables for FAME yield.	187
Figure 4.13	Response surface plots for FAME yield over agitation speed and enzyme loading where (a) 2-D contour plot at 4 hr and (b) 3-D response plot at 4 hr.	188
Figure 4.14	Response surface plots for FAME yield over enzyme loading and reaction time where (a) 2-D contour plot at 150 rpm, (b) 3-D response plot at 150 rpm, (c) 2-D contour plot at 225 rpm and (d) 3-D response plot at 225 rpm.	189

Figure 4.15	Perturbation plot displays the influential process variables for initial reaction rate.	191
Figure 4.16	Response surface plots for initial reaction rate over enzyme loading and agitation speed where (a) 2-D contour plot and (b) 3-D response plot.	192
Figure 4.17	(a) FAME yield attained at 4 hrs reaction time under different combinations of process factors, (b) Initial reaction rate under different combinations of process factors.	193
Figure 4.18	Time course of FAME yield under different enzyme loadings and at 150 rpm.	196
Figure 4.19	Time course of FAME yield under different enzyme loadings and at 175 rpm.	196
Figure 4.20	Overlay plots with optimum operating region for agitation speed and enzyme loading at reaction time of (a) 4 hrs and (b) 2 hrs.	198
Figure 4.21	Equilibrium FAME yield attained at 4 hrs reaction time and under different combinations of process factors.	203
Figure 4.22	Response surface plot of FAME yield over enzyme loading and agitation speed where (a) 2-D contour plot at 150 rpm, (b) 3-D response plot at 150 rpm, c) 2-D contour plot at 225 rpm and (d) 3-D response surface plot at 225 rpm.	206
Figure 4.23	Response surface plots for initial reaction rate over enzyme loading where (a) 2-D contour plot and (b) 3-D response plot.	209
Figure 4.24	Response surface plots for desirability function over agitation speed and enzyme loading.	210
Figure 4.25	Initial reaction rate of FAME under varied operating temperature.	213
Figure 4.26	Initial reaction rate of FAME when submitted to different heat treatment conditions: 45 – 60°C under 1 – 4 days.	214
Figure 4.27	Arrhenius plot for the estimation of the activation energy and reversible denaturation energy.	217
Figure 4.28	Semilog plot of irreversible denaturation of Lipozyme TL IM.	218
Figure 4.29	Plot of $\ln k_d$ versus $1/T$ for determination of deactivation energy, E_d and k_{d_0} constant.	218

Figure 4.30	Logarithm of k_d/T versus $1/T$ for thermodynamic parameters determination.	220
Figure 4.31	Simulation of reaction rate in consideration of thermal effects using mathematical model.	225
Figure 4.32	Plot of calculated reaction rate versus experimental reaction rate.	226
Figure 4.33	Comparison of FAME yield between 30°C and 40°C under (a) variation of enzyme loading at 150 rpm, 4 hr reaction time, (b) variation of agitation speed at 7.5 wt% enzyme loading, 4 hr reaction time.	229
Figure 4.34	Time course of FAME yield under optimum conditions at 30°C and 40°C.	230
Figure 4.35	Dynamic viscosity as a function of temperature on centrifuged crude palm oil plus reaction mixture and crude palm oil plus reaction mixture at 0 hr and 6 hr reaction time.	232
Figure 4.36	Michaelis-Menten plots of ping-pong bi-bi mechanism with (a) initial reaction rate versus CPO (substrate A) (b) initial reaction rate versus methanol (substrate B).	239
Figure 4.37	Lineweaver-Burk plots of (a) competitive inhibition for CPO; (b) noncompetitive inhibition for methanol; (c) Hanes-Woolf plot of noncompetitive inhibition for glycerol.	242
Figure 4.38	Initial reaction rate and FAME yield responses under variation of water content (%).	245
Figure 4.39	Effect of water content on FAME yield produced at different reaction time.	245
Figure 4.40	FAME yield produced in PBR system at different biocatalyst size, packed bed height and (a) at 0.70 ml/min; (b) at 1.20 ml/min and (c) at 1.70 ml/min.	248
Figure 4.41	Plot of experimental runs in PBR system with high FAME yield, the operating conditions for data point no. 1 - 6 were listed in Table 4.16.	253
Figure 4.42	Effect of weight hourly space velocity (WHSV) on FAME yield in one-step fixed bed reactor continuous system.	254
Figure 4.43	Model diagnostic plots of FAME yield model in (a) residual normal probability plot and (b) predicted versus actual values plot.	257

Figure 4.44	Contour plots of FAME yield in the continuous enzymatic synthesis of FAME at feedstock flowrate of (a) 0.70 ml/min and (b) 1.70 ml/min.	258
Figure 4.45	Contour plots of FAME yield in the continuous enzymatic synthesis of FAME at PBR height of (a) 2.80 cm and (b) 4.80 cm.	260
Figure 4.46	Contour plots of FAME yield in the continuous enzymatic synthesis of FAME at biocatalyst size of (a) 355 μm and (b) 500 μm .	262
Figure 4.47	Contour plot of desirability for process optimization.	263
Figure 4.48	Feedstock + FAME yield in feed tank and FAME yield in product tank with time sequence in recirculation PBR system. Reaction conditions: 0.70 ml/min recycling flowrate, 355 μm biocatalyst size, 3.73 cm packed bed height.	265
Figure 4.49	Operational stability of Lipozyme TL IM in continuous packed bed reactor. Reaction conditions: 0.70 ml/min, 355 μm biocatalyst size, 3.73 cm packed bed height.	268
Figure 4.50	FTIR analysis for FAME product.	273
Figure 4.51	FTIR spectra of (a) diesel, (b) biodiesel and (c) biodiesel blend (Sastry <i>et al.</i> , 2006).	274
Figure 4.52	GC-MS analysis for CPO.	275
Figure 4.53	GC-MS analysis for FAME product.	276
Figure B.1	Standard calibration of BCA protein assay.	300
Figure D.1	GC chromatogram for standard reference of FAME purchased from Nu-chek Prep, USA and Fluka, Switzerland.	304
Figure D.2	GC chromatogram for FAME sample.	304

LIST OF PLATES

		Page
Plate 3.1	Sample A of CPO obtained directly from palm oil mill.	100
Plate 3.2	Sample B of CPO after pretreatment process.	100
Plate 3.3	Sample C of reaction mixture (CPO + methanol + tert-butanol) for transesterification.	100
Plate 3.4	Sample D of FAME product after evaporating methanol and tert-butanol.	100
Plate 3.5	System configurations (enlarge version) for continuous FAME production.	126
Plate 3.6	The complete unit for water jacketed PBR.	127
Plate 3.7	The complete continuous PBR system for CPO transesterification.	127

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ASTM D675	American standard for FAME
B5	A mixture composed of 5% biodiesel with 95% diesel
B20	A mixture composed of 20% biodiesel with 80% diesel
BAUN	Batch acidolysis unit NOVO
b.p.	Boiling point
CCD	Central composite design
CCRD	Central composite rotatable design
CMD	Crossed mixture design
CO	Carbon monoxide
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
CPO	Crude palm oil
CSTR	Continuous stirred tank reactor
EJ	Exjoule
EN 14214	European standard for FAME
FAME	Fatty acid methyl esters
FFA	Free fatty acids
FID	Flame ionization detector
FTIR	Fourier Transform Infrared
GC	Gas Chromatography
GC-MS	Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry
ID	Inner diameter
IRR	Initial reaction rate
IUN	Interesterification units
KF Titrator	Karl-Fischer Moisture Titrator
KLU	Kilo lipase unit
KOH	Potassium hydroxide
Lipozyme TL IM	<i>Thermomyces lanuginosus</i> immobilization on silica
Lipozyme RMIM	<i>Rhizomucor miehei</i> immobilization on anionic resin
MPOB	Malaysia Palm Oil Board
NaOH	Sodium hydroxide

Novozym 435	<i>Candida antarctica</i> immobilization on macroporous polyacrylic resin
NO _x	Nitrogen oxide
PBR	Packed bed reactor
PLU	Propyl laurate unit
PORIM	Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia
Pred. R ²	Predicted determination coefficient
PSS	Programmed split/ splitless injector
Quad	Quadrillion Btu
RSM	Response surface methodology
RVO	Refined vegetable oil
rpm	Revolutions per minute
SO ₂	Sulphur dioxide
TCD	Thermal conductivity detector
vol	Volume
WCO	Waste cooking oil
WHSV	Weight hourly space velocity
wt%	Weight percentage

LIST OF SYMBOLS

		Unit
A	Constant	min^{-1}
$[A]$	Initial concentration of substrate A	mol.L^{-1}
Adj R^2	Adjusted coefficient of determination	-
a_w	Water activity	-
B	Reactants	-
$[B]$	Initial concentration of substrate B	mol.L^{-1}
Data	Titration volume	ml
DF	Dilution factor	-
Drift	Drift value	$\mu\text{g.min}^{-1}$
E	Enzyme	-
E'	Modified form of the enzyme	-
EI	Enzyme-inhibitor complex	-
ES	Enzyme-substrate complex	-
$[ESI]$	Concentration for enzyme-substrate-inhibitor complex	-
E_0	Initial enzyme activity	$\text{mol.L}^{-1}.\text{min}^{-1}$
E_a	Activation energy constant	J.mol^{-1}
E_d	Denaturation energy for lipase	J.mol^{-1}
F_1	The factor of the reagent charged in Burette No. 1	-
$[FAME]_0$	FAME concentration at time, 0	g.L^{-1}
$[FAME]_t$	FAME concentration on the linear plot at time, t .	g.L^{-1}
$f(x_1, x_2, \dots)$	Mixture variables	-
$g(z)$	Ordinary model for the process factors	-
ΔG	Standard free energy	J.mol^{-1}
h	Planck's constant = 6.63×10^{-34}	$\text{m}^2.\text{kg.s}^{-1}$
ΔH^0	Standard enthalpy (heat content) change	J.mol^{-1}
I	Inhibitor	-
K_a	Binding constant for CPO	mmol.ml^{-1}

K_b	Binding constant for methanol	mmol.ml ⁻¹
K_I	Dissociation constant for inhibitor with enzyme	mol.L ⁻¹
K_I^A	Dissociation constant for substrate A	mol.L ⁻¹
K_m^A	Michaelis constant for substrate A	mol.L ⁻¹
K_m^B	Michaelis constant for substrate B	mol.L ⁻¹
k	Reaction rate constant	min ⁻¹
k_1	Forward rate constants for formation of the ES complex	s ⁻¹
k_{-1}	Reverse rate constants for formation of the ES complex	s ⁻¹
k_2	Rate constant for the decomposition of ES to P	s ⁻¹
k_d	Denaturation constant	s ⁻¹
k_{d_0}	Constant	min ⁻¹
k_B	Boltzmann constant = 1.38×10^{-23}	m ² .kg.s ⁻² .K ⁻¹
Log P	Logarithm of the partition coefficient	-
M_{FAME}	Moles of FAME produced	mol
M_L	Moles of methyl linoleate	mol
M_m	Moles of methyl myristate	mol
M_o	Moles of methyl oleate	mol
M_p	Moles of methyl palmitate	mol
M_s	Moles of methyl stearate	mol
M_{CPO}	Moles of total fatty acids in crude palm oil	mol
P	Product	-
Q	Byproduct	-
R	Gas constant = 8314	$\frac{\text{kg.m}^2}{\text{s}^2 \cdot \text{kg} \cdot \text{mol.K}}$
R ²	Coefficient of determination	-
S	Substrate	-
ΔS^0	Standard entropy change	J.mol ⁻¹ .K ⁻¹
T	Operating temperature	K

t	Time	s
t_o	Initial Time	s
Δt	Reaction time taken to produce $[FAME]_t$	min
V_{\max}	Maximum reaction rate for CPO and methanol	$\text{mmol.ml}^{-1}.\text{min}^{-1}$
v	Initial rate of reaction	$\text{mol.ml}^{-1}.\text{min}^{-1}$
v_0	Constant	$\text{mol.ml}^{-1}.\text{min}^{-1}$
Wt_1	Weight of the sample before the sample is injected for titration	g
Wt_2	Weight of the remaining sample after the sample is injected for titration	g
x	Independent variables	-
y	Predicted response	-

Greek letters

β_o	Plane interception coefficient	-
β_i	First-order model coefficient	-
β_{ii}	Quadratic coefficient for the factor i	-
β_{ij}	Linear model coefficient for the interaction between factors i and j	-
β_x	Partial regression coefficient	-
ε	Random error term	-
τ	Half life time	min
ψ	Lipase activity coefficient	-

TRANSESTERIFIKASI MINYAK KELAPA SAWIT MENTAH KE LEMAK ASID METIL ESTER (FAME) MENGGUNAKAN PERANTARAAN LIPASE DALAM SISTEM KELOMPOK DAN SELANJAR

ABSTRAK

Harga minyak mentah yang meningkat akibat daripada penyusutan simpanan bahan api fosil dan kadar penggunaan tenaga yang semakin meningkat di serata dunia telah menarik perhatian penyelidik-penyelidik untuk menghasilkan biodiesel sebagai sumber tenaga alternatif. Transformasi minyak kelapa sawit kepada produk yang berharga seperti biodiesel membantu meningkatkan nilai dagangan minyak kelapa sawit. Penghasilan biodiesel dengan 'teknologi hijau' seperti transesterifikasi berenzim dengan minyak kelapa sawit mentah (CPO) sebagai bahan mentah telah dikaji dalam penyelidikan ini. Lipozyme TL IM terbukti sebagai pemangkin yang sesuai bagi transesterifikasi CPO dengan hasil lemak asid metil ester (FAME) yang stabil sebanyak 54.84 - 63.14% pada suhu 30 - 60°C. Pemulihan Lipozyme TL IM mudah untuk penggunaan berulang dan kos lipase yang murah (USD 125.91/kg) berbanding dengan Novozym 435 (USD 1671.19/kg). Perencatan akibat kesan metanol dapat diatasi dengan mengaplikasikan rekabentuk campuran silang (CMD) di mana 96.15% hasil FAME dicapai pada 0.37: 0.10: 0.53 kadaran CPO: metanol: tert-butanol. Proses beroperasi dengan had pemindahan jisim yang minimum dapat dicapai pada 150 rpm, 6.65 jisim% bebanan enzim dan 4 jam masa tindakbalas untuk menghasilkan 96.15% hasil FAME. Model matematik dengan mempertimbangkan kesan pengaktifan dan perencatan lipase dapat meramalkan hasil FAME dengan perubahan suhu dan masa tindakbalas ($R^2 = 0.99$). Sehubungan itu, suhu 40°C merupakan suhu kendalian optimum kerana kadar perencatan lipase sebanyak $1.10 \times 10^{-2} \text{ jam}^{-1}$ pada suhu 40°C dapat diatasi dengan 2.66% hasil FAME/min.

Pemangkinan lipase pada transesterifikasi CPO dengan perantara tert-butanol dapat dijelaskan dengan mekanisme ping-pong bi-bi dengan 1.45 mmol/ml.min kadar tindakbalas maksimum, V_{max} , 1.59 mmol/ml nilai pemalar CPO, K_a dan 1 mmol/ml nilai pemalar metanol, K_b . Transesterifikasi CPO di dalam sistem selang reaktor lapisan terpadat menunjukkan kecekapan pemangkinan optimum pada hasil FAME 90% dengan kadar aliran penyusunan 0.70 ml/min, ketinggian lapisan terpadat 3.50 sm dan saiz mangkin 355 μ m. Pencapaian hasil FAME yang tinggi dalam kajian ini telah menunjukkan kemungkinan untuk menghasilkan biodiesel daripada CPO melalui transesterifikasi berenzim.

TRANSESTERIFICATION OF CRUDE PALM OIL TO FATTY ACID METHYL ESTERS (FAME) MEDIATED BY LIPASE IN BATCH AND CONTINUOUS SYSTEMS

ABSTRACT

The rapid increase in the crude oil prices due to diminishing reserves of fossil fuels and the increased rate of world energy consumption have drawn attention of the researchers towards biodiesel as an alternative energy source. The transformation of palm oil into value-added product biodiesel can help to increase its commercial value of palm oil. The green technology of enzymatic transesterification with crude palm oil (CPO) as feedstock for biodiesel production has been studied in the present research. Lipozyme TL IM was found as a suitable biocatalyst for CPO transesterification with stable FAME productivity of 54.85 - 63.14% within the temperature range of 30 - 60°C. The recovery of Lipozyme TL IM for repeated usage was simple and relatively cheap (USD 125.91/kg) as compared to the competitive Novozym 435 (USD 1671.19/kg). Methanol inhibition was alleviated successfully using CMD where 96.15% FAME yield was achieved at 0.37: 0.10: 0.53 proportions of CPO: methanol: tert-butanol. Process operation with minimum mass transfer limitations was defined at 150 rpm, 6.65 wt% enzyme loading and 4 hr reaction time in order to attain 96.15% FAME yield. A kinetic model that accounted for both lipase activation and deactivation effects was proposed and FAME yield corresponding to temperature and reaction time variation was predicted from the model ($R^2 = 0.99$). The most suitable operative temperature was 40°C because the lipase denaturation rate of $1.10 \times 10^{-2} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ at 40°C was overwhelmed with the gain of 2.66% FAME yield/min. The lipase-catalyzed transesterification of CPO mediated with tert-butanol could be elucidated by ping-pong bi-bi mechanism with maximum

reaction rate, $V_{max} = 1.45$ mmol/ml.min, CPO binding constant, $K_a = 1.59$ mmol/ml and methanol binding constant, $K_b = 1$ mmol/ml. The CPO transesterification in continuous PBR system showed high catalytic efficiency with 90% FAME yield and produced at 0.70 ml/min feed flowrate, 3.50 cm PBR height and 355 μ m biocatalyst particle size. The high FAME yield achieved in this study shows that it is feasible to produce biodiesel from CPO via enzymatic transesterification.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biodiesel fuel: a clean and promising renewable energy source

The U.S. Energy Information Administration declared that total world energy consumption in 2005 was 488 EJ (exjoule, 10^{18} J) or 463 Quad (quadrillion Btu, 10^{15} Btu). World consumption is expected to surpass 60% increase in energy consumption or equivalent to 650 EJ by 2025 and this value reflects the degree of industrialization, efficiency of primary energy source used and energy conservation (Energy Information Agency, 2007). In view of the worldwide energy supply, crude oil accounted for 35% of the total energy consumption in 2002. Natural gas, coal and nuclear accounted for 21%, 23% and 7% respectively whereas renewable energy contributed to 14% (U.S. Department of Energy, 2004; Energy Information Agency, 2007). Annual energy consumption values for selected countries are shown in Figure 1.1. On top of the annual energy consumption between 1985 and 2005, China and India achieved an overwhelming of 250 % increased in energy demand compared to 18 % in Europe (Energy Information Agency, 2007). Currently, available fossil fuel sources are estimated to become depleted in the next century, with petroleum reserves depleted within 40 years (BP, 2005; Energy Information Agency, 2007) . As a consequence, crude oil prices have risen from less than \$20/ barrel in the 1990s to nearly \$100/ barrel in 2007 (Kinney and Clemente, 2005).

In addition to the energy security crisis, severe climate changes were the consequences of greenhouse gases due to fossil fuels consumption (Drapcho *et al.*, 2008; Arent *et al.*, 2010; Meunier, 2007; Kriegler, 2010; Ellington *et al.*, 1993). As

an alternative, biodiesel fuel produced on a sustainable basis offers the benefits of environmentally friendly (Zhang, 2003), energy independency and security, economic and social cohesion (Howell and Jobe, 2005). These factors have created the driving force and motivation for this alternative fuel-biodiesel production.

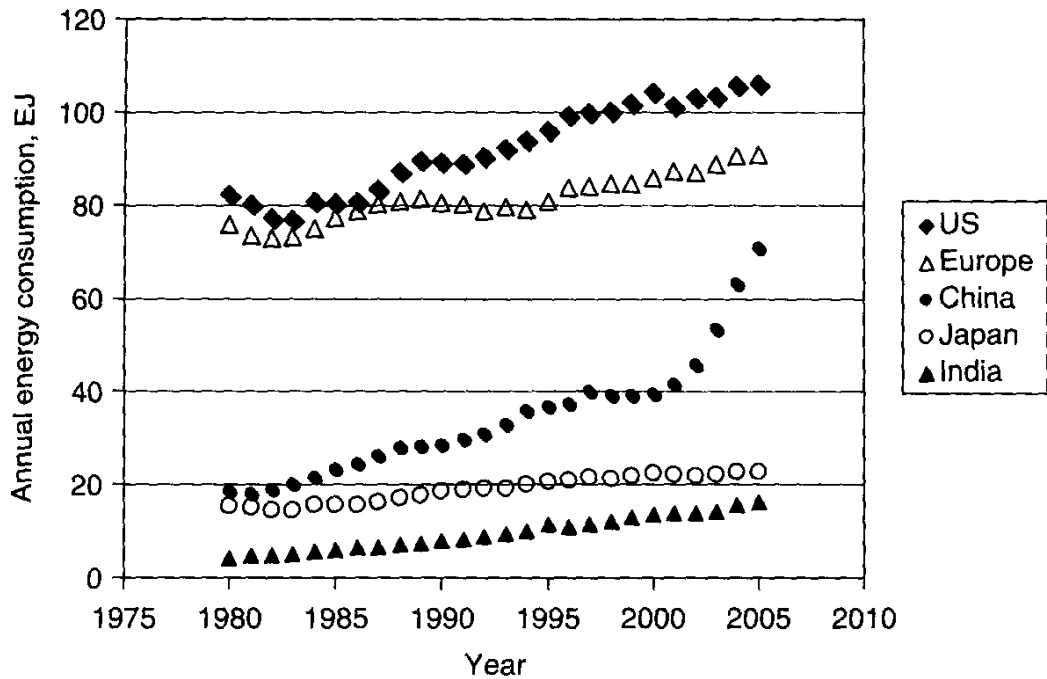


Figure 1.1: Annual energy consumption values for selected countries. (Adapted from Energy Information Agency, 2007)

Biodiesel, chemically defined as monoalkyl esters of long chain fatty acids, are derived from renewable feedstocks from vegetable oils or animal fats (Ganesan *et al.*, 2009). Biodiesel is an environmentally friendly and a renewable fuel that gives a promising alternative fuel for compression-ignition engines. Generally, biodiesel resulted from vegetable oil has viscosity close to diesel fuel, possesses high cetane number and flash point (Meher *et al.*, 2006; Demirbas, 2009). The utilization of biodiesel possesses several distinct technical advantages and disadvantages compared to petro diesel (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: List of advantages and disadvantages of biodiesel as engine combustion fuel compared to petrodiesel. (Meher *et al.*, 2006; Demirbas, 2009)

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derivation from renewable resource, thus in the aim of sustainability and dynamic energy preservation. • Biodegradability • Reduction of most exhaust emissions • Higher flash point for safer handling and transport purpose • High cetane number resulted in high combustion efficiency • Excellent lubricity compared to greatly reduced lubricity of petrodiesel fuels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its inherent higher price (offset by legislative and regulatory incentives/subsidies) • Slightly increased NO_x exhaust emissions • Instability when exposed to air (oxidative stability) • Cold flow properties especially relevant in North America.

Global economic growth factor is forcing higher burning fossil fuels and thus greenhouse gases are released at a life-threatening rate and causing global warming. In terms of impacts on environmental hazard, biodiesel production can be more environmentally benign than fossil fuel technologies for several reasons. Biodiesel production from biomass is carbon neutral where the CO₂ produced as fuel is combusted, is offset by the carbon absorbed as the biomass is grown (Tillman *et al.*, 2006). Besides, bioconversion processes produce less hazardous compounds and less environmental pollutions are involved. In contrast, extraction of fossil fuels without the execution of sustainable practices places a heavy toll on the environment (Drapcho *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, by considering the process as well as the compound itself, biodiesel is considered as a clean fuel that can combat global warming and stabilize the climate through the reduction of CO₂ emissions (Jacquet, 2007; Drapcho *et al.*, 2008; Arent *et al.*, 2010; Meunier, 2007; Kriegler, 2010; Ellington *et al.*, 1993).

The utilization of biodiesel would largely enhance the commercial value for fats and oils, the need to build biodiesel plants and the employment of human capital to operate these plants. Thus, using biodiesel would gain economic benefits for farmers, local communities and the nation as a whole. Increased utilization of biodiesel results in significant economic benefits for both the urban and rural sectors, as well as the balance of trade (Howell and Jobe, 2005).

Coupled with political considerations over the security of energy supplies and price volatility, environmental concerns related to global warming and sustainability are the momentums to move the worlds' energy consumption away from fossil fuels. The initiatives and efforts taken across the European and Asian countries in developing and promoting biodiesel production so as to reduce dependency on energy supply from fossil fuels are reviewed in the following section.

1.2 Biodiesel developments to meet energy challenges

The factors of fuel prices volatility, the desire for energy independence and security, encourage several countries to dramatically step up for targets and mandates for biofuels (Bockey, 2005). The global biodiesel industry has grown significantly over the pass decade and estimated to reach 37 billion gallons by 2016 at an annual growth of 42% (Sims, 2007). The European Union was the global leader in biodiesel production with 3.2 million tons in 2005 and 4.9 million tons in 2006 (European Biodiesel Board, 2006). Germany alone accounted for half of the global biodiesel production in 2005. Several countries in the EU dramatically stepped up targets and mandates for biofuels policies in 2005-06. French established a 5.75% of biodiesel blending by 2008 whereas Germany mandated 4.4% biodiesel blending. EU

countries have also been enacting biofuel tax exemptions (Bockey, 2005). The United States has increased biodiesel production from 2 million gal in 2000 to 250 million gal in 2006 (Carriquiry, 2007). The blending mandates have also initiated in several biodiesel producer countries such as Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Malaysia and Thailand. Malaysia started using B5 or 5% biodiesel blending in 2005 (Körbitz, 2005).

Recently, a rapid expansion in production capacity is being observed in developing countries. In China, a vegetable fat chemistry plant was started in June 2001 and has established a capacity 10,000 tons/year. The Kyoto city initiated biodiesel production from recycled frying oil and has established the B20 mixture for 81 city buses since 2000 (Körbitz, 2005). As reported at the International Biofuel Conference in 1998, the biodiesel produced from Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia's (PORIM) pilot plant has promising results in diesel engines. The suitability of palm oil as biodiesel feedstock with encouraging results for trial run on diesel engine and the limitations of biodiesel feedstock in Europe had significantly increased the palm oil exports which gave an additional venue for Malaysia's palm oil industry (Malaysia Palm Oil Council, 2007). Alternatively, Malaysian government launched National Biofuel Policy in promoting the biodiesel production from palm oil in research stages by PORIM until the establishment of a few biodiesel plants in Malaysia (National Biofuel Policy, 2006). Prospects and impacts of biofuel from palm oil especially to Malaysia are elaborated and discussed in detail in the following section.

1.3 Prospects of biodiesel from palm oil

Malaysia is endowed with abundant supplies of non-renewable energy resources, especially oil and gas. However, the non-renewable fossil fuels (current oil and gas reserves) are expected to be depleted within 17 and 37 years respectively. From 1998 to 2001, electricity accounted for 18% of the fuel energy consumption, averaging 28,500 in the Malaysia energy sector, therefore Malaysia is expected to become an importer of crude oil when its domestic petroleum consumption exceeds production (Earth Trends Country Profiles, 2003). With the knowledge that these non-renewable fossil fuel resources will exceed their threshold capacity, Malaysian government has to optimize the use of its huge quantities of palm oil as renewable energy resource (Malaysia Palm Oil Board, 2009).

In view of the usage of biodiesel would reduce dependency on imported crude oil, there must be a balance to be sought between agricultural, economic development and the environment (Basiron, 2007). Malaysia Palm Oil Board (MPOB) has dramatically taken leading steps and efforts in research and development from as early as 1987 to explore biodiesel production from palm oil. Malaysia is well-known as world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil with crude palm oil production dramatically increased from 8.3 million tonnes in 1998 to 15.8 million tonnes in 2009 (Malaysia Palm Oil Board, 2009). In 2008, palm oil contributed to about 13% of the total world production of oils and fats and it is competitive to soybean oil as the most important vegetable oil (Santosa, 2008; Sumathi *et al.*, 2008).

Biodiesel produced from palm oil meets full EN 14214 and ASTM D675 specifications. Research studies by MPOB claimed that palm oil methyl esters used as diesel substitute resulted in promising and satisfying engine performance through a long term assessment of the effect of biodiesel on vehicle maintenance, operating costs, fuel consumption and exhaust emission (May *et al.*, 2005; Kalam and Masjuki, 2005; Crabbe *et al.*, 2001). These studies concluded from test run on biodiesel fuel engines mounted on passenger buses with milestones of 300,000 km. This also included very detailed tests on bus fleets, which were started by Daimler-Benz as early as 1987 (Körbitz, 2005). Other benefits with the used of palm oil biodiesel includes the great reduction in CO₂, CO, unburnt hydrocarbon, SO₂, particulates and air toxics and biodegradable (Kalam and Masjuki, 2005). The palm oil fuel has experienced intensive development from research to the first commercial small scale plant by Carotino Sdn. Bhd. and the plant started production of 3,000 tons per annum by August 2002. The plant expanded to 120,000 tons per annum in 2006. In addition, the world first integrated commercial normal and winter-grade biodiesel plant was successfully launched by Carotino Sdn. Bhd. in August 2006 (Choo *et al.*, 2009).

The successful studies and developments in biodiesel production from palm oil has attracted keen interest by the Malaysian government to dramatically step up and release the National Biofuel Policy in March 2006 (Choo *et al.*, 2009). The National Biofuel policy with envisions to reduce the dependency on fossil fuels, with the use of environmental friendly, sustainable and viable sources of energy. The policy also aims to enhance prosperity and well-being of the stakeholders in the agriculture and commodity based industries through stable and remunerative prices (National Biofuel Policy, 2006). Five Strategic Thrusts were embedded in the

National Policy to sustain and establish the biodiesel industry. Government have mandated the used of 5% biodiesel from palm oil blending with 95% petroleum diesel or B5 in land and sea transport as well as in the industrial sector (Malaysia Palm Oil Board, 2009). Government and private sectors would provide enough funding adequate for the research, development and commercialization of biofuel technologies to enable an increase use of biofuel. Malaysia's interest to become an active biofuel exporter and thus, the establishment of plants for biodiesel production is encouraged and facilitated. The utilization of biofuel will reduce the use of fossil fuels and consequently enhance the quality of the environment (Abdullah *et al.*, 2009a).

Various conversion methods on renewable feedstocks have been established for biofuel production with chemical reaction being the most popular route. However, biodiesel synthesis method of enzymatic transesterification is environmental benign, requires mild operating conditions of low energy input and the ease of glycerol separation from biofuel. There is no need of deodorization nor neutralization of the product necessary compared to chemical process (Du *et al.*, 2004; Fukuda *et al.*, 2001; Wardle, 2003). In the present study, the research is focused on using enzymatic transesterification for biodiesel production throughout the investigation. Therefore, literatures on the effects of crucial parameters such as lipids, lipase sources, methanol to oil molar ratio, operating temperature and water content on transesterification are emphasized. In addition, current techniques which are adopted for process enhancements and process optimization, the available system configurations for continuous transesterification reaction are discussed and reviewed in Chapter 2.

1.4 Problem statement

Enzymatic transesterification reaction for FAME production is not commercially adopted, mainly due to the expensive cost of immobilized lipase and relatively slow reaction rate compared to alkaline-catalysed transesterification. Therefore, this study was carried out to identify the problems occurred during the enzymatic transesterification process and appropriate solutions to the problems will be suggested.

In previous researches, effort was carried out mostly on transesterification of refined vegetable oil or waste cooking oil by expensive immobilized lipase *Candida antarctica* (Novozym 435). Waste cooking oil (WCO) although cheap but the feedstock is not adequate in supply and its chemical composition is inconsistent. Besides, high free fatty acids (FFA) in WCO may cause the hydrolysis reaction in competition with the transesterification reaction and thus, lead to low FAME yield. Therefore, crude palm oil (CPO) which is high in triglyceride content (>96%) and extremely low in FFA is chosen as a potential feedstock for transesterification. The cost for CPO resulting from palm oil extraction is relatively low compared to the refined vegetable oil (RVO) that undergoes processes such as degumming, bleaching, deodorization and hydrogenation. Although CPO is cheap, it is not a favourable feedstock for research due to the phospholipids and degummed oil contents inhibit the lipase used for the enzymatic transesterification. The semi-solid form of CPO at room temperature is quite viscous and difficult to handle since the diffusion of reactants from bulk liquid to biocatalyst could lead to significant mass transfer limitations. Therefore, CPO is recommended for a pretreatment process prior to the transesterification reaction.

A widely adopted lipase isolated from *Candida antarctica* is an excellent enzyme for transesterification with more than 90% of fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) yield, but the production cost of the lipase is expensive (USD 1671.19/ kg) (Haas *et al.*, 2006) and the ease of lipase inactivation with mild methanol to oil molar ratio of 1.5:1. These adverse effects have hindered the repeated use of lipase *C. antarctica* for a prolonged period of operation and thus, enzymatic transesterification for biodiesel production is not economically feasible. Alternative lipase sources need to be screened with characteristics of cheap in production cost, high resistant to feedstock and product inhibitions, maintaining high catalyzing efficiency even for extended period of operation and achieved high FAME yield. Relatively cheap lipase of *Thermomyces lanuginosus* (USD 125.91/ kg) (Haas *et al.*, 2006) compared to lipase *C. antarctica* is a better choice for transesterification.

Due to the ease of lipase inactivation with mild methanol concentration, step-wise methanol addition method and the use of organic solvent as reacting medium are the initiatives adopted to increase the viability of enzyme transesterification in biodiesel production. Batch wise methanol addition technique for high methyl ester yield is a compromise between methanol dosage and addition time so as to solubilise all the added methanol into oil. The method is time consuming and requires intensive monitoring to avoid excessive insoluble methanol droplets in reaction mixture. Organic solvent, for instance, tert-butanol is able to dilute both hydrophilic methanol and hydrophobic CPO into the reaction mixture, but the excessive use of tert-butanol may result in dilution effect and could lead to low conversion. Besides, the subsequent immersion of insoluble byproduct, glycerol tends to bind to the lipase structure and causes very slow or no catalytic activity. Therefore, all the components

in the reaction mixture present in appropriate proportions are of paramount importance to ensure complete solubility between reactants (CPO, methanol) with products (FAME, glycerol) into organic solvent. Crossed mixture design (CMD) is adopted to optimize the mixture proportions and operating parameters simultaneously.

Most of the transesterification studies were focused on optimizing the operating temperature merely to accelerate and maximize catalyzing activity of lipases without considering thermal stability of lipases due to high temperature operation. Lipase is sensitive and is reported to be merely inactivated at moderate temperature operation of 50°C. The enzymatic transesterification operates under the most desirable operating temperature able to attain high FAME productivity as a whole besides preserving the lipase catalyzing activity.

Continuous stirred tank reactor (CSTR) for FAME production usually results in low FAME yield compared to batch system which is mainly due to the relatively short retention time of substrate in the reactor. In addition, the procedures for lipase recovery in CSTR system are difficult and expensive while the process scale-up could be unreliable. Continuous system integrated with the bed of immobilized lipase particles being packed inside the reactor helps to minimise the methanol inhibition to lipase due to low differences between substrate and product concentration in the whole reactor. The *in-situ* immobilized lipase separation can be carried out with packed bed reactor (PBR) while the corporation of membrane in CSTR to recover lipase for reusability have caused an expensive capital cost and mass transfer limitations. The effective enzyme loading required for high methyl esters yield was

largely reduced in PBR compared to CSTR. Continuous system with all the lipase particles packed inside the PBR offers the ease of reactants mass transfer to lipase active site for catalyzing activity. Whereas, in CSTR, the lipase shearing resulted from collisions between biocatalyst particles and impeller besides the adsorption and tendency for the lipase particles to accumulate at the membrane surface have largely reduced the theoretical catalytic activity. Key factors for continuous system are simultaneously identified and optimized to maximize the FAME production rate.

1.5 Objectives

The project was aimed to initiate renewable fuel production from crude palm oil (CPO) via enzymatic transesterification. Process enhancement and optimization in batch and continuous systems were carried out using statistical approach. In order to achieve the main objective, a number of specific objectives are required and they are listed as follows:

- 1.) To compare the catalyzing efficiency on FAME production from CPO and methanol for both free and immobilized lipases from three different species (*Candida antarctica*, *Rhizomucor miehei*, *Thermomyces lanuginosus*).
- 2.) To optimize composition of the reaction mixture (tert-butanol, CPO and methanol) and process parameters simultaneously for high catalyzing activity using crossed mixture design (CMD).

- 3.) To identify external mass transfer control and lipase loading conditions in batch system for high FAME yield using factorial experimental design approach.
- 4.) To study the thermal effects on lipase and to determine the optimum operating temperature that simultaneously achieve high FAME yield and preserves high catalyzing activity of lipase.
- 5.) To deduce the kinetics and mechanism for lipase-catalyzed transesterification of CPO under reaction-controlled condition, which then leads to identification of types of inhibition exerted from both substrates and product on the lipase catalyzing rate.
- 6.) To study and optimize the enzymatic transesterification of CPO process in continuous packed bed reactor using factorial experimental design.

1.6 Scope of the study

Overall, the FAME production from CPO and methanol were initiated in batch reactor and the reaction was then transferred to continuous packed bed reactor (PBR) system with the aim of obtaining high production rate and high FAME yield.

Scope 1: Identifying the most potential lipase for CPO transesterification.

Few commonly utilized lipases (from: *C. antarctica*, *T. lanuginosus* and *Rhizomucor miehei*) in free and immobilized forms were studied for their catalyzing specificity in transesterification reaction. The most desirable immobilized lipase that can withstand

the highest methanol to oil molar ratio while achieving the highest FAME yield at the lowest reaction temperature was identified. Since the transesterification reaction is reversible, the excess molar methanol concentration is necessary to drive the FAME production into completion. The desired lipase was further examined for the degree of methanol inhibition when susceptible to the extremely high methanol to oil molar ratio of 35:1.

Scope 2: Process optimization, thermal and kinetic studies in batch system.

Optimization on transesterification reaction in batch system was carried out with the study on independent variables of feed compositions (methanol, tert-butanol, CPO), operating temperature (30 – 60 °C) and reaction time (0.50 - 12 hr). The crossed mixture design (CMD) was employed to optimize feed compositions of reaction mixture and operating parameters simultaneously. Transesterification reaction at the minimum mass transfer limitations was developed by optimizing process parameters of agitation speed, enzyme loading and reaction time using factorial experimental design. The optimum mixture compositions which were defined by CMD were adopted in the process optimization study. In the thermal effects study, the most desirable operating temperature for transesterification reaction was identified which produces high FAME yield while preserving the catalyzing activity of lipase. The thermal stability and activity of immobilized lipase at different operating temperature and period of heat treatment was modelled for an enzymatic reactor. The kinetic parameters and suitable kinetic mechanism based on variants were deduced for the lipase-catalyzed transesterification of CPO with methanol in tert-butanol solvent system. Consequently, types of inhibitions exerted by substrates of CPO and

methanol as well as byproduct of glycerol were evaluated using reciprocal plots of Lineweaver-Burk plot and Hans-Woolf plot.

Scope 3: To study CPO transesterification in a continuous PBR system and process optimization. A packed bed reactor suitable for continuous production of FAME from CPO was fabricated and reaction was conducted. The product recovery after the reaction was also carried out. An empirical model that revealed the process performance with key parameters was developed for PBR system with the aid of statistical design. The obtained model equation was simulated for desirable product yield and the simulated results were compared with the experimental data.

1.7 Organization of the thesis

The thesis comprises of five chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) explains the importance of biodiesel as sustainable fuel for future besides incentives and energy policies taken nation wide to secure energy independency. Research developments until the establishment of biodiesel plant using palm oil feedstock in Malaysia are described to clarify the prospects of biodiesel production from palm oil. Difficulties occurred with enzymatic transesterification technology are identified in problem statement. Objectives are listed down and strategies are proposed with scope of the study, to solve the problems for the current research.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) is mainly on the literature survey, information on theories and principles involved in kinetics for lipase-catalyzed reaction, thermodynamic effects on reaction, key parameters that affecting process efficiency and significant findings from the previous researches on enzymatic transesterification

for biodiesel production. Description about the modeling tools of factorial design, crossed mixture design (CMD) and response surface methodology (RSM) are included.

Chapter 3 (Material, Experimental Methods and Analysis) is a compilation of all the materials, equipments and chemicals used in the experiment. All the procedures from feedstock pretreatment, conducting transesterification reaction for optimization, kinetic studies and thermodynamic studies in batch system are mentioned in this chapter. Lastly, the experimental setup and operation for continuous PBR as well as the product analyses are presented.

Chapter 4 (Results and Discussion) is a discussion section for the experimental work done based on the data analysis. This chapter includes the lipase screening for high FAME yield, defining optimum mixture compositions to minimise methanol and glycerol inhibitions, process optimization at minimum external mass transfer and intra-particles mass transfer limitations, studies on the thermal effects and the lipase kinetics to understanding process behaviour. Performance of transesterification reaction in continuous PBR is optimized with statistical analysis, effect of external mass transfer in PBR system is evaluated and concluded with long hours' operation.

Chapter 5 (Conclusions and Recommendations) highlight and emphasize the dominant observations for the experimental studies with specific remarks based on the previous research works. Recommendations are included for future work of biodiesel production via enzymatic transesterification.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Biodiesel production routes

The substitution of vegetable oil for diesel fuel in diesel engines has shown to encounter problems of high viscosities, low volatilities and polyunsaturated character (Srivastava and Prasad, 2000). Oils with high in polyunsaturates have higher nitrogen oxide emissions once burned. However, these oil characteristics can be modified for improved diesel engine performances through pyrolysis, microemulsification and transesterification (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001).

2.1.1 Pyrolysis

Pyrolysis is defined as the conversion of one substrate into another by the application of thermal energy in the absence of oxygen. Generally, pyrolysis is carried out under flow of nitrogen (Srivastava and Prasad, 2000; Schwab *et al.*, 1988). Soybean oil, cotton seed oil, rapeseed oil and other oils are thermally cracked with similar chemical compositions to fossil fuels (Ma and Hanna, 1999). However, pyrolyzed vegetable oils are contaminated with trace amounts of sulphur, water, sediment and these could lead to corrosion problems in the engine. This process usually requires high maintenance cost especially the distillation unit for various fractions separation (Ma and Hanna, 1999). The removal of oxygen during the thermal processing of pyrolysis eliminates the benefits of using oxygenated fuel.

2.1.2 Microemulsion

A microemulsion is defined as a colloidal equilibrium dispersion of optically isotropic fluid microstructures with dimensions generally 1 - 150nm range formed spontaneously from two normally immiscible liquids and one or more ionic or non-ionic amphiphiles (Schwab *et al.*, 1987). Ionic and non-ionic microemulsions of aqueous ethanol in soybean oil have good performances as No. 2 diesel where No. 2 diesel is known as diesel fuel oil. Emulsion of 53% (vol) alkali-refined and winterized sunflower oil, 13.3% (vol) 190-proof ethanol and 33.4% (vol) 1-butanol when undergoing 200 hrs laboratory screening endurance test, irregular injector needle sticking, heavy carbon deposits, incomplete combustion and an increase of lubricating oil viscosity were reported (Ziejewski *et al.*, 1984).

2.1.3 Transesterification

Transesterification is the most widely used process producing biodiesel from vegetable oils. Transesterification is the alcoholysis of triglyceride esters and resulting in a mixture of mono-alkyl esters and glycerol (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001). This process has been used to reduce the viscosity of triglycerides and enhancing the physical properties of renewable fuels with the aim to improve the performance in engine (Clark *et al.*, 1984). Short-chain alcohol especially methanol and ethanol are utilized due to its low cost, easy availability and its physical and chemical advantages (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001). Transesterification can be carried out through variety of ways in the presence of alkali catalyst, acid catalyst, biocatalyst, heterogeneous catalyst or using alcohols under supercritical conditions without catalyst.

Microemulsions of vegetable oils would reduce the biofuel viscosity but engine performance problems of injector coking and carbon deposits still persist (Bala, 2005). Pyrolysis of triglycerides produces compounds with incompatible biodiesel quality in terms of ash, carbon residues and pour point (Schwab *et al.*, 1987). Among all the conversion methods, transesterification of vegetable oils is the most promising route to produce biofuel with similar properties and performances as hydrocarbon based diesel fuels (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001).

2.2 Transesterification in biodiesel production

Transesterification is not a newly discovered process but the reaction has been conducted as early as 1853 by scientists E. Duffy and J. Patrick. The process of converting vegetable oil into biodiesel fuel is termed as transesterification. There are numerous transesterification citations in the scientific and patent literature (Ma *et al.*, 1998; Freedman *et al.*, 1986; Schwab *et al.*, 1987). The transesterification reaction with alcohol as acyl acceptor consists of a number of consecutive, reversible reactions. The mechanism is initiated with the released of one mole methyl esters from the conversion of triglycerides to diglycerides, followed by second and third methyl ester yield from the conversion of diglycerides to monoglycerides and from monoglycerides to glycerol (Freedman *et al.*, 1986; Nouredini and Zhu, 1997).

2.2.1 Chemical-catalyzed transesterification

The effects of the different acyl acceptor, molar ratio, catalyst loading and reaction temperature on to the reaction rate were the concerned parameters to be examined by researchers (Freedman *et al.*, 1986). Catalyst transesterification is the most often used method to produce fatty acid methyl ester (FAME) and the alkalis

used include sodium hydroxide (NaOH), potassium hydroxide (KOH), carbonates and alkoxides such as sodium methoxide, sodium ethoxide and sodium butoxide (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001). For an effective alkali-catalyzed transesterification, the reaction mixture consisted of triglycerides and alcohol must be anhydrous and low in free fatty acids (FFA) (Ma *et al.*, 1998; Wright *et al.*, 1944) to eliminate the occurrence of saponification reaction that involved soap production. The catalyst is consumed during the soap formation and thus reduces the catalytic efficiency, causing increase in fluid viscosity, formation of gels and renders the separation of esters and glycerol (Ma and Hanna, 1999; Fukuda *et al.*, 2001).

Acid-catalyzed transesterification is used when triglycerides have relatively high water and FFA (Aksoy *et al.*, 1988; Freedman *et al.*, 1984). Acids used for transesterification include sulphuric, phosphoric, hydrochloric and organic sulfonic acids (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001). Researchers reported that acid-catalyzed transesterification was particularly important when conducting the reaction with low grade material such as sulphur olive oil (Aksoy *et al.*, 1988). The acid-catalyzed process is not favourable because the process is corrosive and the reaction rate was reported to be 4000 times slower than alkali-catalyzed transesterification with the same amount of catalyst (Formo, 1954).

2.2.2 Supercritical transesterification

Supercritical state of transesterification without using any catalyst was developed by Saka and Kusdiana (2001) under reaction temperature of 350°C and molar ratio of methanol to rapeseed oil of 42:1 (Saka and Kusdiana, 2001). Non-polar triglycerides can be well solvated with supercritical methanol to form single

phase oil to methanol mixture, thus the conversion rate of oil to methyl esters increased dramatically (Kusdiana and Saka, 2001). In addition, the purification of products after the process is simple to accomplish and the reaction is environmentally friendly. However, the requirements of high temperature of 350°C and operating pressure of 45 MPa with the supply of excessive amount of methanol are prerequisite to drive the supercritical state of transesterification reaction (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001).

2.2.3 Enzymatic transesterification

Several researchers have attempted to produce biodiesel using extracellular lipase enzyme for effective methanolysis reaction. The successful implementation of enzymatic transesterification was able to offset several drawbacks occurred during the chemical transesterification in biodiesel production. In contrast to chemical transesterification, lipase-catalyzed processes are promising due to high selectivity of lipase in reaction under mild operating conditions (Salis *et al.*, 2003; Jaeger and Eggert, 2002; Schimd *et al.*, 2002; Salis *et al.*, 2004). Besides, recovery of FAME is simple to accomplish (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001). When compared to base catalysis, FFA concentration in the oil is not critical to enzymatic transesterification because fats containing triglycerides and FFA can be enzymatically converted to biodiesel in a one-step-process. Lipases are able to catalyze both transesterification and esterification reactions (Szczesna Antczak *et al.*, 2009). Production of cheaper and robust lipase preparations together with system development that favor for long-term, iterative use of biocatalyst can give rise to the replacement of chemical processes with enzymatic route (Gerpen, 2005; Meher *et al.*, 2006; Ma and Hanna, 1999; Ranganathan *et al.*, 2007; De Greyt, 2004; Marchetti *et al.*, 2007; Akoh *et al.*, 2007).

The comparison in catalyzing behaviours and operating conditions between chemical catalysis, supercritical alcoholysis and lipase catalysis processes for FAME production is summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Comparison between chemical catalysis, supercritical alcoholysis and lipase-catalysis methods for biodiesel fuel production. (Fukuda *et al.*, 2001; Ganesan *et al.*, 2009)

Criterion	Acid-catalysis	Alkali-catalysis	Supercritical alcoholysis	Lipase-catalysis
1. Reaction temperature	• 55-80 °C	• 60-70 °C	• 239-385 °C	• 30-40 °C
2. FFA in raw materials	• Esters	• Saponified products	• Esters	• Methyl esters
3. Water on raw materials	• Interfere with the reaction	• Interfere with the reaction	• Not stated	• No influence
4. Yield of methyl esters	• Normal	• Normal	• Good	• Higher
5. Recovery of glycerol	• Difficult	• Difficult	• Not stated	• Easy
6. Purification of methyl esters	• Repeated washing	• Repeated washing	• Not stated	• None
7. Production cost of catalyst	• Cheap	• Cheap	• Medium	• Relatively expensive

2.3 Biogreen technology: enzymatic transesterification

The enzyme catalyzing triglycerides with methanol appears to be in accordance with a successive reaction mechanism (Kaieda *et al.*, 1999). Triglycerides and partial glycerides are first hydrolyzed by lipase to partial glycerides and FFA respectively. The intermediate reaction includes the alcoholysis of FFA with methanol and methyl esters are synthesized (Kaieda *et al.*, 1999). In brief, triglycerides contained in vegetable oil react with an alcohol (usually