

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**Preparation and Characterization of
UV-Crosslinked Sulfonated Poly Ether
Ether Ketone - Methyl Cellulose as
Proton Exchange Membrane.**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Faculty of Applied Sciences

December 2016

ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at developing an alternative proton exchange membrane (PEM) with ease of synthesis and more economical material without sacrificing the membrane's performance such as high conductivity and excellent dimensional stability. PEM composed of Sulfonated (poly ether ether ketone), SPEEK and Methyl Cellulose, MC are synthesized then modified by UV-crosslinking technique with Benzoin Ethyl Ether, BEE as photoinitiator. The effect of UV-irradiation period and photoinitiator composition on the proton exchange membrane is examined. The outcome indicates that both stirring and drying period play crucial role in determining the sulfonation degree of a PEM. 60 hours of sulfonation produces degree of sulfonation 68%. FTIR result proves the occurrence of sulfonation when new peaks of $-\text{SO}_3$ groups appear. The FTIR results also reveal the crosslink reaction of SPEEK-MC membrane with BEE is initiated by C-C bonds instead of $-\text{SO}_3$ groups hence the membrane conductivity is maintained. By crosslinking the SPEEK with MC polymer the membrane water uptake is reduced. The MC gives more support to SPEEK membrane by enhancing the membrane's water binding capacity and maintaining the membrane dimensional stability at the same time. Although the crosslinked SPEEK-MC membrane has lower water uptake than the non-crosslinked PEM, the crosslinked PEM displays higher dielectric constant due to water presence in the channels or pores is bound stronger in the crosslinked PEM and therefore appear less bulky in character. The water molecules of the PEM can attach to the cellulose through hydrogen bonding which enables hydronium ions to travel between the ionic clusters easily consequently enhancing the conductivity. The conductivity of SPEEK-MC membrane is measured by impedance spectroscopy and the addition of MC into SPEEK polymer enhances the conductivity up to $4.69 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S.cm}^{-1}$ at 30°C temperature and 80% relative humidity. The conductivity of the hybrid membrane increased from $4.69 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S.cm}^{-1}$ to $8.76 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S.cm}^{-1}$ and $6.90 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S.cm}^{-1}$ after radiated with UV-crosslink for 15 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. This new crosslinked hybrid PEM shows good prospect to be used in fuel cell.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give thank to Allah SubhanahuWaTa'ala for protection and ability to do work and may He richly blesses all of the people who in one way or another contributed in the completion of this thesis.

Firstly I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr Ab Malik Marwan Bin Ali for the continuous support of my M.Sc study and related research, for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my M.Sc study. Besides my advisor, I would like to thank Prof. Muhd Zu Azhan Bin Yahya, Assoc. Prof. Dr Oskar Hasdinor Hassan, and Che Masni Soberi who provided me an opportunity to join Ionic Material Device (iMADE) team, and who gave access to the laboratory and research facilities. Without their precious support it would not be possible to conduct this research.

My sincere thanks also goes to Nazli Ahmad Bin Aini, Nursyahida B Sahli, Siti Zulaikha Bt Suhaili, Siti Zafirah Bt Zainal Abidin and Nordiana Bt Hashim for their insightful comments and encouragement, and also for the hard question which incited me to widen my research from various perspectives. I also would like to thank my fellow labmates in iMADE laboratory for the stimulating discussions, for the sleepless nights we were working together before deadlines, and for all the fun we have had in the last five years.

I am thankful for my loving parents, Ramly Bin Othman and Umi Kalthum Bt Rashid for supporting me spiritually throughout writing this thesis and my life in general. I would also like to thank my husband, Muhammad Ali Bin Mat Yaacob who has always been there to cheer me up and stood by me through the good and bad times. Finally a big thank to my daughter, Hani Sumayyah Bt Muhammad Ali for being such a good and understanding daughter.

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