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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

'Up-scaling' Potential for Polyelectrolyte Multilayer Membranes

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Abstract

The layer-by-layer method is an attractive technique for preparing ultrathin nanostructured polyelectrolyte multilayer membranes (PEMMs) with tailored composition and tunable properties. This paper investigates the optimization of the membrane preparation to render it more feasible from a practical view point. PEMMs were prepared with minimal number of bilayers and rinsing steps for two polyion combinations: poly(diallyldimethylammonium chloride) with poly (vinylsulfonic acid sodium salt) and the same cation with poly(sodium 4-styrenesulfonate). Three bilayers proved optimal for SRNF applications. The commonly applied rinsing process turned out to be non-essential. In addition, two minutes dipping time per deposition step already proved sufficient for defect-free SRNF membrane preparation. Thus, the build-up protocol for PEMMs was overall reduced to a 6-step coating procedure taking 12 minutes without compromising the SRNF properties, in contrast to the previously reported 20 to 80 steps which required upto 7 hours. Therefore, the 'up-scaling' potential of this type of membrane is significantly increased and potential production costs reduced.

Keywords: Polyelectrolyte. Multilayer. Membrane. Layer-by-layer technique. Solvent resistant nanofiltration

1. Introduction

Preparation of thin multilayer films using layer-by-layer technique (LBL) is reported as a versatile method to produce thin nanostructured membranes [1]. The LBL method involves alternate dipping of a charged substrate into oppositely charged polyelectrolytes (PEs) followed by washing after each deposition as schematically shown in Fig1[2]. Each adsorption step then leads to a charge inversion of the substrate, thus forming a layered complex consisting of several bilayers. These layered membranes are formed and stabilized with the help of electrostatic interactions between the charged layers [3]. These self-

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