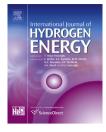


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Numerical investigation on impacts on fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among solid oxide fuel cell unit channels



Bin Lin^{*a*}, Yixiang Shi^{*a*,*}, Meng Ni^{*b*,**}, Ningsheng Cai^{*a*}

^a Key Laboratory for Thermal Science and Power Engineering of Ministry of Education, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, PR China

^b Building Energy Research Group, Department of Building and Real Estate, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels in planar SOFC units under different working conditions is numerically investigated. A comprehensive three-dimensional electrochemical model is validated and then adopted in a cell unit model with structure of a real cell unit. The model couples interdependent process of species transport, heat transport, chemical reaction, electrochemical reaction, ionic conduction and electronic conduction. A nonuniformity index is proposed to quantitatively evaluate nonuniform degree of fuel velocity distribution among channels in the planar SOFC unit. The effect of the fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity on cell performance and the effects of working voltage, flow rate, flow pattern and fuel type on fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels are investigated. The result shows that an increase in fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity can lead to a cell performance drop and fuel velocity distribution is less uniform under lower cell voltage, lower flow rate, using co-flow configuration instead of counter-flow or using syngas as fuel instead of hydrogen. In addition, the CO oxidation should be considered when studying the fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels.

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Introduction

Fuel cells are electrochemical devices which can directly convert chemical energy of fuel into electricity with high efficiency and low pollutant emission [1]. Among different types of fuels cells, planar solid oxide fuel cells (SOFCs) show distinct features of fuel flexibility and potential high power density and thus have been recognized as a promising technology for future medium-sized power generation industry [2]. However, challenges in material, cell geometry design and sealing still remain to be solved before planar SOFC commercialization [3]. One of the major challenges is the geometry design of planar interconnects. Interconnects act

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^{*} Corresponding author. Tel./fax: +86 10 62789955.

^{**} Corresponding author. Tel.: +852 27664152; fax: +852 27645131.

E-mail addresses: shyx@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn (Y. Shi), meng.ni@polyu.edu.hk (M. Ni). http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhydene.2014.12.088

both as gas distributor and current collector in a planar SOFC. One aim of the interconnect optimal design is to provide a uniform fuel velocity distribution among channels on anode side to improve cell performance [4].

Many efforts have been devoted to studying the fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels in planar SOFC and its influence on cell performance. Bi et al. [5] investigated numerically the effects of design parameters such as the channel height and manifold width on fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels. Huang et al. [6] found experimentally that by adding small guide vines in an interconnect, the fuel velocity distribution uniformity among channels could be improved and the power density of the cell could be increased by 10%. Moreover, geometry modifications to improve fuel distribution uniformity among channels have also been proposed by researchers. Dey et al. [3] attached square type distributors on the manifolds to obtain a uniform reactant velocity distribution among channels below the active area. Liu et al. [7] adopted a symmetric bifurcation design of flow channel to gain a uniform flow field. Fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels in planar SOFC unit is recognized as one crucial challenge in SOFC development.

Numerical method is essential to study fuel velocity distribution among channels inside SOFC, since SOFC is tightly sealed and it is hard to experimentally get information inside the cell such as flow velocity, temperature and gas composition. It can be time-saving and cost-effective if the numerical model can predict detailed electrode behavior and help researchers to gain a better understanding of the complex multi-physical process inside the cell. For this purpose, a reliable electrochemical model is required. However, the previous modeling studies on the fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels usually focus on the transport behavior, such as fluid flow and heat transfer, while the very important electrochemical reaction kinetics are treated in a very simple manner, or even neglected.

In this paper, a comprehensive three-dimensional mechanistic model of an anode-supported SOFC unit is developed. Different from the existing models in the literature, the present model fully considers the intricate process of mass transfer, heat transfer, momentum transfer, chemical reaction, electrochemical reaction, ionic conduction and electronic conduction to predict nonuniform flow velocity distribution among channels in a SOFC unit. A validated electrochemical model is coupled with heat and momentum transfer for simulating a cell unit with real geometry. A quantitative index of nonuniformity is proposed to compare fuel velocity distribution nonuniformity among channels in different working conditions. Influence of fuel velocity Download English Version:

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