

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0959-6526(18)31064-3

DOI: [10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.04.051](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.04.051)

Reference: JCLP 12632

To appear in: *Journal of Cleaner Production*

Received Date: 9 November 2017

Revised Date: 10 March 2018

Accepted Date: 5 April 2018

Please cite this article as: Li C, Bai H, Lu Y, Bian J, Xu H, Life-cycle assessment for coal-based methanol production in China, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.04.051.

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1 Life-cycle assessment for coal-based methanol production in 2 China

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9 **Abstract:** More methanol is produced and used in China than in any other country. China has a
10 great deal of coal, less oil, and little gas, so the Chinese government is enthusiastically developing
11 the coal-based chemical industry, of which coal-based methanol production is an important part.
12 Coal-based methanol production strongly affects the environment, so the environmental impacts
13 of coal-based methanol production processes must be assessed. Here, two life-cycle assessment
14 models are established using GaBi6 software, and the models and local data for coal-based
15 methanol production are used to establish a life-cycle inventory. The environmental impacts of
16 two typical coal-based methanol production techniques are evaluated using the CML 2001
17 (mid-point level) method and the Eco-indicator 99 (end-point level) models. The results indicated
18 that less environment harm is caused by producing methanol using the coal coking technology
19 than by producing methanol using the coal gasification technology, especially in terms of
20 acidification, global warming, and photochemical oxidation. In particular, significantly less
21 environmental harm in terms of climate change and radiation is caused by the coal coking
22 technology than by the coal gasification technology. Different sub-processes clearly make
23 different contributions to environmental harm. The results indicated that the methanol production
24 process, heating, and desalination are the main sources of environmental harm for both the coal
25 gasification technology and coal coking technology. Importantly, the public engineering process
26 rather than the methanol production process itself was found to determine emissions for the
27 different methanol production methods.

28 *Keywords:*

29 Coal-based methanol production

30 Coal gasification technology (CGT)

31 Coal coking technology (CCT)

32 Life-cycle assessment (LCA)

33 China

34 **Highlights:**

35 1. A comparative LCA for coal-based methanol production was conducted.

36 2. The LCI for coal-based methanol based on site-specific investigations was proposed.

37 3. The impacts of two coal-based methanol production techniques were analyzed.

38 4. Potential policy implications to lower the related impacts were identified.

39 *Abbreviations:* CGT, Coal gasification technology; CCT, Coal coking technology; COG, Coke

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