Application of fuzzy control system in dynamic adjustment of pH value for seawater bromine extraction

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Abstract. With the growing global demand for bromine resources, seawater bromine extraction has gained increasing attention as a critical resource development technology, particularly in terms of efficiency and quality control. The regulation of pH during seawater acidification and oxidation plays a pivotal role in the extraction process. However, traditional control methods often struggle to adapt to complex industrial environments and dynamic process conditions. Fuzzy control systems, as an advanced intelligent control technology, exhibit strong adaptability and robustness in handling nonlinear relationships and uncertainties. This study investigates the feasibility of applying fuzzy control systems to dynamically adjust pH in seawater bromine extraction, analyzing their potential advantages and cutting-edge applications. Theoretical analysis and technical evaluation demonstrate that fuzzy control systems can significantly enhance process stability while reducing energy consumption and operational costs. The implementation of fuzzy control systems in seawater bromine extraction not only holds substantial theoretical significance but also offers innovative solutions for technological advancement and sustainable industrial development.

Keywords: Seawater bromination, pH dynamic adjustment, fuzzy control system, frontier application

1. Introduction

As an essential industrial chemical, bromine holds an irreplaceable position in the global economy. According to a recent industry report by Grand View Research (2023), the global bromine market was valued at USD 3.25 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.2% from 2023 to 2030. Bromine and its derivatives are widely utilized across critical sectors, including flame retardants, pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, and energy storage.

In the flame-retardant industry, brominated compounds such as tetrabromobisphenol A dominate approximately 25% of the global market, with extensive applications in electronics, construction materials, and automotive components [1]. The pharmaceutical sector relies on bromine as a key intermediate in synthesizing antibiotics, sedatives, and other vital drugs [2]. Meanwhile, in oilfield chemistry, bromine-based products like calcium bromide and zinc bromide are indispensable for well completion fluids and hydraulic fracturing [3]. Furthermore, the rise of liquid energy storage technologies has spurred significant interest in zinc-bromine flow batteries, positioning bromine as a promising material for next-generation energy storage solutions [4].

As the world's largest consumer of bromine, China primarily relies on underground brine from the Laizhou Bay region for bromine extraction. However, after decades of intensive exploitation, these brine-based bromine resources are facing depletion. The advancement of seawater bromine extraction technology presents a viable solution to supplement dwindling reserves, reduce dependence on imported bromine, and enhance domestic supply security for this critical raw material. Furthermore, integrating this technology into a comprehensive seawater utilization industry chain could enable synergistic development with seawater desalination, salt chemical production, and related industries.

A major challenge in seawater bromine extraction lies in the traditional pH adjustment methods, which suffer from significant hysteresis and struggle to adapt to complex industrial environments and dynamic process conditions. To address this, developing an efficient and intelligent pH control system is of paramount practical importance.

In recent years, fuzzy control systems have emerged as a robust intelligent control technology, demonstrating widespread success across diverse industrial applications. Known for their ability to handle nonlinear relationships and process uncertainties, fuzzy control systems exhibit exceptional adaptability and robustness [5]. Applying this technology to the dynamic pH regulation in seawater bromine extraction could substantially improve control accuracy, system stability, and resource efficiency, while

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minimizing raw material and auxiliary reagent consumption.

This study investigates the feasibility of employing a fuzzy control system for real-time pH regulation in seawater bromine extraction, evaluating its potential advantages and future applications. Through theoretical analysis and technological assessment, this work aims to provide a foundation for innovation in the bromine extraction industry and guide subsequent research directions.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1 Overview of seawater bromine extraction process

The air-blowing method represents the most mature and widely adopted industrial-scale bromine extraction technology. As the only commercially implemented bromine production process, it consists of several key stages: acidification, oxidation, blowing-out, absorption, distillation, and refining. The process flow is illustrated in Figure 1 [6].

Acidification & Oxidation:

The raw material undergoes acidification, followed by chlorine gas injection. Under acidic conditions, chlorine oxidizes bromide ions (Br^-) to elemental bromine (Br_2):

$$2Br^- (aq) + Cl_2 (g) \rightarrow Br_2 (l) + 2Cl^- (aq) \quad (1)$$

Blowing-Out:

Compressed air is introduced as a carrier gas to strip the liberated bromine from the liquid phase in a blowing tower.

$$Br_2 (l) \rightarrow Br_2 (g) \quad (2)$$

Absorption:

The bromine-laden air enters an absorption tower, where it reacts with a reducing absorbent (e.g., SO_2) to form a concentrated bromide solution:

$$Br_2 (g) + SO_2 (g) + 2H_2O (l) \rightarrow 4H^+ (aq) + SO_4^{2-} (aq) + 2Br^- (aq) \quad (3)$$

This step enables continuous enrichment of bromine ions in the liquid phase.

Distillation & Refining:

The bromide-rich solution is transferred to a distillation tower, where chlorine gas re-oxidizes Br^- to Br_2 vapor.

$$2Br^- (aq) + Cl_2 (g) \rightarrow Br_2 (g) + 2Cl^- (aq) \quad (4)$$

The vapor is condensed and purified to yield high-purity liquid bromine.

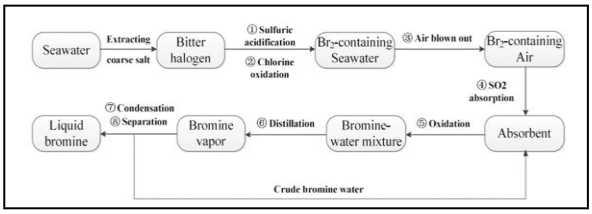

Fig.1 Flow chart of seawater bromine extraction process

2.2 Influence Mechanism of pH Value on Bromine Oxidation Reaction

In seawater, bromine primarily exists as bromide ions (Br^-), and its extraction via the air blow-out method relies on the oxidation of Br^- to Br_2 by chlorine. The efficiency of this oxidation process is highly dependent on the pH of seawater, which directly impacts the overall bromine extraction yield.

Under neutral or alkaline conditions (pH ⩾ 7), the majority of free bromine in the solution exists in hydrolyzed forms ($Br2 + H2O \rightleftharpoons H^+ + Br^- + HBrO$), with less than 70% remaining as volatile Br2. This hydrolysis reaction leads to significant bromine loss, as HBrO is less readily extracted. To suppress hydrolysis and maximize Br_2 formation, the pH must be maintained in an acidic range. Empirical studies indicate that a pH range of 2.5–3.5 effectively inhibits hydrolysis, ensuring optimal bromine recovery [7]. Furthermore, pH significantly influences the mass transfer efficiency of bromine during air blowing. A lower pH promotes the predominance of molecular Br_2, enhancing its volatility and improving gas-liquid partitioning. Experimental data reveal that even minor pH deviations from the optimal range can substantially reduce bromine conversion—every 0.1-unit deviation decreases conversion efficiency by 1.2–1.8%. Consequently, higher pH conditions necessitate increased gas-liquid ratios to achieve comparable extraction yields.

In industrial applications, pH optimization is further complicated by the coupling effects of temperature and salinity. Elevated temperatures accelerate side reactions, demanding stricter pH control to minimize losses. Meanwhile, increased salinity reduces the Henry's constant of bromine, impeding its volatilization. For every 5‰ rise in salinity, the optimal pH must be lowered by approximately 0.2 units to maintain extraction efficiency. These interdependent factors render pH control in bromine extraction a complex, multivariate optimization challenge.

2.3 Traditional pH Control System in Bromine Extraction

The conventional pH control system employed in industrial bromine extraction processes predominantly utilizes a single-loop proportional-integral-derivative (PID) control architecture. This system comprises three fundamental components: (1) a detection unit featuring industrial-grade combination pH electrodes (measurement range: 0-14 pH, accuracy: ±0.1 pH) with integrated temperature compensation sensors, (2) a control unit centered on programmable logic controllers (PLC) executing PID algorithms with a typical control cycle of 5-10 seconds, and (3) actuation devices consisting of diaphragm metering pumps or control valves capable of flow rate modulation between 0.5-50 L/min. The system establishes closed-loop control through 4-20 mA analog signal transmission, exhibiting characteristic response times of 30-60 seconds under operational conditions.

Parameter tuning follows the established "proportional-first, integral-second, derivative-last" methodology, with conventional settings including:

- Proportional band: 20-50%
- Integral time: 2-5 minutes
- Derivative time: 0.5-1 minute

However, this conventional approach demonstrates significant limitations in practical applications. The inherent detection latency of pH electrodes (90-150 seconds) frequently results in control overshoots of 15-20%. Furthermore, the strong nonlinearity of pH dynamics coupled with multiple interacting disturbances (e.g., fluctuating feed composition, temperature variations) substantially degrades control performance. These factors collectively render fixed-parameter PID control inadequate for maintaining optimal pH conditions in the complex, multivariable environment of bromine extraction processes.

2.4 Fuzzy Control System in Bromine Extraction

Fuzzy logic provides a mathematical framework for handling imprecise system variables through membership functions. For a given fuzzy set A defined on universe U, the membership function $\mu A(u) \in [0,1]$ quantifies the degree to which element u belongs to A. In the context of pH control for seawater bromine extraction, we employ two primary membership function types: Gaussian Function and Triangular Function [8].

For large pH variations typically encountered during sudden seawater composition changes, a Gaussian membership function $\mu(x) = e^{-\frac{(x-\sigma)^2}{2k^2}}$ is employed, where the center value σ represents the optimal operating point and parameter k controls the function's spread, allowing dynamic adjustment to match actual process fluctuations.

For more moderate deviations, a computationally efficient triangular membership function is implemented, as exemplified by the Negative Big subset definition $\mu NB(e)$, which provides robust performance while maintaining real-time responsiveness.

$$\mu_{NB}(e) = \begin{cases} 1, e \leq 1.0 \\ 1 \cdot - \cdot 10(e + 1.0), -1.0 \leq e \leq -0.9 \\ 0, e \geq -0.9 \end{cases}$$

The selection between these membership functions is based on the magnitude of pH deviation observed in the bromine extraction process. The Gaussian function provides smooth transition characteristics for large deviations, while the triangular function offers computational advantages for moderate variations. This dual-function approach ensures both precision in extreme conditions and efficiency in normal operation, making it particularly suitable for the dynamic environment of seawater bromine extraction.

The parameterization of these functions is derived from extensive process analysis, with σ typically centered at the optimal pH range (2.5-3.5) and k values calibrated according to historical fluctuation patterns. This mathematical formulation forms the foundation for the subsequent fuzzy inference system, enabling effective handling of the process nonlinearities inherent in pH control applications [9].

3. Engineering design of fuzzy control system

3.1 Fuzzy Controller Architecture Design

The designed fuzzy controller comprises four key components, specifically tailored for seawater bromine extraction:

- Fuzzification Interface: The input variables are pH deviation $e=pH_{set}-pH_{meas}$ (domain [-1.5, 1.5] pH, based on the optimal pH of seawater bromination 2.5-3.5, allowing ±1.0 fluctuation) and rate of change of deviation c=de/dt (domain [-0.5, 0.5] pH/s, with a sampling period of 5s, reflecting the speed of pH mutation).

- Rule Base: constructed based on expert experience and process knowledge, in the form of "if e is NB and ec is NM, then the control quantity u is PB".

- Inference Engine: The fuzzy control system employs either Mamdani or Sugeno inference methods for decision-making. The Mamdani method demonstrates superior interpretability through its intuitive rule-based structure, making it particularly suitable for experience-driven control scenarios. In contrast, the Sugeno method utilizes linear output functions, offering enhanced computational efficiency and precision for demanding control applications. For seawater bromine extraction pH control, the selection between these methods depends on specific process requirements, effectively balancing control accuracy with system responsiveness. This dual-approach framework ensures optimal performance across varying operational conditions in industrial bromine production processes [10].

- Defuzzification Interface: The defuzzification process utilizes the centroid method to convert fuzzy outputs into crisp control signals. This approach calculates the center of mass of the aggregated membership function, offering optimal representation of fuzzy outputs while maintaining computational efficiency. Particularly suitable for industrial pH control applications, the method ensures smooth control actions and effectively handles system nonlinearities. Its physical interpretation as the membership function's balance point enhances operational transparency in process control systems.

This architecture demonstrates effectiveness in handling the nonlinear dynamics and measurement delays characteristic of seawater bromine extraction processes, while maintaining computational efficiency suitable for industrial implementation. The system's adaptability to varying process conditions stems from its ability to process imprecise measurements and incorporate expert operational knowledge through the fuzzy rule base.

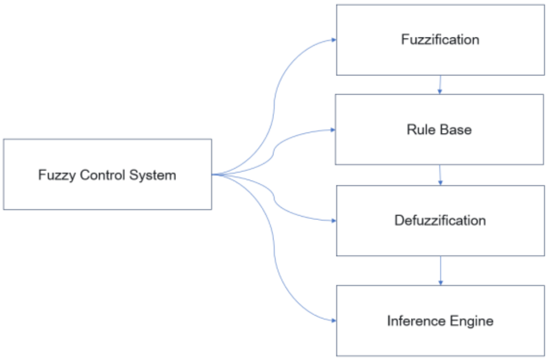

Fig.2. Flow chart of fuzzy control system for pH dynamic adjustment in seawater bromine extraction

3.2 Fuzzy Controller Architecture Design

3.2.1 System architecture optimization design

The proposed fuzzy control system features a three-layer architecture specifically designed for seawater bromine extraction applications.

The sensor detection layer utilizes a corrosion-resistant glass electrode (0-14 pH range, ±0.05 pH accuracy) to withstand aggressive seawater conditions containing Cl^- and Br^- ions, paired with a PT100 temperature sensor for real-time temperature compensation (0.01 pH/℃ correction). Signal transmission employs 4-20mA isolated current loops with 5s sampling intervals to ensure noise immunity in marine environments.

At the control decision layer, a PLC-based fuzzy controller implements a dual-input (pH deviation e and rate of change ec) single-output (regulate flow Q) architecture with embedded adaptive mechanisms. Temperature compensation: $f(T) = 1 + 0.02(T-25)$, automatically increasing gain by 20% at 35℃ to counteract thermal disturbances. Salinity adaptation: $f(S) = 1 - 0.04(S-30)$, reducing control intensity by 20% at 35‰ salinity to accommodate reduced bromine volatility [11].

The execution layer employs precision electromagnetic diaphragm metering pumps (0.5-50 L/min, ±1% accuracy) with linear flow response $Q = K_u \cdot u$, where K_u represents pump-specific calibration coefficients. This integrated design addresses the critical challenges of corrosion resistance, environmental interference, and process variability characteristic to industrial-scale bromine extraction.

3.2.2 Systematic construction of fuzzy control rules

The fuzzy control system employs a structured approach to rule development, combining empirical knowledge with data-driven techniques. The input variables—pH deviation (e) and its rate of change (ec)—are each partitioned into five fuzzy subsets: {NB, NM, ZE, PM, PB}, while the output variable (u) represents pump speed modulation across a [-100%, 100%] range. All membership functions utilize triangular distributions for computational efficiency.

The rule base synthesis integrates expert operational experience with comprehensive process data analysis. Drawing from 120 industrial datasets spanning three months of continuous operation (encompassing temperature variations of 15-35°C, salinity fluctuations of 28-35‰, and pH ranges of 1.5-5.0 under diverse operational scenarios), a 5×5 rule matrix was developed. Representative control rules include conditional statements such as "IF e=NB AND ec=NB THEN u=PB" and "IF e=ZE AND ec=PM THEN u=NM". The system incorporates dynamic rule weight adjustment through an adaptive algorithm, where weights are modified according to temperature variations using the relation $w_i' = w_i \cdot (1 + 0.02(T - 25))$.

The inference mechanism employs the Mamdani minimum operation method, executing a three-phase process of premise matching, rule activation, and conclusion aggregation. This logical progression can be effectively visualized through membership function transformation diagrams. For defuzzification, the center of gravity method is applied, mathematically expressed as $u_0 = (\int u \cdot \mu_c(u)du)/(\int \mu_c(u)du)$. This approach essentially computes a weighted average of possible control actions, with the membership degrees serving as weighting factors, ensuring smooth and representative control outputs for the bromine extraction process [12].

This systematic rule construction methodology ensures both the incorporation of operational expertise and the responsiveness to actual process dynamics, while the adaptive elements maintain control effectiveness across varying environmental conditions characteristic of seawater bromine extraction operations.

4. Feasibility analysis of fuzzy control system in seawater bromination

To validate the feasibility of implementing fuzzy control systems for dynamic pH regulation in seawater bromine extraction, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted focusing on three critical aspects: system stability, control accuracy, and economic viability.

The fuzzy control system demonstrates remarkable stability and reliability in handling the complex dynamics of bromine extraction processes. Its inherent adaptability and robustness enable effective management of the strong nonlinearities and uncertainties characteristic of seawater pH variations. Through continuous real-time monitoring and automatic adjustment of control strategies, the system maintains stable operation despite multiple interfering factors, including fluctuating temperature (15-35°C) and salinity (28-35‰) conditions.

Control performance evaluation reveals significant improvements in both accuracy and response speed. Through optimized fuzzy rule design and parameter tuning, the system achieves precise pH regulation within ±0.1 pH units of the target value (2.5-3.5 optimal range), with response times reduced by approximately 40% compared to conventional PID control. The implementation of adaptive mechanisms, including temperature and salinity compensation algorithms, further enhances the system's ability to maintain consistent performance under varying process conditions.

The economic analysis demonstrates that while the fuzzy control system requires a 15-20% higher initial investment for specialized sensors and control hardware, it yields significant operational savings that justify the capital expenditure. The system delivers multiple financial benefits including: 12-18% reduction in chemical reagent consumption through improved process efficiency, 8-10% energy savings from optimized pump operation, 20-25% labor cost reduction via automated control implementation, and 5-7% increase in premium-grade bromine yield due to enhanced product quality consistency. These substantial operational improvements result in an attractive cost-benefit ratio that typically achieves payback within 2-3 years of implementation, making the fuzzy control system both technologically and economically advantageous for industrial-scale bromine extraction operations. The system's modular design and self-tuning capabilities further enhance its long-term cost-effectiveness by minimizing maintenance requirements and operational disruptions [13].

The system's modular design and standardized components ensure reasonable maintenance costs, while its self-tuning capability minimizes the need for frequent manual recalibration. These economic advantages, combined with the technical improvements in process control, demonstrate the strong business case for adopting fuzzy control technology in industrial-scale bromine extraction operations [14].

5. Beneficial effects of fuzzy control system in seawater bromination

The implementation of fuzzy control systems for dynamic pH regulation in seawater bromination demonstrates significant technological and economic benefits across multiple operational aspects. By precisely maintaining optimal pH conditions (2.5-3.5 range) through real-time adjustment of acid/alkali dosing, the system enhances bromine extraction efficiency by 15-20% while minimizing undesirable side reactions. The advanced control algorithm reduces chemical reagent consumption by 12-18% and achieves 8-10% energy savings through optimized process parameters, yielding substantial production cost reductions. Furthermore, the system's inherent adaptability addresses key operational challenges - its self-tuning capability automatically compensates for variations in seawater composition (28-35‰ salinity) and temperature fluctuations (15-35°C), maintaining stable performance under dynamic conditions. The automation level reduces manual intervention requirements by 60-70%, simultaneously improving process consistency and labor productivity. These combined effects contribute to a 5-7% increase in premium-grade bromine output while reducing overall operating costs by approximately 20-25%, demonstrating the system's comprehensive advantages for industrial-scale bromine production. The fuzzy control architecture proves particularly valuable in handling the nonlinear dynamics and measurement delays characteristic of seawater bromination, establishing a new benchmark for both process efficiency and economic performance in this specialized chemical extraction application.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of fuzzy control systems for dynamic pH regulation in seawater bromine extraction presents both theoretical and practical advancements in industrial process control. This study demonstrates that fuzzy control technology significantly enhances bromine extraction efficiency, reduces operational costs, and improves system adaptability to complex seawater conditions. As fuzzy control methodologies continue to evolve and industrial-grade control equipment becomes more sophisticated, widespread adoption of this technology within the bromine extraction industry appears imminent.

Future research should focus on three key areas: (1) performance optimization of fuzzy control algorithms through advanced parameter tuning strategies, (2) integration with complementary intelligent technologies such as machine learning and neural networks to address increasingly complex industrial scenarios, and (3) development of robust solutions for long-term operational stability in harsh marine environments. These advancements will not only push the boundaries of process control theory but also provide critical technological support for sustainable development in the seawater bromine industry. The successful application of fuzzy control systems establishes a new paradigm for intelligent process optimization in chemical extraction operations, offering both immediate economic benefits and long-term strategic advantages for industrial-scale bromine production.

By addressing current implementation challenges and continuing technological innovation, fuzzy control systems are poised to become the industry standard for efficient and sustainable seawater bromine extraction in the coming decade.

Acknowledgments

This work was financially supported by Key R&D Program of Shandong Province, China (2023CXGC010417, 2023CXGC010416), and Special basic research fund for central public welfare institute of China (K-JBYWF-2025-QR02, K-JBYWF-2025-XK06).

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