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**Use of ultrasound in enhancing productivity of
biotechnological processes**

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Abstract

This study focused on identifying optimum sonication regimens (e.g. intensity, duty cycles) that may intensify bioprocesses without damaging the biocatalyst. Possible mechanisms of productivity enhancement in various biotechnology processing scenarios were investigated. Three model processes were used: 1) production of bioethanol from lactose by fermentation with the yeast *Kluyveromyces marxianus*; 2) β -galactosidase catalyzed hydrolysis of lactose in a homogeneous cell-free system; and 3) hydrolysis of soluble and insoluble particulate cellulose of various sizes, catalyzed by soluble cellulase. The above processes involved: 1) conversion of a soluble substrate by a live catalyst in the presence of gas-liquid mass transfer; 2) a cell-free homogeneous bioreaction system; and 3) a heterogeneous reaction system involving substantial solid-liquid mass transfer limitations depending on the size of the substrate (i.e. soluble and insoluble particulate cellulose).

Low intensity ultrasound (11.8 W cm^{-2} sonication power at the sonotrode tip), enhanced the ethanol productivity of the batch fermentation process. At the specified sonication intensity a duty cycle of 20% was found to be optimal. A duty cycle of 40% adversely affected the fermentation. With the best duty cycle of 20%, the final ethanol concentration was $5.2 \pm 0.68 \text{ g L}^{-1}$, or nearly 3.5-fold that of the control fermentation. The productivity enhancing effect of sonication was attributed to a possible improved desorption of carbon dioxide from the fermentation broth. Ultrasound may also have facilitated transport of lactose into the cell by affecting cell permeability. While ultrasound apparently enhanced desorption of carbon dioxide, it also damaged yeast enzymes such as β -galactosidase and this may explain why a 40% duty cycle had an adverse impact on the fermentation. Although at the highest duty cycle of 40% sonication reduced cell growth, cell viability remained high at $\geq 70\%$ during most of the fermentation. In continuous fermentations, sonication always enhanced the steady-state biomass concentration and ethanol concentration at all dilution rates tested relative to the corresponding controls.

Ultrasound effectively influenced enzyme-substrate binding/unbinding for β -galactosidase mediated hydrolysis of lactose in a cell-free system. A short irradiation pulse (i.e. 10% duty cycle), applied at the highest irradiation power (11.8 W cm^{-2}),

improved the initial hydrolysis rate, by nearly 1.4-fold relative to control. This effect of ultrasound was possibly due to its accelerative effect on collision frequency of the enzyme and substrate molecules as a consequence of the microturbulence caused by sonication.

The cellulase-mediated hydrolysis of soluble cellulose as well as particulate cellulose was enhanced by sonication at a 10% duty cycle and power intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2} , but prolonged sonication adversely impacted the enzyme stability at a constant temperature of $50 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ relative to control.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	xiv
Abbreviations.....	xv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
2.1 Ultrasound.....	3
2.2 Effects of ultrasound.....	4
2.2.1 Cavitation.....	4
2.2.2 Compression and rarefaction.....	4
2.2.3 Turbulance.....	5
2.3 Use of ultrasound in biotechnological processes.....	5
2.4 Effect of ultrasound on microbial fermentation.....	6
2.5 Ethanol production from lactose by <i>Kluyveromyces marxianus</i>	8
2.6 Factors affecting the fermentation.....	12
2.7 Effect of ultrasound on β -galactosidase.....	17
2.8 Effects of ultrasound on gas-liquid mass transfer.....	18
2.9 Effect of ultrasound on enzymatic hydrolysis of cellulose.....	21
2.10 Objectives of study.....	23
2.11 Contributions of the study.....	24
CHAPTER 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	25
3.1 Effects of ultrasound on conversion of lactose to ethanol by live cells.....	26
3.1.1 Introduction.....	26
3.1.2 Culture medium.....	26
3.1.3 Microorganism, maintenance and preparation.....	27
3.1.4 Batch bioreactor fermentations.....	28
3.1.5 Sonobioreactor fermentations.....	32
3.1.6 Continuous bioreactor fermentations.....	33

3.1.7 Analytical methods	37
3.1.8 Gas-liquid mass transfer measurements.....	43
3.2 Effects of ultrasound on β -galactosidase-mediated hydrolysis of lactose	46
3.2.1 Introduction.....	46
3.2.2 Enzyme and substrate	46
3.2.3 Experimental setup and operation.....	47
3.2.4 Glucose analysis.....	47
3.2.5 Enzyme stability.....	47
3.2.6 β -Galactosidase activity	48
3.3 Effects of ultrasound on enzymatic hydrolysis of cellulose	48
3.3.1 Introduction.....	48
3.3.2 Enzyme and substrates.....	48
3.3.3 Substrate preparation	49
3.3.4 Cellulose hydrolysis.....	49
3.3.5 Cellulase stability.....	50
3.3.6 Cellulase activity assay	53
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	54
4.1 Bioethanol fermentation using <i>K. marxianus</i>	54
4.1.1 Baseline determination (nonsonicated batch fermentation).....	54
4.1.2 Sonicated batch fermentations	55
4.1.3 Continuous culture of <i>K. marxianus</i>	72
4.1.4 Oxygen transfer studies in bioreactor	80
4.2 Effect of ultrasound on β -galactosidase mediated-hydrolysis of lactose (cell-free system).....	83
4.2.1 Introduction.....	83
4.2.2 Baseline determination (nonsonicated enzymatic hydrolysis of lactose)	84
4.2.3 Effects of sonication on lactose hydrolysis.....	87
4.2.4 Effects of sonication on enzyme stability	90
4.3 Effect of ultrasound on enzymatic hydrolysis of cellulose.....	91
4.3.1 Non-sonicated cellulose hydrolysis (baseline studies)	92
4.3.2 Estimation of kinetic parameters of cellulose hydrolysis	94
4.3.3 Effects of ultrasound on cellulose hydrolysis	96
4.4 Effects of sonication on various bioreaction systems (a unified analysis)	106
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS	107

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	109
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	110
REFERENCES	111
APPENDIX 1.....	131
APPENDIX 2.....	135
APPENDIX 3.....	136
APPENDIX 4.....	176
APPENDIX 5.....	186
APPENDIX 6.....	193
APPENDIX 7.....	207

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Batch lactose fermentation by <i>K. marxianus</i> at an initial lactose concentration of 40 g L ⁻¹ , 30 °C and pH 5.0 (Lukondeh <i>et al.</i> , 2005). (DCW is dry cell weight.)	9
Figure 3.1 Schematic diagram of the batch ultrasound assisted fermentation system.....	30
Figure 3.2 Ultrasonic flow cell dimensions (mm).	31
Figure 3.3 Ultrasound generator (Misonix Sonicator 3000).....	33
Figure 3.4 Setup for continuous fermentation.	35
Figure 3.5 (a) Fermenter feed pump calibration plot and (b) the corresponding dilution rate.....	36
Figure 3.6 Calibration curve for A ₆₂₀ at 1:25 dilution versus actual dry biomass concentration.....	38
Figure 3.7 Calibration curve for lactose concentration.....	40
Figure 3.8 Release of intracellular β-galactosidase activity after various periods of sonication. Samples were sonicated continuously for the specified period at 550 W and 20 kHz.	43
Figure 3.9 Dissolved oxygen electrode response versus time from the instance of transfer to oxygen-saturated water.	44
Figure 3.10 Dissolved oxygen electrode response versus time from the instance of transfer to oxygen-saturated lactose medium.	45
Figure 3.11 Schematic diagram of the 2-L stirred beaker system used for enzymatic hydrolysis of cellulose (dimension in cm).....	52
Figure 4.1 A typical control fermentation profile of <i>K. marxianus</i> at initial lactose concentration of 50 g L ⁻¹ , 30 °C, pH 5.0 and inoculum size of 5% by volume.....	55
Figure 4.2 Effects of sonication on: (a) biomass concentration; (b) lactose concentration; and (c) dissolved oxygen concentration. Except for the nonsonicated control, the sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm ⁻² . Each of the profiles shown in (a) and (b) is an average of three independent fermentations.	57
Figure 4.3 Ethanol concentration profiles. The sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm ⁻² except for the nonsonicated control culture. Each of the profiles shown is an average of three independent fermentations.	59

Figure 4.4 Foaming behavior of the fermentation: (a) just before sonication commenced 9.5 h after inoculation; (b) the same fermentation 10 min after sonication commenced at a power intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2} and a duty cycle of 20%. 61

Figure 4.5 Comparison of hemocytometer/methylene blue and plate count methods for viable cells (sonication intensity = 11.8 W cm^{-2} where applicable)..... 64

Figure 4.6 Cell viability profiles. The sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} except for the nonsonicated control culture. Each of the profiles shown is an average of three independent fermentations. 66

Figure 4.7 Yeast cell morphology (1000× magnification) at 22 h of fermentation: (a) control (no sonication); (b) sonication at 10% duty cycle; (c) sonication at 20% duty cycle; (d) sonication at 40% duty cycle. The sonication intensity was always 11.8 W cm^{-2} 67

Figure 4.8 β -Galactosidase activity profiles during fermentation: a) extracellular enzyme activity; b) intracellular enzyme activity. The sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} except for the nonsonicated control culture. Each of the profiles shown is an average of three independent fermentations. 69

Figure 4.9 Biomass specific β -galactosidase activity profiles during fermentation: a) extracellular enzyme activity; b) intracellular enzyme activity. The sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} except for the nonsonicated control culture. For clarity, lines are plotted only through the data for the control culture (solid lines) and the culture sonicated at the 40% duty cycle (dashed lines)..... 71

Figure 4.10 The continuous fermentation profiles: (a) biomass and lactose concentrations; and (b) ethanol concentration. When ultrasound was used, sonication intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} and duty cycle was 20%. Arrows mark the on/off sequence of sonication. 74

Figure 4.11 Steady state concentration of biomass, lactose and ethanol at various dilution rates in control (no sonication) and sonicated continuous cultures of *K. marxianus*. 76

Figure 4.12 Steady state ethanol productivity at various dilution rates in control and sonicated cultures. 77

Figure 4.13 Lineweaver-Burk plots of continuous fermentation of lactose by *K. marxianus*: (a) control – no sonication; (b) sonication at 20% duty cycle with an intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2} 79

Figure 4.14 Dependence of mass transfer coefficient on agitation rate and aeration rate in the absence of ultrasound: (a) air-water system; and (b) air-uninoculated medium. All measurements were at $30 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments. 81

Figure 4.15 Dependence of mass transfer coefficient on agitation rate: (a) air-water system; and (b) air-uninoculated medium. In all cases the aeration rate was at 2 vvm and the temperature was $30 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments. 83

Figure 4.16 Glucose production from lactose during nonsonicated enzymatic hydrolysis. Initial substrate concentrations S_0 were $5\text{--}60 \text{ g L}^{-1}$. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments..... 85

Figure 4.17 Effects of initial substrate concentration S_0 on the initial rate (V_i) of lactose hydrolysis at various initial substrate concentrations ($5.0\text{--}60.0 \text{ g L}^{-1}$). 86

Figure 4.18 Double reciprocal (Lineweaver-Burk) plot of $1/V_i$ versus $1/S_0$ for enzymatic hydrolysis of lactose. 86

Figure 4.19 Effects of ultrasonication on initial reaction rate (V_i) at power intensities of: a) 2.4 W cm^{-2} ; b) 4.7 W cm^{-2} ; and c) 11.8 W cm^{-2} . Control reactors were not sonicated. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments. 88

Figure 4.20 Effects of ultrasonication on: (a) maximum reaction rate (V_{max}); and (b) Michaelis constant (K_m) for hydrolysis of lactose at various sonication intensities (I) and duty cycles. 90

Figure 4.21 Residual enzyme activity (%) versus time at various sonication duty cycles. The sonication power intensity was fixed at 11.8 W cm^{-2} ($37 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, pH 6.5). Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments. 91

Figure 4.22 Time courses of the enzymatic hydrolysis of: (a) carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC); (b) Solka-Floc BH 300 ($30 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$); (c) Solka-Floc BH 40 ($60 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$); and (d) Solka-Floc CH 10 ($290 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$). Nonsonicated controls at various initial substrate concentrations S_0 , the initial enzyme concentration was always 0.1 g L^{-1} . Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments. 93

Figure 4.23 Effects of substrate concentration on the rate of enzyme-catalyzed hydrolysis of CMC (control, no sonication).....95

Figure 4.24 Plot of $1/V_i$ versus $1/S_o$ for enzymatic hydrolysis of CMC in the absence of ultrasonication (control).....95

Figure 4.25 Effects of ultrasonication on initial reaction rate (V_i): (a) sonication intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2} ; (b) sonication intensity of 4.7 W cm^{-2} ; (c) sonication intensity of 2.4 W cm^{-2} . The controls were not sonicated. The substrate was CMC. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments.97

Figure 4.26 Effect of sonication on: (a) maximum reaction rate V_{\max} and (b) Michaelis constant K_m for hydrolysis of CMC. The control was not sonicated. (I is sonication intensity.).....99

Figure 4.27 Glucose production from Solka-Floc particulate cellulose of different particle sizes: (a) $30 \mu\text{m}$; (b) $60 \mu\text{m}$; and (c) $290 \mu\text{m}$. In all cases the sonication duty cycle was 10% and the power intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} . Control runs were not sonicated. S_o is initial substrate concentration. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments.....102

Figure 4.28 Glucose production by hydrolysis of: (a) CMC; (b) particulate cellulose at particle size of $30 \mu\text{m}$. In all cases the sonication duty cycle was 10% and the power intensity was 11.8 W cm^{-2} . S_o is initial substrate concentration. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments.103

Figure 4.29 Effects of ultrasound on the residual enzyme activity (%): (a) sonication intensity of 2.4 W cm^{-2} ; (b) sonication intensity of 4.7 W cm^{-2} ; (c) sonication intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2} . Controls were not sonicated. Each profile shown is an average of three independent experiments.105

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Some of the parameters used to characterize a fermentation (Doran, 1995).....	10
Table 2.2 Published kinetic parameters for batch fermentation of lactose by <i>K. marxianus</i>	11
Table 2.3 Prior sonication studies of fermentation processes.....	14
Table 3.1 Composition of the culture medium for batch and continuous fermentations...	27
Table 3.2 Sonication regimens used at a fixed sound intensity of 11.8 W cm^{-2}	33
Table 4.1 Comparison of fermentation kinetics.....	62
Table 4.2 Summary of steady state parameters from continuous cultures of <i>K. marxianus</i>	75
Table 4.3 Kinetic parameters for enzymatic hydrolysis of CMC*	98

Abbreviations

A	Cross-sectional area (m^2)
a_L	Interfacial area per unit liquid volume (m^{-1})
C^*	Dissolved oxygen saturation concentration (mol L^{-1})
C_0	Dissolved oxygen concentration in bulk liquid phase (% sat or mol L^{-1})
C_L	Actual instantaneous concentration of dissolved oxygen in the broth (mol L^{-1})
CMC	Carboxymethyl cellulose
C_p	Dissolved oxygen concentration measured by probe (mol L^{-1} or % of air saturation)
D	Dilution rate (h^{-1})
E_0	Initial enzyme concentration (g L^{-1})
E_{max}	Maximum ethanol concentration (g L^{-1})
f	Frequency (s^{-1})
H	Henry's law constant
I	Sonication intensity (W cm^{-2})
k_L	Mass transfer coefficient (m s^{-1})
$k_L a_L$	Volumetric mass transfer coefficient (s^{-1})
K_m	Michaelis constant (g L^{-1})
k_p	Response coefficient of oxygen probe (s^{-1})
K_s	Saturation constant for substrate (g L^{-1})
P	Power input (W)
P_E	Ethanol productivity ($\text{g L}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$)
P_{ir}	Irradiation power of ultrasound (W)
P_x	Biomass productivity ($\text{g L}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$)
q_p	Average biomass specific ethanol production rate ($\text{g g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$)
q_s	Average biomass specific lactose uptake rate ($\text{g g}^{-1} \text{h}^{-1}$)
S	Substrate concentration (g L^{-1})
S_e	Substrate concentration in the reactor at steady state (g L^{-1})
S_0	Initial substrate concentration (g L^{-1})
t	Time (s)

t_m	Mass transfer time (s)
V_i	Initial reaction rate ($M s^{-1}$)
V_L	Liquid volume in the reactor (m^3)
V_{max}	Maximum reaction rate ($M s^{-1}$)
X_{max}	Biomass concentration ($g L^{-1}$)
$Y_{p/s}$	Ethanol yield on substrate ($g g^{-1}$)
$Y_{x/s}$	Biomass yield on substrate ($g g^{-1}$)
τ_p	Probe response time (s)
μ	Liquid viscosity (mNs/m^2)
μ	Specific growth rate (h^{-1})
μ_{max}	Maximum specific growth rate (h^{-1})
ρ	Density (kg/m^3)