Screening of Synthesis Conditions of Polymers and the Effects on Viscosity Reduction Performance

Lijun Zhu, Shoulong Wang, Chao Huang, Yao Tian, Xi Yang, Xiaohui Jing and Aifen Li

1State Key Laboratory of Heavy Oil, College of Chemical Engineering, China University of Petroleum, No.66, Changjiang West Road, Qingdao, 266580, China.
2College of Petroleum Engineering, China University of Petroleum, No.66, Changjiang West Road, Qingdao, 266580, China.

*Corresponding author e-mail: zhulj2002@163.com

Abstract. The optimum conditions were obtained by optimizing the reaction conditions of the polymerization. Under the conditions of monomer ratio of 1:1, the reaction temperature of 70 °C, the reaction time of 5h, self-polymers and binary copolymers of phenylethyl acrylate and styrene were prepared. By comparing the performance of viscosity reducer to heavy oil, the copolymer with octadecyl acrylate showed the best performance. When the viscosity reduction agent disperse heavy oil molecules, long chain can play a separation of heavy oil micelles, reduce friction, to prevent the combination of heavy oil molecules to achieve the role of viscosity reduction.

1. Introduction

With the increase in oil extraction, the proportion of heavy oil is growing. While the application of heavy oil problems will be placed in front [1]. Heavy oil is the crude oil with viscosity of more than 100mPa·s at the storage temperature of degassing [2]. Heavy oil is rich in colloid, asphaltene, and because of the high molecular weight of the colloid and asphaltene and the polarity is very strong, so they are easy to form hydrogen bonds between molecules, making the molecules have a strong cohesion, resulting in heavy oil cannot flow due to the greater internal friction. These cause the difficulties of mining and transporting of heavy oil [3].

At present, the method of reducing the viscosity of heavy oil is heating, emulsifying and adding viscosity reducing agent. Heating technology is relatively mature, but the energy consumption is too large, the cost is too high. Emulsification costs are lower, the effect is relatively good, but in use exposed some problems, such as dehydration [4]. The most promising technology is to add oil-soluble viscosity reducer, both to reduce the viscosity of heavy oil, the cost is relatively low [5]. There are few reports on oil-soluble viscosity reducers, most of which are reported on the use of a pour point depressant-based fluidity improver for high viscosity and high coagulation crude oil delivery, and the viscosity reduction effect is relatively poor [6-9].

Recently, the research direction of oil-soluble viscosity reducers has been to increase the polarity of the existing ester-type molecular skeleton [10], so that it can be combined with colloid or asphaltene molecules with stronger hydrogen bonding, or Surfactant group [11], the use of its spatial effect and
reduce the interfacial tension of the ability to change the nature of glial and asphaltene to improve the
wax, glial, asphaltene dispersion, so as to reduce the viscosity of the purpose [12].

Since most of the viscosity reducer studied was developed on the basis of the pour point depressant,
the viscosity reducer was only effective for heavy oil with low wax content, and when the temperature
increased, the viscosity reduction effect would change Poor, and even sticky. The fluidity improver
has no significant viscosity reduction effect on both heavy and super heavy oils.

Therefore, the development of new molecular structure of the polymer viscosity reducing agent to
improve the rate of heavy oil production and reduce the cost of mining and transportation is of great
significance. In this paper, the synthesis method of polymer viscosity reducer was studied, and then
the viscosity reduction effect of new ethyl acrylate was compared. The development of new viscosity
reducer has a reference.

2. Experimental Section
The raw materials and reagents used were of analytical grade and were not further purified. The
molecular weight was determined by the gelatin chromatograph (GPC) of Water. The viscosity of
heavy oil before and after viscosity reducer treatment was measured by Brookfiled R/S plus rheometer.

2.1. Polymerization
The monomers were scaled and accurately weighed and added to a three-necked flask. Install a
condenser on a three-necked flask with a rotor. Add toluene as a solvent, from the glass tube to the
device through the nitrogen, the reaction in the anaerobic conditions for 30min, you can see the
reaction were all dissolved in toluene.

After 30 min of nitrogen, the initiator azobisisobutyronitrile (AIBN) was added (the mass was 1%
of the total mass of the reactants). After further nitrogen for 2 min, the device was placed in an oil bath
and slowly heated to 70 °C. When the temperature reaches the reaction temperature, turn off the
nitrogen. The reaction was carried out at that temperature for 5 h.

2.2. Separation and purification of polymerization products
After the reaction, stop heating. The reaction product was slowly dropped into a large amount of
methanol using a dropper and stirred rapidly. The reactor was rinsed with a small amount of toluene
and the remaining product was transferred to methanol. After stirring for 2 h, the polymer was
completely precipitated. Stirring was stopped, suction filtered by a Buchner funnel, dried and weighed
to obtain a polymer.

2.3. Determination of molecular weight
The 10 mg of the polymer was placed in a centrifuge tube and 2 mL of tetrahydrofuran (HPLC) was
added. The drug was completely dissolved in tetrahydrofuran and placed in a 5.0 mg / mL sample
solution. Match the sample with a needle filter. Measure 150 ~ 200mL filtered sample, into the
injector, turn the handle, the instrument began to record the signal. After the test, select the calculation
method, the integration area, calculate the molecular weight and record.

2.4. Evaluation method of performance of viscosity reducer []
The 0.4 mL solution of VRA in toluene was transferred into the 25-g dilution oil, which is the mixture
of heavy oil and kerosene with ratio of 9:1 (wt), the content of VRA in dilution oil was 500 μg·g⁻¹. A
Brookfield r/s plus rheometer with flat part was used for determination of the viscosity of the heavy oil
at 60 °C before and after viscosity reduction treatment. The viscosity reduction rate (VRR) was
calculated with respect to heavy oil without VRA only [13].

Viscosity reduction rate

\[ \text{(VRR)} = 100 \times \frac{(\eta_0 - \eta)}{\eta_0} \] (1)
3. Results and Discussion
In order to obtain the polymer with yield relatively high and large molecule weight, the influence of the reaction conditions on the polymerization reaction is explored, and finally the optimal viscosity reducing agent polymerization conditions are obtained. The polymerization of octadecyl acrylate and styrene was carried out to explore the optimal reaction conditions.

3.1. Effect of Synthesis Time on the Yield of Viscosity Reducer
At the condition of reaction temperature of 70 °C and monomer ratio of 1: 1, change the reaction time, synthesis of a series of polymers, calculate the yield of viscosity reducer, the experimental results in Table 1.

| Reaction time | Total mass of monomer/g | The amount of product/g | Yield/% |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 3 h           | 2.14                    | 0.255                   | 11.94   |
| 4 h           | 2.14                    | 0.590                   | 27.58   |
| 5 h           | 1.07                    | 0.696                   | 64.81   |
| 6 h           | 1.23                    | 0.767                   | 62.33   |

As can be seen from Table 1, the yield of the polymer in a certain range, with the increase in time, but after 5h, the polymer yields no longer change with time, remained stable. Indicating that after 5h polymerization is basically completed; the product is no longer increased. In terms of reaction yield, the optimum polymerization time was 5 h.

3.2. Effect of reaction temperature on the yield of viscosity reducer
Under the condition of reaction time of 5h and monomer ratio of 1: 1, the reaction temperature was changed, and a series of polymers were synthesized to calculate the yield of viscosity reducer. The experimental results are shown in Table 2.

| Temperature °C | Total mass of monomer / g | The amount of product / g | Yield /% |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| 60             | 2.04                      | 0.201                     | 9.85    |
| 70             | 1.07                      | 0.696                     | 64.81   |
| 80             | 2.14                      | 1.087                     | 50.81   |
| 90             | 2.14                      | 0.916                     | 42.78   |

It can be seen from Table 4-2 that the yield of the polymer increases first and then decreases with the increase of the polymerization temperature, reaching its peak at 70 °C. In terms of reaction yield, the optimum polymerization temperature was 70 °C.

3.3. Effect of monomer ratio on the yield of viscosity reducer
Under the condition of reaction time of 5 hours and reaction temperature of 70 °C, change the monomer ratio, synthesize a series of polymers, and calculate the yield of viscosity reducer, the experimental results in Table 3.
Table 3. Effect of monomer ratio on the yield of viscosity reducer

| The proportion of the monomer | Total mass of monomer / g | The amount of product / g | Yield /% |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| 1:1                          | 1.073                     | 0.696                    | 64.81    |
| 1:2                          | 2.130                     | 0.893                    | 41.90    |
| 1:3                          | 1.908                     | 0.589                    | 30.58    |
| 1:4                          | 2.221                     | 0.878                    | 39.56    |

It can be seen from Table 3 that the effect on the yield of the copolymer is different when the polymerization reaction is carried out at different monomer ratios and does not show a certain law. In the case of the reaction yield alone, the optimum polymerization reaction has a monomer ratio of 1:1.

3.4. Synthesis of homopolymerize of the monomer

In order to investigate the viscosity reduction effect of homopolymer, all the monomers were self-aggregated to calculate their yield. The experimental results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Synthesis of monomer homopolymer

| Polymer | Monomer               | Monomers/g | Product/g | Yield /% | Molecular weight |
|---------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| 1       | Octadecyl acrylate    | 2.000      | 1.515     | 75.75    | 32654            |
| 2       | Styrene               | 2.000      | 0.531     | 26.53    | 53284            |

As can be seen from Table 4, when the monomer is self-polymerized, the yield of the octadecyl acrylate self-polymer is higher, while the styrene yield is low, only about 26.53%, the yield is low. The resulting polymer molecular weight gap is larger.

3.5. Synthesis of binary copolymer

In order to investigate the properties of binary polymerization, octadecyl acrylate, phenylethyl acrylate and styrene were copolymerized in two parts, and the yield and molecular weight were calculated. The experimental results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Synthesis of polymer monomer binary copolymer

| Polymer | Monomer                         | Monomers/g | Product/g | Yield /% | Molecular weight |
|---------|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| 3       | Octadecyl acrylate, styrene     | 1.073      | 0.696     | 64.81    | 22971            |
| 4       | Phenethyl acrylate, styrene     | 2.021      | 1.524     | 75.41    | 19759            |
| 5       | Phenethyl acrylate, octadecyl acrylate | 2.021 | 1.618 | 80.07 | 7353 |

As can be seen from Table 5, when the monomer is subjected to binary copolymerization, the yield is high, but the molecular weight is quite different, indicating that the substrate is different when the monomer is different. Under the same conditions, the amount of polymer and the reaction rate of the polymer are different and lead to different molecular weights.
3.6. Performance evaluation of viscosity reducer

![Viscosity Reduction Rate](image)

**Fig. 1** The viscosity reduction properties of the polymer (1#-5#) to heavy oil

The viscosity reducer was evaluated by the experimental part, and the viscosity reduction was shown in Fig1. From the viscosity reduction performance of the viscosity reducer (Fig. 1), it can be seen that the viscosity reduction of No. 3 polymer (copolymer of octadecyl acrylate and styrene copolymer) is the best, and the No. 5 polymer (opolymer of phenethyl acrylate and octadecyl acrylate) is the second.

From the structural analysis, in octadecyl acrylate monomer, octadecyl alcohol has a long alkyl chain. Therefore, when the viscosity reduction agent disperses heavy oil molecules, long chain can play a separation of heavy oil micelles, reduce friction, to prevent the combination of heavy oil molecules to achieve the role of viscosity reduction [1].

4. Conclusion
The optimum conditions were obtained by optimizing the reaction conditions of the polymerization. Under the conditions of polymer monomer ratio of 1:1, the reaction temperature of 70 °C, the reaction time of 5h, self-polymers and binary copolymers of phenylethyl acrylate and styrene were prepared. By comparing the performance of viscosity reducer to heavy oil, the copolymer with octadecyl acrylate showed the best performance. When the viscosity reduction agent disperses heavy oil molecules, long chain can play a separation of heavy oil micelles, reduce friction, to prevent the combination of heavy oil molecules to achieve the role of viscosity reduction.

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