Chapter

Fusion Neutronics Experiments for Thorium Assemblies

Rong Liu

Abstract

Thorium is a fertile element that can be applied in the conceptual blanket design of a fusion-fission hybrid energy reactor, in which \(^{232}\)Th is mainly used to breed \(^{233}\)U by capture reaction. It is essential to validate \(^{232}\)Th nuclear data by carrying out integral fusion neutronics experiments for macroscopic thorium assemblies. The thorium assemblies with a D-T fusion neutron source consist of a polyethylene shell, depleted uranium shell, and thorium oxide cylinder. The activation of \(\gamma\)-ray off-line method for determining the thorium reaction rates is developed. The \(^{232}\)Th(n, \(\gamma\)), \(^{232}\)Th(n, f), and \(^{232}\)Th(n, 2n) reaction rates in the assemblies are measured by using \(\text{ThO}_2\) foils and an HPGe \(\gamma\) spectrometer. From \(^{232}\)Th reaction rates, the fuel and neutron breeding properties of thorium under different neutron spectra are obtained and compared. The leakage neutron spectra from the \(\text{ThO}_2\) cylinders are measured by a liquid scintillation detector. The experimental uncertainties are analyzed. The experiments are simulated by using the MC code with different evaluated data. The ratios of calculation to experimental values are analyzed.

Keywords: neutronics experiment, D-T fusion, thorium assembly, \(^{232}\)Th reaction rate, neutron spectra, MC simulation

1. Introduction

The fusion-fission hybrid energy reactor, consisting of a low-power magnetic confinement fusion assembly and a subcritical blanket, is one of the advanced reactors of applying fusion technology to solve the present energy crisis. Natural thorium contains one isotope \(^{232}\)Th. Thorium is a fertile element that can be applied in the conceptual blanket design of a fusion-fission hybrid reactor [1, 2]. The actual neutron spectrum in the subcritical blanket based on the Th/U fuel cycle is composed of fast and thermal spectra. The \(^{232}\)Th capture cross section at fast neutron is slightly larger than that of \(^{238}\)U, and \(^{232}\)Th is more suitable to breed \(^{233}\)U under fast spectrum. Since \(^{232}\)Th capture cross section for thermal neutron is about 2.7 times larger than that of \(^{238}\)U, the conversion rate in the Th/U fuel cycle is more than that in the U/Pu fuel cycle and the neutron economy of thorium is better. Moreover, the \(^{233}\)U capture cross section for thermal neutron is smaller than that of \(^{239}\)Pu and \(^{233}\)U needs to absorb neutrons many times to produce Pu and long-life Minor Actinides (MA, such as \(^{237}\)Np, \(^{241}\)Am, and \(^{242}\)Cm), whereas Pu and MA produced in the Th/U fuel cycle are one order of magnitude less than those in the U/Pu fuel cycle. Therefore, the Th/U fuel cycle is beneficial to reduce the long-life nuclear waste and prevent nuclear proliferation. The feasibility and reliability of the physical
design for the subcritical blanket based on thorium depend on the accuracy of $^{232}$Th nuclear data and calculational tool. It is essential to carry out the fusion neutronics experiments for validating the evaluated $^{232}$Th nuclear data and studying the breeding properties.

A small number of fusion neutronics experiments on thorium were carried out, and there exist essential differences between the calculations and experiments [3–5]. The $^{232}$Th fission rate with fast neutrons was determined by detecting the gamma rays emitted from $^{140}$Ba and $^{140}$La, and the calculated-to-experimental ratio was 0.9 based on ENDF/B-IV [4]. The thorium fission reaction rate in a metallic sphere setup was determined by absolute measurement of the gamma-emission from $^{143}$Ce, the experimental uncertainty was 5.2%, and the calculation to experiment ratio was 1.17 employing ENDF/B-IV [5].

The integral fusion neutronics benchmark experiments for macroscopic thorium assemblies with a D-T fusion neutron source were carried out at Institute of Nuclear Physics and Chemistry (INPC) [6–17]. The method for measuring integral $^{232}$Th reaction rate and its application in an experimental assembly were developed and investigated [6–8]. In this chapter, the progress in the fusion neutronics experiments for thorium assemblies is described. The overview of main results is presented. The thorium assemblies with a D-T fusion neutron source consist of a polyethylene shell, depleted uranium shell, and thorium oxide cylinder. The $^{232}$Th reaction rates in the assemblies and leakage neutron spectra are measured separately. The benchmark experiments on fuel and neutron breeding properties derived from the $^{232}$Th reaction rates in representative thorium assemblies are carried out and analyzed. The breeding properties are valuable to the breeding ratio in the conceptual design of subcritical blanket based on the Th/U fuel cycle. The experimental results are simulated by using the MC code with different evaluated data. The ratios of calculation to experimental values are analyzed.

2. Methods

The fusion neutronics experiments contain the measurements of the $^{232}$Th($n,\gamma$), $^{232}$Th($n,f$), and $^{232}$Th($n,2n$) reaction rates, and the neutron spectra for thorium assemblies with a D-T fusion neutron source.

2.1 $^{232}$Th reaction rates

The experimental method of activation of $\gamma$-ray off-line measurement of $^{232}$Th reaction rates is used. The activation $\gamma$-rays are measured by using an HPGe $\gamma$ spectrometer.

The $^{232}$Th capture reaction rate (THCR) indicates the fuel breeding, that is, the production rate of fissile $^{233}$U ($^{233}$Pa decay). THCR can be deduced by measuring 311.98 keV $\gamma$ rays emitted from $^{233}$Pa [6, 7]. The reaction process is as follows:

\[
^{232}\text{Th} (n,\gamma) \rightarrow ^{233}\text{Th} \rightarrow ^{233}\text{Pa} \beta^- 22.3\text{min} \rightarrow ^{233}\text{U}
\]

The $^{232}$Th fission (with threshold of 0.7 MeV) reaction rate (THFR) indicates energy amplification and neutron breeding. The fission fragment yield correction method is used [8]. THCR can be deduced by measuring 151.16 keV $\gamma$ rays emitted from the decay of $^{85m}$Kr from $^{232}$Th ($n, f$) reaction. The reaction process is as follows:
The $^{232}\text{Th}(n,2n)$ $^{231}\text{Th}$ (with threshold of 6.5 MeV) reaction rate (THNR) indicates neutron breeding. THNR is obtained from measuring 84.2 keV $\gamma$ rays emitted from $^{231}\text{Th}$ [9]. The reaction process is as follows:

$$^{232}\text{Th}(n,2n)^{231}\text{Th} \xrightarrow{\beta^-} 25.52h \xrightarrow{231}\text{Pa}$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

The $^{232}\text{Th}$ reaction rates are deduced from the measured activity and corrections, which include detection efficiency of the HPGe $\gamma$ spectrometer, cited value of branching ratio, D-T neutron yield during irradiation, self-absorption of gamma rays in the foils, $^{85m}\text{Kr}$ yield only for THFR, etc. The $^{232}\text{Th}$ reaction rates are normalized to one source neutron and one $^{232}\text{Th}$ atom.

### 2.2 Breeding properties

The breeding ratio in the conceptual design of subcritical blanket is more than one [1]. The experiment on breeding properties of thorium is used to support the design [17]. The breeding properties are relevant to the reaction type, cross section, and neutron spectrum. The breeding properties contain the fuel breeding and neutron breeding. The fuel breeding is derived from the reaction rate ratio of $^{232}\text{Th}$ capture to fission, and neutron breeding from the $^{232}\text{Th}(n,2n)$ and fission reaction rates. The different neutron spectra are constructed by using the macroscopic assemblies in which the material is relevant to that of the conceptual design. The breeding properties under different assemblies are obtained and analyzed from the measured $^{232}\text{Th}$ reaction rates.

### 2.3 Neutron spectra

The neutron spectra leaking from the ThO$_2$ cylinders of different thickness are measured by the proton recoil method and the liquid scintillator [16]. The n-$\gamma$ pulse shape discrimination is based on the cross-zero method. The spectra are resolved by using iterative method, and their range is from 0.5 to 16 MeV.

### 3. Assemblies

The experimental assemblies are composed of polyethylene shell, depleted uranium shell, and ThO$_2$ cylinder with a D-T fusion neutron source and thorium samples.

#### 3.1 Polyethylene shell

One can assume the elastic scattering cross sections of H and C, which are widely used as standard cross sections [18] to be reliable. The polyethylene (PE) shell is adopted for checking the method of measuring the $^{232}\text{Th}$ reaction rates. The inner radius (IR) and the outer radius (OR) of the PE shell are 80 and 230 mm [11], respectively. Five slices of ThO$_2$ (concentration > 99.95%) foils are put in the radial channel at 0° to the incident D$^+$ beam, as shown in Figure 1. The mass and size of foils are about 4.2 g and $\phi 30 \times 1$ mm, respectively.
A D-T fusion neutron source is located in the center of the shell. The 14 MeV neutrons are produced by a neutron generator at INPC. The energy of D\(^+\) beam bombarding a T-Ti target is 225 keV. An Au-Si surface barrier semiconductor detector is at an angle of 178.2° to the incident D\(^+\) beam in the drift tube and used to measure the absolute yield by counting associated \(\alpha\) particles [19, 20]. D-T neutron yield is about 3 \(\times\) 10\(^{10}\)/s.

### 3.2 Depleted uranium shell

In the conceptual design of a subcritical blanket based on thorium, the neutrons from the U reaction process are used to maintain the Th/U fuel cycle. The depleted uranium (DU) shell is adopted for studying Th reaction. The IR/OR of the DU shell is 131/300 mm [12]. Six slices of ThO\(_2\) samples are put in the radial channel at 90° to the incident D\(^+\) beam, as shown in Figure 2. ThO\(_2\) samples are foils made from ThO\(_2\) powder filling a plexiglass box with IR/OR of 9/9.5 mm. The mass of ThO\(_2\) powder is about 0.45 g, and the thickness is about 0.7 mm. The D-T neutron source is located in the center of the shell.

### 3.3 ThO\(_2\) cylinders

#### 3.3.1 ThO\(_2\)/DU cylinders

The thorium oxide (ThO\(_2\)) cylindrical assembly with the thickness of 150 mm is produced and consists of three ThO\(_2\) cylinders with the thickness of 50 mm and the
diameter of 300 mm. The ThO₂ cylinders are made by pressing ThO₂ powder using PEO (CH₂CH₂O) as the binder and their densities are 4.25–5.59 g/cm³ [9, 10]. The structure of the ThO₂ cylinders as benchmark is simple. To change neutron spectra in ThO₂ cylinders, the latter can be combined with DU cylinders. The combination of two ThO₂ cylinders and one DU cylinders is shown in Figure 3. Three slices of the ThO₂ samples are put in axial channel of the assembly. The front surface of the assembly is 113 mm from the center of a tritium target.

3.3.2 ThO₂ powder cylinder

Based on thorium oxide powder, the ThO₂ assembly is produced, as shown in Figure 4 [13–15]. ThO₂ powder fills a stainless steel/aluminum cylinder container with IR/OR of 93.4/96.2 mm. The height of the ThO₂ cylinder is 168.9 mm and the density 1.5 g/cm³. Five pieces of ThO₂ foils are put at 0° to the incident D⁺ beam and fixed using holders consisting of aluminum plate and stainless steel. The mass and size of ThO₂ foils are about 5.0 g and φ30 × 1 mm, respectively. The distance between the tritium target center and the front end of the cylinder is 78.8 mm.

3.4 Neutron spectra in three assemblies

The neutron spectra in PE, DU, and ThO₂ assemblies are simulated by using the MCNP4B code [21] with ENDF/B-VII.0 [22], in which the S (α, β) thermal scattering model in PE is considered. The angular dependences of the source neutron

![Figure 3. ThO₂/DU assembly.](image)

![Figure 4. ThO₂ powder cylindrical assembly.](image)
energy and intensity are calculated by “DROSG-2000” code [23]. The neutron spectra at foils with different distances $d$ to the neutron source in three assemblies are relatively compared, as shown in Figure 5. The ordinate is a normalized neutron fraction, that is, the proportion of the neutron number in each energy segment to the one in the whole energy range [11, 13]. The results show that the differences of the fractions are very obvious, especially in the low-energy region.

4. Results

4.1 $^{232}$Th reaction rates in PE shell

The PE shell assembly for measuring $^{232}$Th reaction rates is shown in Figure 1. THCR is deduced from measuring 311.98 keV γ rays emitted from $^{233}$Pa (its half-life is 26.967 days, it is obtained from $^{233}$Th decay). THFR is deduced from measuring 151.16 keV γ rays emitted from $^{85m}$Kr decay (its half-life is 4.48 hour), which is one of the fragments of $^{232}$Th(n,f) reaction, and using the fragment yield correction method. THNR is deduced from measuring 84.2 keV γ rays emitted from $^{233}$Th (its half-life is 25.52 hour).

The experimental uncertainty of THCR is 3.1%, including neutron yield 2.5%, γ-ray detection efficiency 1.0% (HPGe-GEM 60P), self-absorption 1.0%, characteristic gamma branch ratio 1.0%, $^{232}$Th nucleus number 0.5%, and counting statistics 0.3–0.6%.

The experimental uncertainty of THFR is 5.3%, including neutron yield 2.5%, γ-ray detection efficiency 1.0%, self-absorption 1.0%, average fission yield of $^{85m}$Kr 4.3%, characteristic gamma branch ratio 0.7%, $^{232}$Th nucleus number 0.5%, and counting statistics 0.8–1.0%.

The experimental uncertainty of THNR is 6.8%, including neutron yield 2.5%, γ-ray detection efficiency 1.0%, self-absorption 1.0%, characteristic gamma branch ratio 6.1%, $^{232}$Th nucleus number 0.5%, and counting statistics 0.5–0.6%.

The experiment is simulated by using the MCNP code with evaluated nuclear data from different libraries, including ENDF/B-VII.0, ENDF/B-VII.1 [24] and JENDL-4.0 [25]. The model is completely consistent with the structure of the
assembly; it takes into account the target chamber and experimental hall. The calculated statistical uncertainty is less than 1%. The ranges of C/E with ENDF/B-VII.0 are 0.96–1.02 for THCR, 0.95–0.97 for THFR, and 0.89–0.91 for THNR. The results show that the experiment and calculation for THCR and THFR are well consistent within the range of experimental uncertainties, respectively. It is shown that the γ-ray off-line method is feasible for determining the $^{232}$Th reaction rates.

The distributions of $^{232}$Th reaction rates obtained from the experiments and calculations with ENDF/B-VII.0 are shown in Figure 6. The reaction rate ratio of $^{232}$Th capture to fission gives fissile production rate in unit of fuel burn-up [12]. The relative ratios measured are about 10.76–20.17 with the increase of radius in PE shell.

The ratios of calculation to experimental values (C/E) are analyzed. The C/E ratios of $^{232}$Th reaction rates are shown in Figure 7, and the $^{232}$Th(n,f) reaction results for different evaluated nuclear data are shown in Ref. [11]. The calculations with ENDF/B-VII.0 and ENDF/B-VII.1 for THNR underestimate the experimental values. Meanwhile, large differences still exist in the $^{232}$Th(n,2n)$^{231}$Th cross sections among different evaluated data [26]. Fractions with different energies in the PE shell are calculated by using ENDF/B-VII.0, and neutrons of energy more than 6.5 MeV account for 33–48% in the whole energy range, as shown in Figure 5. Since the neutron spectra in the PE shell are reliable, it is suggested that $^{232}$Th(n,2n) reaction cross sections should be studied further.

### 4.2 $^{232}$Th reaction rates in DU shell

The DU shell assembly for measuring $^{232}$Th reaction rates is shown in Figure 2. The $^{232}$Th reaction rates are measured by the same method as described above.

The experimental uncertainties are 3.1% for THCR, 5.3–5.5% for THFR [6, 8], and 6.8% for THNR in DU shell.

The experiment is simulated using the MCNP code with different evaluated data, including ENDF/B-VII.0, ENDF/B-VII.1, JENDL-4.0, and CENDL-3.1 [27]. The distributions of $^{232}$Th reaction rates from the experiments and calculations with ENDF/B-VII.0 are shown in Figure 8. The ranges of C/E ratios with ENDF/B-VII.0

![Figure 6. $^{232}$Th reaction rates in PE shell.](image-url)
are 0.97–1.04 for THCR and 0.95–1.02 for THFR [8, 12], respectively. The results show that calculations and experiments are well consistent within the range of experimental uncertainties. The ratio of $^{232}$Th capture to fission is about 6.71–12.23 with the increase of radius in DU shell.

Figure 7.
C/E ratio of $^{232}$Th reaction rates in PE shell.
The C/E ratios of $\text{^{232}Th}$ reaction rates with different evaluated data are shown in Figure 9. The calculations for THNR overestimate the experiments. Meanwhile, large differences still exist in C/E of THNR. The range of C/E with ENDF/B-VII.0 is 1.07–1.12. Fractions with different energies in DU shell are calculated by using ENDF/B-VII.0, and neutrons of energy more than 6.5 MeV account for 4–9% in the whole energy range, as shown in Figure 5. Since U(n,f) cross sections are standard in the wide energy range, it is suggested that U inelastic cross sections and $\text{^{232}Th}(n,2n)$ reaction cross sections should be studied further.

4.3 $\text{^{232}Th}$ reaction rates in $\text{ThO}_2$ cylinders

4.3.1 $\text{^{232}Th}$ fission and $(n,2n)$ reaction rates in $\text{ThO}_2$ cylinder

The $\text{ThO}_2$ assembly for measuring $\text{^{232}Th}$ reaction rates in three $\text{ThO}_2$ cylinders with the thickness of 150 mm (without DU cylinder) is shown in Figure 3. The $\text{^{232}Th}$ fission and $(n,2n)$ reaction rates are measured by the same method as described above.

The experimental uncertainties are 5.3–5.5% for THFR and 7.1% for THNR [9, 10]. The $\text{^{232}Th}$ reaction rates are calculated by using MCNP code with ENDF/B-VII.0. The ranges of C/E are 0.77–0.91 for THFR, and 0.92–1.0 [12] for THNR, respectively. The results show that the calculations generally underestimate the experiments for THFR. The PEO influence on THFR is described below. The distributions of $\text{^{232}Th}$ reaction rates by the experiments and calculations are shown in Figure 10.

4.3.2 $\text{^{232}Th}$ fission rates in $\text{ThO}_2$/DU cylinders

Experimental and simulative studies of THFR are carried out on three sets of $\text{ThO}_2$/DU cylinder assemblies to validate the evaluated thorium fission cross section and code [9, 10]. The size of each $\text{ThO}_2$ cylinder and DU cylinder is $\phi 300 \times 50$ mm. The $\text{ThO}_2$ cylinders with PEO contents of 7.28, 11, and 0.55% are named as number 1, number 2, and number 3, respectively. The DU cylinder is named as number 4. Three sets of cylinder assemblies are combined with different cylinders, and named as “3 + 2 + 1,” “4 + 2 + 1” (as shown in Figure 3) and “3 + 4 + 2 + 1” assembly, respectively.
Figure 9.
C/E ratio of $^{232}$Th reaction rates in the DU shell.
THFR in the axial direction of the assemblies is obtained by using the activation method as described above, with experimental uncertainties about 5.6–5.9%.

THFRs are calculated by using MCNP code with ENDF/B-VII.0 and ENDF/B-VII.1. The calculations are 5–21% smaller than experimental ones, while the calculations with ENDF/B-VII.0 show better agreement with experimental ones. C/E distributions in the three assemblies are presented in Figure 11. The influence of the PEO in the ThO$_2$ cylinders is also evaluated by MCNP simulation employing ENDF/B-VII.0. The results show that the PEO influence on THFR under the measured level is negligible.

In order to gain more experimental results, it is necessary to design a new integral experiment employing thorium transport medium in which the ingredient is single and precisely known, and to determine THFR based on more kinds of fission

Figure 10. $^{232}$Th reaction rates in ThO$_2$, cylinder.

Figure 11. C/E distribution in the three sets of assemblies.
products, as described below. The stage results could provide reference for the evaluation of neutron-induced thorium fission cross section, and the conceptual design margin of the subcritical blanket.

4.3.3 $^{232}$Th reaction rates in ThO$_2$ powder cylinder

The ThO$_2$ powder cylinder assembly for measuring $^{232}$Th reaction rates is shown in Figure 4. The $^{230}$Th reaction rates are measured by the same method as described above. The experimental uncertainties are 3.1% for THCR, 5.5% for THFR, and 7.0% for THNR in the ThO$_2$ powder cylinder. The experiment is simulated by using the MCNP code with different evaluated data [10, 11]. The C/E ratio of $^{232}$Th reaction rates with ENDF/B-VII.0 are shown in Figure 12. The ranges of C/E ratio are 0.96–0.98 for THCR, 0.96–0.99 for THFR, and 0.74–0.76 for THNR. The results show that calculations and experiments for THCR and THFR are well consistent within the range of experimental uncertainties. The distributions of $^{232}$Th reaction rates in the experiments and calculations are shown in [13–15]. The calculations for THNR underestimate the experiments. Fractions with different energies in ThO$_2$ powder cylinder are calculated by using ENDF/B-VII.0, and neutrons of energy more than 6.5 MeV account for 62–72% in the whole energy range, which is the largest among the assemblies, as shown in Figure 5. The suggestion described above is that $^{232}$Th(n,2n) reaction cross sections should be studied further.

4.3.4 $^{232}$Th fission rate based on $^{135}$I in ThO$_2$ powder cylinder

The ThO$_2$ powder cylinder assembly for developing the activation method of measuring THFR is shown in Figure 4. THFR in the axial direction of the cylinder is determined by measuring the 1260.409 keV gamma emitted from $^{232}$Th fission product $^{135}$I, with experimental uncertainties of 6.2% [14]. The experiment is simulated by using the MCNP code with ENDF/B-VII.0, ENDF/B-VII.1, JENDL-4.0, and CENDL-3.1. The calculations and experiments are in good agreement within experimental uncertainties. The activation method to determine THFR is developed further.

Figure 12.
C/E ratio of $^{35}$Th reaction rates in ThO$_2$ powder cylinder.

12
and the data obtained in this work could provide reference for the validation of thorium fission parameters. The C/E ratio of $^{232}$Th fission rates based on different evaluated data is presented in the [14].

4.4 Breeding properties

4.4.1 Fuel breeding

The primary conversion rate is one of the important parameters in the conceptual design of subcritical blanket. The relative reaction rate ratio of $^{232}$Th capture to fission as the fissile production rate indicates fuel breeding in the fuel burn-up unit [12]. The ratios of $^{232}$Th capture to fission measured in PE shell, DU shell, and ThO$_2$ powder cylinder are obtained.

The ratios are about 10.76–20.17 with the increase in radius of the PE shell. It is demonstrated that the fuel breeding efficiency under the neutron spectra in the PE shell is quite high.

The ratios are about 6.71–12.23 with the increase in radius of the DU shell. It is demonstrated that the fuel breeding efficiency under the neutron spectra in DU shell is high.

The ratios are only about 0.11–0.19 with the increase in radius of the ThO$_2$ powder cylinder. It is demonstrated that the fuel breeding efficiency under the neutron spectra in ThO$_2$ powder cylinder is low.

The results show that the ratios are relevant to neutron spectra in the assemblies. The ratios in the three assemblies are compared and shown in Figure 13.

4.4.2 Neutron breeding

The bred neutrons from $^{232}$Th(n,2n) and $^{232}$Th(n,f) react with thorium or relevant nuclides to maintain the Th/U fuel cycle. THNRs in three assemblies, that is, under different neutron spectra, are compared and shown in Figure 14. The results show that the $^{232}$Th(n,2n) reaction rates are relevant to the fraction of high-energy neutrons in the assemblies as described above, and the decreasing trend of THNR with the increase in distance to the neutron source are similar for three assemblies.

![Figure 13. Ratios of $^{232}$Th capture to fission in the three assemblies.](image-url)
Since $^{230}$Th half-life ($7.54 \times 10^4$ years) is very long, measurement of $^{232}$Th(n,3n) $^{230}$Th reaction rate by the activation method is very difficult. The $^{232}$Th(n,4n) reaction has high threshold 19 MeV and is not involved in this work.

The prompt neutron and delayed neutron yields from $^{232}$Th(n,f) reaction are about 3.7 and 0.0265 per fission at 14.1 MeV [28], respectively. THFRs in three assemblies, that is, under different neutron spectra, are compared and shown in Figure 15. From Figures 14 and 15, THNRs are higher than THFRs in the three assemblies.

### 4.5 Leakage neutron spectra

Three assemblies consist of the ThO$_2$ cylinders with thicknesses of 50, 100, and 150 mm (without DU cylinder), respectively, as shown in Figure 3. The front
Fusion Neutronics Experiments for Thorium Assemblies
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.81582

The surface of the assembly is 0.22 m from the center of a T-Ti target. The leakage neutron spectra are measured by using a 50.8 mm diameter and 50.8 mm length BC501A liquid scintillator coupled to a 50.8 mm diameter 9807B photomultiplier [16]. The distance from the detector to the neutron source is 10.75 m. The detector is at a 0° to the incident D\(^+\) beam and arranged in shielding room. The influence of background neutrons is negligible.

The leakage neutron spectra from the three assemblies are measured. The spectra are normalized to one source neutron and unit area. The experimental uncertainties are 9.7% for 0.5–1 MeV, 6.7% for 1–3 MeV, and 6.3% for 3–16 MeV. The experiments are calculated by using MCNP code with ENDF/B-VII.0. The results show that the experiments and calculations are generally consistent within the range of experimental uncertainties, and the spectra (<5 MeV) should be analyzed further, as shown in Figure 16.

5. Conclusions

To validate \(^{232}\)Th nuclear data, the fusion neutronics experiments for the three kinds of thorium assemblies with a D-T neutron source have been carried out. The two spherical assemblies based on the DU and PE shells, and the cylindrical assemblies based on ThO\(_2\) have been designed and established. The assembly materials are referable to the conceptual design of subcritical blanket of a hybrid reactor. The \(^{232}\)Th(n,\(\gamma\)), \(^{232}\)Th(n,f), and \(^{232}\)Th(n,2n) reaction rates in the assemblies are measured by the foil activation technique. The results show that the developed activation approach can work well for the experiments, and the \(^{232}\)Th reaction rates are relevant to neutron spectra in assemblies. The reaction rate ratios of \(^{232}\)Th capture to fission are obtained. The fuel and neutron breeding properties under different neutron spectra are compared and analyzed. The leakage neutron spectra from ThO\(_2\) cylinders are measured. The experimental results are compared to the numerical results calculated by using the MCNP code with different evaluated data. The results show that the experiments are beneficial to validate Th nuclear data and support the conceptual design of subcritical blanket with thorium in a hybrid reactor. Furthermore, it should be beneficial to measure relevant \(^{232}\)Th excitation curve at white neutron source of China Spallation Neutron Source (CSNS) [29] for verifying \(^{232}\)Th nuclear data.

![Figure 16. Leakage neutron spectra from ThO\(_2\) cylinders.](image-url)
Acknowledgements

This work is supported by the National Special Magnetic Confinement Fusion Energy Research of China (No. 2015GB108001B), the National Natural Science Foundation of China (No. 11675155, 91226104), and the National Key Research and Development Program of China (No. 2016YFA0401603). The author wishes to acknowledge all participators of the projects, including Dr. Yiwei Yang, Dr. Lei Zheng, Dr. Song Feng, MS. Caifeng Lai, Prof. Xinxin Lu, MS. Zhujun Liu, Prof. Li Jiang, Prof. Mei Wang, MS. Zijie Han, et al. All participators would like to thank Prof. Benchao Lou and his group for operating the neutron generator. The author thanks the reviewers, comments and suggestion.

Author details

Rong Liu
Institute of Nuclear Physics and Chemistry, Key Laboratory of Neutron Physics, China Academy of Engineering Physics, Mianyang, China

*Address all correspondence to: liurongzy@163.com

IntechOpen

© 2018 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This chapter is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
References

[1] Shi X, Peng XJ. Preliminary concept design on blanket neutronics of a fusion-fission hybrid reactor for energy production. Nuclear Power Engineering. 2010;31(4):5-7. In Chinese

[2] Zhao J, Yang YW, Zhou ZW, et al. Study of thorium-uranium based molten salt blanket in a fusion-fission hybrid reactor. Fusion Engineering and Design. 2012;87(7):1385-1389

[3] Adam J, Bhatia C, Katovsky K, et al. A study of reaction rates of \( (n, f) \), \( (n, \gamma) \) and \( (n, 2n) \) reactions in \(^{235}U\) and \(^{232}Th\) by the neutron fluence produced in the graphite set-up (GAMMA-3) irradiated by 2.33 GeV deuteron beam. European Physical Journal A: Hadrons and Nuclei. 2011;47(7):1-18

[4] Anderl RA, Harker YD. Measurement of the integral capture and fission cross sections for \(^{232}Th\) in the CFRMF. In: Proceedings of the International Conference on Nuclear Cross Sections for Technology. Vol. 594. Tennessee, USA; 1980. p. 475

[5] Zagryadskii VA, Markovskii DV, Novikov VM, et al. Calculated neutron transport verifications by integral 14 MeV-neutron source experiments with multiplying assemblies. Fusion Engineering and Design. 1989;9(3):347-352

[6] Yang YW, Liu R, Yan XS, et al. Thorium capture ratio determination through \( \gamma \)-ray off-line method. Acta Physica Sinica. 2013;62(3):032801. In Chinese

[7] Yang YW, Liu R, Jiang L, et al. Determination of \(^{232}Th(n, \gamma)\) reaction rate induced by D-T neutrons in one-dimensional alternate depleteduranium/polyethylene shells. Acta Physica Sinica. 2014;63(16):162801. In Chinese

[8] Feng S, Liu R, Lu XX, et al. Determination of thorium fission rate by off-line method. Acta Physica Sinica. 2014;63(16):162501. In Chinese

[9] Feng S, Yang YW, Lu XX, et al. An integral experiment on thorium oxide/depleted uranium cylinders with D-T neutrons for \(^{135}I\) in thorium oxide/depleted uranium cylinders with D-T neutrons. Annals of Nuclear Energy. 2015;81:281-286

[10] Zheng L, Lu XX, Yang YW, Liu R, et al. Experimental and simulative studies of thorium fission rateson thorium oxide/depleted uranium cylinders with D-T neutrons. Progress in Nuclear Energy. 2017;99:73-80

[11] Zheng L, Yang YW, Liu ZJ, et al. Measurement and analysis of thorium fission rate in a polyethylene shell with a D-T neutron source. Fusion Engineering and Design. 2016;113:177-182

[12] Liu R, Yang YW, Yan XS, et al. Measurement and calculation of U and Th reaction rates in uranium mock assemblies. Annals of Nuclear Energy. 2016;92(2):391-396

[13] Zheng L, Liu ZJ, Yang YW, et al. Measurement of \( \text{Th}(n,f) \) and \( \text{Th}(n,\gamma) \) reaction rates in thorium powder cylinder bombarded with D-T neutrons. Journal of Nuclear Science and Technology. 2017;54(5):600-608

[14] Zheng L, Yang YW, Liu R, et al. Determination of thorium fission rate based on \(^{135}I\) in thorium oxide cylinder bombarded with D-T fusion neutrons. Annals of Nuclear Energy. 2018;119:264-270

[15] Liu ZJ, Yang CW, Yang YW, et al. Measurement and analysis of \(^{232}Th(n,2n)\) reaction rate in the thorium oxide cylinder with a D-T neutron source. Annals of Nuclear Energy. 2018;111:660-665
[16] Liu R, Yang YW, Zheng L, et al. Integral experiments on thorium assemblies with D-T neutron source. In: EPJ Web of Conferences (ND2016). Vol. 146. 2017. p. 06022. DOI: 10.1051/epjconf/201714606022

[17] Liu R, Yang YW, Zheng L, et al. Benchmark experiments on breeding properties of thorium. Fusion Engineering and Design. 2018;131:119-124

[18] Carlson AD, Pronyaev VG, Smith DL, et al. International evaluation of neutron cross section standards. Nuclear Data Sheets. 2009;110(12):3215-3324

[19] Liu R, Lin LB, Wang DL, et al. Measurement and check of fusion neutron yield with the method of associated particles at a large angle. Nuclear Electronics and Detection Technology. 1999;19(6):428-432. In Chinese

[20] Yan J, Liu R, Li C, et al. LabVIEW-based auto-timing counts virtual instrument system with ORTEC 974 counter/timer. Journal of Nuclear Science and Technology. 2009;20(5):307-311

[21] Briesmeister JF. MCNP: A General Monte Carlo N-Particle Transport Code. LA-12625-M Version 4B (Issued)1997. p. 1

[22] Chadwick MB, Oblozinsky P, Herman M, et al. ENDF/B-VII.0: Next generation evaluated nuclear data library for nuclear science and technology. Nuclear Data Sheets. 2006;107(12):2931-3060

[23] Dros G M. DROSG-2000: Neutron Source Reactions. IAEA; 2003

[24] Chadwick MB, Herman M, Oblozinsky P, et al. ENDF/B-VII.1 nuclear data for science and technology: Cross sections, covariances, fission product yields and decay data. Nuclear Data Sheets. 2011;112(12):2887-2996

[25] Shibata K, Iwamoto O, Nakagawa T, et al. JENDL-4.0: A new library for nuclear science and engineering. Journal of Nuclear Science and Technology. 2012;48(1):1-30

[26] Reyhancan IA. Measurements and model calculations of activation cross sections for $^{232}\text{Th}(n,2n)^{231}\text{Th}$ reaction between 13.57 and 14. 83 MeV neutrons. Annals of Nuclear Energy. 2011;38:2359-2362

[27] Ge ZG, Zhao ZX, Xia HH, et al. The updated version of Chinese evaluated nuclear data library (CENDL-3.1). Journal of the Korean Physical Society. 2011;59(2):1052-1056

[28] Meadows J et al. Evaluated Nuclear Data File of Th-232. ANL/NDM-35. 1978

[29] The CSNS. Back-n collaboration: Back-n white neutron facility for nuclear data measurements at CSNS. Journal of Instrumentation. 2017;12(7):P07022