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Thermoplastic Micromodel Examination of Two-phase Flows in a Fractured Porous Medium

Mikko Virtanen*

Department of Bioenvironmental System Engineering, Opole University of Technology, Mikolajczyka 5, 45-271 Opole, Poland

Introduction

The study of two-phase flows in fractured porous media is essential for understanding various natural and engineered systems, such as groundwater movement, hydrocarbon recovery and environmental remediation. Fractured porous media, characterized by the presence of both solid matrix and interconnected fractures, create complex flow paths that significantly influence fluid dynamics. In these systems, the interactions between different phases typically liquid and gas can lead to intricate behavior that is not fully captured by traditional modeling approaches. Thermoplastic micromodels have emerged as a powerful experimental tool for investigating the fundamental mechanisms governing two-phase flows in such environments. These micromodels allow for the precise visualization of fluid movement at the pore scale, providing insights into the impact of pore geometry, wettability and capillary forces [1]. By using thermoplastic materials, researchers can fabricate models that replicate the physical characteristics of natural fractured media, enabling detailed studies of flow patterns and phase distribution. This investigation aims to explore the dynamics of two-phase flows in fractured porous media using thermoplastic micromodels. By analyzing various parameters, such as flow rates, phase interactions and fracture characteristics, we seek to enhance our understanding of how these factors influence fluid behavior. The outcomes of this research will contribute to the development of more effective models and strategies for managing fluid flows in various applications, including resource extraction, contamination mitigation and sustainable water management [2].

Description

Fractured porous media consist of a solid matrix with voids and fractures that facilitate fluid movement. This dual structure is prevalent in many geological formations, including aquifers, oil reservoirs and even man-made materials. The presence of fractures can enhance permeability and significantly alter the flow characteristics compared to homogeneous porous media. The geometry of pores and fractures directly influences flow patterns, capillary pressure and phase distribution. Irregularities in fracture shapes and sizes create varying flow paths that can trap or mobilize fluids, leading to complex interactions between different phases. The wettability of a porous medium how fluids interact with the solid surfaces plays a crucial role in two-phase flow dynamics. Wettability affects capillary pressure and the distribution of fluids in the pore space. In fractured systems, variations in wettability can lead to preferential flow paths and influence the overall efficiency of fluid recovery [3].

Thermoplastic micromodels are small-scale representations of porous media that allow researchers to observe fluid flows in real-time. These models are typically fabricated using transparent thermoplastic materials, which enable visualization under various lighting conditions. Advanced manufacturing techniques, such as 3D printing and photolithography, allow for the precise creation of micromodels with tailored geometries. The ability to manipulate pore sizes, shapes and connectivity in these models facilitates detailed studies of flow dynamics. High-resolution imaging techniques, such as optical microscopy and digital image analysis, can be employed to capture the behavior of two-phase flows in thermoplastic micromodels. These methods provide quantitative data on fluid distribution, flow rates and interaction mechanisms [4].

Two-phase flow in fractured porous media involves the simultaneous movement of two immiscible fluids commonly water and air or oil. The interaction between these phases is governed by several physical principles. Capillary pressure arises due to surface tension at the interface between the two fluids. These forces can either facilitate or hinder the movement of one phase through the porous medium, depending on the wettability of the surfaces involved. The tension at the interface between the two fluids influences how they interact and distribute within the pore space. Higher interfacial tension can lead to more stable interfaces, whereas lower tension may facilitate the movement of one phase through the other. Different flow regimes, such as counter current and concurrent flows, can emerge depending on the flow rates and the properties of the fluids involved. Understanding these regimes is critical for predicting the behavior of two-phase flows in fractured porous media [2].

To conduct the thermoplastic micromodel examination, a series of experiments will be designed to investigate the effects of various parameters on two-phase flow dynamics. Custom thermoplastic micromodels will be created to replicate specific fracture geometries and pore structures. This design will allow for controlled experiments with varying wettability conditions and fluid properties. Experiments will be conducted at different flow rates to assess how changes in velocity affect two-phase interactions and overall flow behavior. These variations will help elucidate the relationship between flow rate and fluid distribution within the micromodel. By introducing different fluids into the micromodel, researchers can examine the dynamics of fluid interactions, including displacement and entrapment phenomena. These studies will provide insights into how specific characteristics of each fluid impact the overall flow behavior. High-resolution imaging will be utilized to capture the behavior of fluids within the micromodel during experiments. Digital image analysis software will be employed to quantify phase distributions, flow rates and other relevant metrics [5].

Conclusion

The examination of two-phase flows in fractured porous media using thermoplastic micromodels offers significant potential for advancing our understanding of fluid dynamics in these complex systems. By exploring the intricate relationships between pore geometry, wettability and flow conditions, this research can provide valuable insights applicable to various fields, including hydrocarbon recovery, groundwater management and environmental engineering. The findings from this study are expected to enhance the development of more accurate predictive models for fluid behavior in fractured porous media. As urbanization and resource extraction continue to exert pressure on natural water systems, effective management

***Address for Correspondence:** Mikko Virtanen, Department of Bioenvironmental System Engineering, Opole University of Technology, Mikolajczyka 5, 45-271 Opole, Poland; E-mail: mvirtanen@po.edu.pl*

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strategies will become increasingly important. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge required to address these challenges, fostering more sustainable practices in water and resource management.

Future research directions may include expanding the range of fluids studied, exploring the effects of temperature and pressure variations and investigating the long-term behavior of two-phase flows in thermoplastic micromodels. By integrating these aspects, researchers can build a comprehensive understanding of fluid dynamics in fractured porous media, ultimately leading to more effective solutions for real-world applications. Through these efforts, we can better navigate the complexities of fluid behavior in our environment, paving the way for innovative approaches to resource management and environmental protection.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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