

COMPUTATIONAL FLUID DYNAMICS (CFD) ANALYSIS  
FOR A CATALYTIC CONVERTER DESIGN

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# UNIVERSITI TUN HUSSEIN ONN MALAYSIA

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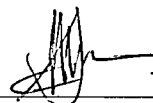
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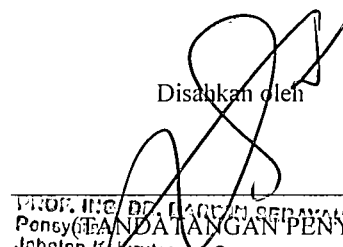
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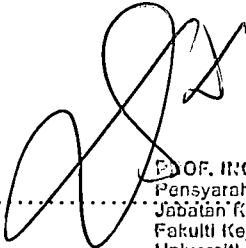
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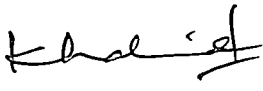
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**COMPUTATIONAL FLUID DYNAMICS (CFD) ANALYSIS FOR A  
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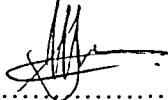
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## ABSTRACT

Design of catalytic converters involves four major components including casing, washcoat, catalyst and substrate. However, the design process is complicated as it involves various parameters. One of the problems faced by designers is obtaining the performance of catalytic converters where the substrate is made up of a large number of cells. Therefore, an effort to solve the problem using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) with an alternative modeling technique is deployed. This study involved a preliminary design which employed an adapted sub-grid scale modeling as an alternative method for the analysis of substrate performance. The Pahl and Beitz's model was applied in the design process. The adapted sub-grid scale modeling was used to predict the pressure loss, select the cell shape and produce the performance chart which could show the relationship between the parameters involved. The proposed adapted sub-grid scale modelling method was found to give results within 5 % error which was better compared to the single channel method. Results also indicated the advantage of hexagonal-shaped over square-shaped cells in terms of pressure loss where the former showed a 43 % lower value than the latter. The Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping (MCPM) was finally obtained. The mapping could be used to assist in the substrate design of catalytic converters.



## ABSTRAK

Rekabentuk penukar bermangkin melibatkan empat komponen utama termasuk bekas, lapisan, pemangkin dan substrat. Namun begitu, proses rekabentuk adalah kompleks kerana ia melibatkan pelbagai parameter. Salah satu masalah yang dihadapi oleh perekabentuk adalah untuk memperolehi prestasi penukar bermangkin di mana substrat terdiri daripada banyak sel. Oleh itu, usaha telah dilakukan untuk menyelesaikan masalah dengan menggunakan Pengiraan Dinamik Bendalir (CFD) sebagai kaedah permodelan alternatif telah digunakan. Kajian ini melibatkan rekabentuk awalan di mana ia mengadaptasikan kaedah sub-grid yang telah diperbaiki sebagai kaedah alternatif dalam analisis prestasi substrat. Model Pahl and Beitz's telah digunakan dalam proses merekabentuk. Kaedah sub-grid telah digunakan untuk meramalkan kejatuhan tekanan, memilih bentuk sel dan memperolehi carta prestasi yang menunjukkan hubungan antara parameter terlibat. Kaedah sub-grid yang dicadangkan telah menunjukkan bentuk heksagon memberikan perbezaan keputusan sebanyak 5 % dan ia lebih baik berbanding kaedah satu sel. Keputusan juga menunjukkan kelebihan sel berbentuk heksagon berbanding bentuk segiempat dari segi kejatuhan tekanan di mana bentuk heksagon menunjukkan 43 % lebih rendah kejatuhan tekanan berbanding bentuk segiempat. Carta Prestasi Mekanikal dan Kimia akhirnya diperolehi. Ia boleh digunakan untuk membantu dalam merekabentuk substrat sesebuah penukar bermangkin.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	ITEM	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
	ABSTRACT	iv
	ABSTRAK	v
	CONTENT	vi
	LIST OF TABLES	ix
	LIST OF FIGURES	xi
	LIST OF ABBREVIATION	xv
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xvi
	LIST OF APPENDIXES	xviii
 <b>I</b>	 <b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
	1.1 Research Background	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	3
	1.3 Objectives	3
	1.4 Scope	4
	1.5 Importance of the Research	4
	1.6 Preview of the Thesis	5
 <b>II</b>	 <b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
	2.1 Introduction	7
	2.2 Development of Automotive Catalytic Converter	7
	2.3 Flow inside Catalytic Converter	10

2.4	Pressure Loss in Catalytic Converter	12
2.5	The Geometry of Honeycomb Monolith	17
2.5.1	Cell Density and Wall Thickness	17
2.5.2	Catalyst Length	20
2.5.3	Cross Sectional Area of Substrate	20
2.5.4	Cell Shape	21
2.6	The Performance Evaluation Criteria (PEC)	22
2.7	Modeling Technique	24

### III

#### METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	27
3.2	Conceptual Design	27
3.3	Preliminary Design	29
3.4	Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD)	29
3.5	CFD Process	31
3.5.1	Pre-Processor	32
3.5.2	Geometry	32
3.5.3	Meshing	37
3.5.4	CFX-Pre	38
3.5.5	Solver	43
3.5.6	Post-processing	43

### IV

#### PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF CATALYTIC CONVERTER

4.1	Introduction	46
4.2	Objective of the Design	46
4.3	Functional Analysis	46
4.4	Performance Specification	49
4.5	Generating Alternatives	51
4.6	Evaluating Alternatives	55
4.7	Determination of Substrate Parameter	61
4.8	Analysis on the Preliminary Design of Catalytic Converter	63

## V

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

5.1	Overview	66
5.2	Grid Independence	66
5.3	Validation	70
5.4	Performance Evaluation Criteria of Hexagon and Square Cell Shape	73
5.4.1	Constant Hydraulic Diameter (0.923 mm)	74
5.4.2	Analysis of Various Hydraulic Diameter	77
5.4.3	Constant Cross Sectional Area (0.992 mm <sup>2</sup> )	78
5.4.4	Analysis on Various Cross Sectional Area	81
5.4.5	Constant Cell Density (900 cpsi)	83
5.4.6	Analysis on Various Cell Density (400 to 1200 cpsi) at Constant Wall Thickness (4.5 mil)	85
5.4.7	Analysis of Various Cell Density (400 to 1200 cpsi) with Wall Thickness 2.5 to 7.5 mil	87
5.5	Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping	91

## VI

**CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK**

6.1	Summary	98
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<b>REFERENCES</b>	101
-------------------	-----

<b>APPENDIXES</b>	106
-------------------	-----

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Existing Models on the Pressure Drop Calculation	12
2.2	Constant Values on the Pressure Drop Calculation	14
2.3	Friction Factor for Different Shapes	16
3.1	Reference of Geometry	32
3.2	Geometry Employed during Validation using Sub-Grid Scale Modeling	33
3.3	Air Properties at 20 °C and 1 atmosphere	39
4.1	Requirement List of Catalytic Converter	50
4.2	Requirement List of Components	51
4.3	Design Solution of Catalytic Converter	53
4.4	Alternative Solution 1	53
4.5	Alternative Solution 2	54
4.6	Alternative Solution 3	55
4.7	Ranking of Objectives	56
4.8	Five-Point Evaluation Scale	58
4.9	Evaluation Chart of Solution 1	59
4.10	Evaluation Chart of Solution 2	59
4.11	Evaluation Chart of Solution 3	60
4.12	Summary of Evaluation Result	60
5.1	Results of Pressure Drop for Hexagon Cell Shape with Different Number of Elements using Sub-grid Scale Modeling	68
5.2	Results of Pressure Drop for Square Cell Shape with Different Number of Elements using Sub-grid Scale Modeling	69
5.3	Difference of Pressure Drop for Hexagon Cell Shape	71
5.4	Difference of Pressure Drop for Square Cell Shape	72

5.5	Geometrical Comparison for Constant Hydraulic Diameter (0.923 mm)	75
5.6	Computed Pressure Drop and Friction Factor from $Re = 305$ to $2138$	75
5.7	Comparison of Parameters for Hexagon Shape	77
5.8	Comparison of Parameters for Square Shape	78
5.9	Geometrical Comparison for Constant Cross Sectional Area ( $0.992\text{mm}^2$ )	79
5.10	Computed Pressure Drop at Air Velocity 5 to 35 m/s	79
5.11	Comparison of Parameters for Hexagon Shape	81
5.12	Comparison of Parameters for Square Shape	82
5.13	Geometrical Comparison for Constant Cell Density (900 cpsi)	84
5.14	Computed Pressure Drop at Air Velocity 5 to 35 m/s	84
5.15	Comparison of Parameters for Hexagon Shape	86
5.16	Comparison of Parameters for Square Shape	86
6.1	Selected Parameters of a Catalytic Converter	99

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Components of Catalytic Converter	8
2.2	Metallic Substrate using Ferum Chromium Aluminium (FeCrAl) Corrugated Foil	10
2.3	Effects of Different Cell Density towards Conversion Efficiency	18
2.4	Effects of Different Cell Density towards Hydrocarbon (HC) Emission	19
2.5	Effects of Different Cell Density towards Geometric Surface Area (GSA)	19
2.6	Effects of Different Cell Density towards Heat Capacity	20
2.7	Single Channel Modeling	24
2.8	Sub-Grid Scale Modeling	26
2.9	Domain of Sub-Grid Scale Modeling	26
3.1	Route of the Research	28
3.2	Steps Involved in the Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) Process	31
3.3	Sub-grid Method Applied on Square Cell Honeycomb Monolith	34
3.4	Sub-Grid Method Applied on Hexagon Cell Honeycomb Monolith	35
3.5	Geometry of Square Cell Shape Using Sub-Grid Method	36
3.6	Geometry of Hexagon Cell Shape Using Sub-Grid Method	36
3.7	Meshing of Square Cell Shape	37
3.8	Meshing of Hexagon Cell Shape	38
3.9	Geometry of Square Cell Showing the Inlet	39
3.10	Geometry of Square Cell Showing the Outlet	40
3.11	Geometry of Square Cell Showing the Wall	40

3.12	Geometry of Square Cell Showing the Symmetry	41
3.13	Geometry of Hexagon Cell Showing the Inlet	41
3.14	Geometry of Hexagon Cell Showing the Outlet	42
3.15	Geometry of Hexagon Cell Showing the Wall	42
3.16	Geometry of Hexagon Cell Showing the Symmetry	43
3.17	Pressure Contour along the Channel of Square Cell Shape	44
3.18	Pressure Contour along the Channel of Hexagon Cell Shape	44
4.1	‘Black Box Model’ of Catalytic Converter	47
4.2	‘Transparent Box Model’ of Catalytic Converter	47
4.3	Sub-function Diagram of Catalytic Converter	48
4.4	Objectives Tree of Catalytic Converter	49
4.5	Angle of Diffuser in Catalytic Converter	50
4.6	Weighted Objective Tree	58
4.7	Comparison of Pressure Drop and Specific Surface Area, A/V for Three Alternative Solutions	62
4.8	Preliminary Design of Catalytic Converter	62
4.9	Working Domain of Catalytic Converter	63
4.10	Grid Generated on the Model	64
4.11	Pressure Distribution	64
4.12	Velocity Distribution	65
4.13	Velocity Vector	65
5.1	Results of Pressure Drop for Hexagon Cell Shape with Different Number of Elements using Sub-grid Scale Modeling	68
5.2	Results of Pressure Drop for Square Cell Shape with Different Number of Elements using Sub-grid Scale Modeling	69
5.3	Comparison of Pressure Drop for Hexagon Cell Shape	71
5.4	Comparison of Pressure Drop for Square Cell Shape	72
5.5	A Parity Chart of Correlation between Simulation and Experimental Pressure Drop	73
5.6	Comparison of Friction Factor with Constant Hydraulic Diameter (0.923 mm)	76
5.7	Comparison of Pressure Drop and Specific Surface Area, A/V with Constant Hydraulic Diameter (0.923 mm), Length = 152.4 mm, Velocity = 20 m/s (Re = 1222)	76



5.8	Comparison of Friction Factor at Various Hydraulic Diameter	78
5.9	Comparison of Friction Factor with Constant Cross Section (0.992 mm <sup>2</sup> )	80
5.10	Comparison of Pressure Drop at 20 m/s of Air Velocity and Specific Surface Area, A/V with Constant Cross Section (0.992 mm <sup>2</sup> ) Length = 152.4 mm, Velocity = 20 m/s (Re = 1417 for hexagon, Re = 1318 for square)	80
5.11	Comparison of Friction Factor with Various Cross Sectional Area	82
5.12	Comparison of Specific Surface Area, A/V with Various Cross Sectional Area	83
5.13	Comparison of Friction Factor with Constant Cell Density (900 cpsi)	84
5.14	Comparison of Pressure Drop at 20 m/s of Air Velocity and Specific Surface Area, A/V with Constant Cell Density (900 cpsi) Length = 152.4 mm, Velocity = 20 m/s ; (Re = 1160 for hexagon, Re = 1036 for square)	85
5.15	Comparison of Friction Factor from 400 to 1200 cpsi at Constant Wall Thickness 4.5 mil	86
5.16	Comparison of Specific Surface Area, A/V from 400 to 1200 cpsi at Constant Wall Thickness 4.5 mil	87
5.17	Comparison of Friction Factor from 400 to 1200 cpsi for Hexagon with Wall Thickness (2.5 to 7.5 mil)	88
5.18	Comparison of Friction Factor from 400 to 1200 cpsi for Square Shape with Wall Thickness (2.5 to 7.5 mil)	89
5.19	Comparison of Friction Factor from 400 to 1200 cpsi with Wall Thickness (2.5 to 7.5 mil)	90
5.20	Comparison of Specific Surface Area, A/V with Various Cell Density from 400 to 1200 cpsi with Wall Thickness (2.5 to 7.5 mil)	91
5.21	Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping from 400 to 1200 cpsi (with Wall Thickness 2.5 to 7.5 mil) for Hexagon Shape	93
5.22	Illustration Using Mechanical-Chemical Performance	

	Mapping for Hexagon Shape	94
5.23	Comparison of Various Substrates for Hexagon Shape	95
5.24	Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping from 400 to 1200 cpsi (with Wall Thickness 2.5 to 7.5 mil) for Square Shape	95
5.25	Illustration Using Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping for Square Shape	96
5.26	Comparison of Various Substrates for Square Shape	97
6.1	A Preliminary Design of a Catalytic Converter	99

## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AEA	-	The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	-	Aluminium Oxide (Alumina)
ASC	-	Advanced Scientific Computing
CFD	-	Computational Fluid Dynamics
CFX-Pre	-	Solver in ANSYS CFX Software
cp <sub>si</sub>	-	Cell Per Square Inch
cp <sub>sc</sub>	-	Cell Per Square Centimeter
EURO	-	European Standards of Emission Regulations
FeCrAl	-	Ferum Chromium Aluminium
GSA	-	Geometric Surface Area
MAA	-	Malaysian Automotive Association
OFA	-	Open Frontal Area
OSC	-	Oxygen Storage Capacity
PEC	-	Performance Evaluation Criteria
PDE	-	Partial Differential Equation
RMS	-	Root Mean Square
RS	-	Root Square
TWCC	-	Three-Way Catalytic Converter
U.S	-	United States of America
1D	-	One Dimensional
2D	-	Two Dimensional
3D	-	Three Dimensional

**LIST OF SYMBOLS**

$A$	-	Surface Area ( $\text{mm}^2$ )
atm	-	Atmosphere
$A/V$	-	Specific Surface Area ( $\text{mm}^2/\text{mm}^3$ )
C	-	Carbon
cc	-	Volume of Combustion Chamber ( $\text{cm}^3$ )
$\text{CeO}_2$	-	Cerium Oxide (Ceria)
CO	-	Carbon Monoxide
$\text{CO}_2$	-	Carbon Dioxide
$^\circ\text{C}$	-	Degree Celsius
$D_h$	-	Hydraulic Diameter (mm)
$\varepsilon$	-	Height of Surface Roughness ( $\mu\text{m}$ )
$f$	-	Darcy Friction Factor
$f'$	-	Fanning Friction Factor
HC	-	Hydrocarbon
$h_{tot}$	-	Specific Total Enthalpy ( $\text{m}^2/\text{K}^2$ )
$\text{H}_2$	-	Hydrogen
$\text{H}_2\text{O}$	-	Water
$L_e$	-	Developing Length
$\text{MgO}_2$	-	Magnesium Oxide
mil	-	1/1000 inch
$\text{NO}_x$	-	Nitrogen Oxide
n	-	Number of Data
$\text{O}_2$	-	Oxygen
$p$	-	Static Pressure (Pa)
Pd	-	Palladium
Pt	-	Platinum

Re	-	Reynolds Number
Rh	-	Rhodium
$S_E$	-	Energy Source (kg/m.K <sup>3</sup> )
SiO <sub>2</sub>	-	Silicon Oxide (Silica)
$S_M$	-	Momentum Source (kg/m <sup>2</sup> .K <sup>2</sup> )
$t$	-	Time (sec)
$T$	-	Static Temperature (°C)
$u$	-	Velocity (m/s)
$U$	-	Vector Function of $U(x,y,z)$
$V$	-	Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )
vs	-	Versus
W	-	Watt
$X_{exp}$	-	Experimental Data
$X_{sim}$	-	Predicted Data
$\rho$	-	Density (kg/m <sup>3</sup> )
$\Delta P$	-	Pressure Drop (Pa)
$\lambda$	-	Thermal Conductivity (W/m.K)
$\mu$	-	Dynamic Viscosity (kg/m.s)
$\nu$	-	Kinematic Viscosity (m <sup>2</sup> .s)

$$\nabla = \left[ \frac{\partial}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \right]$$

$$U = \begin{bmatrix} U_x \\ U_y \\ U_z \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\nabla \cdot U = \frac{\partial U_x}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial U_y}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial U_z}{\partial z}$$

$$\nabla \cdot (\rho U \otimes U) = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial}{\partial x}(\rho U_x U_x) + \frac{\partial}{\partial y}(\rho U_y U_x) + \frac{\partial}{\partial z}(\rho U_z U_x) \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial x}(\rho U_x U_y) + \frac{\partial}{\partial y}(\rho U_y U_y) + \frac{\partial}{\partial z}(\rho U_z U_y) \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial x}(\rho U_x U_z) + \frac{\partial}{\partial y}(\rho U_y U_z) + \frac{\partial}{\partial z}(\rho U_z U_z) \end{bmatrix}$$

**LIST OF APPENDIXES**

<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGES</b>
A	Pahl and Beitz's Model of the Design Process	107
B	Meshing Criteria of Hexagon and Square Shape	108
C	Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping for Hexagon Cell Shape	109
D	Mechanical-Chemical Performance Mapping for Square Cell Shape	110
E	Rational Design Method	111
F	Development of Catalytic Converter	112

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

The need for mobility will increase in future, particularly in the fast-developing nations due to the growing world prosperity. In Malaysia, the number of new vehicles registration from 1980-2005 exhibits rapid increase and has contributed to the total of 15 million registered vehicles on the road (MAA Annual Report, 2006). However, this economically necessary development should not come at the expense of the environment. This is particularly important amidst of air pollution and global warming becoming a major issue nowadays. For this reason, the emission limits are being introduced around the world and continually being made stricter every year.

The history began with the introduction of 1970 United States (U.S) Clean Air Act which required the steep emissions reduction for the new 1975 and 1976 automobiles. Since 1975, automotive companies have developed technologies that enable the U.S Environmental Protection Agency to successfully adopt the usage of catalytic converter and three-way catalyst (Gerard and Lave, 2000). European countries had also implemented the strict regulations of the European Standard (EURO) beginning from 1992 with the intention to reduce the emissions including carbon monoxide (CO), hydrocarbon (HC) and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) from the combustion engines. Consequently, the enforcement of these regulations had finally led to the compulsory utilization of catalytic converter as an emission treatment for

the vehicles exhaust gas around the world.

Looking from the engineering design point of view, it is important to optimize design parameters in order to increase the performance of catalytic converter. Miyairi *et al.* (2003) had investigated the effects of cell shape on mass transfer and pressure loss of substrates design. Structural advantages, mechanical and thermal characteristics of square and hexagonal cells had also been studied by Tanaka *et al.* (2003). Maus (1997) had mentioned that an increase of cell density and Geometric Surface Area (GSA) had reduced the HC emissions efficiency. A reduction in wall thickness also reduces the heat capacity of a substrate; hence improve the cold start problem. Inlet pipe and diffuser geometry and monolithic length also influence the overall performance of catalytic converter.

The installation of catalytic converter in the exhaust system has not been without problem. It has to be highly efficient in treating the emissions without sacrificing the engine performance. The catalyst surface area needs to be sufficient to treat the gases to meet the emission target of the vehicles. However, this will result in the increase of the pressure drop. This is the main issue to overcome since it indicates the engine loss in term of power and fuel economy. Typically the engine will lose about 300 W of power per 1000 Pa of pressure loss (Pannone and Mueller, 2001). As a result, a trade-off between the pressure loss and total surface area has become the major concern in determining the appropriate geometry of catalytic converter.

Pressure drop in catalytic converter are associated with two major components: substrate and flow distribution devices (including manifold, inlet and outlet pipe, inlet and outlet diffuser) (Lakshmikantha and Meck, 2002). The largest contribution of the exhaust backpressure is coming from the substrate. Its earlier shape was in pellet form (using spherical particulate  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> particles) before being replaced with the honeycomb monolith. The latter was more advantageous in term of lower pressure drop by having high open frontal area (~70%) and parallel channels (Searless, 2002). The honeycomb monolith is also available in different cell density and shapes offering potential flexibility. However, the geometries have