

University of Belgrade
Technical Faculty in Bor and
Mining and Metallurgy Institute Bor



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University of Belgrade

51st International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy

PROCEEDINGS

Editors:

Prof. dr Srba Mladenović
Prof. dr Čedomir Maluckov

Bor Lake, Serbia,
October 16-19, 2019



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Publisher: *University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor*

For the publisher: Dean prof. dr Nada Štrbac

Circulation: 100

Printed by "Tercia", Bor, 2019.

ISBN 978-86-6305-101-0

CIP - Каталогизacija u publikaciji
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

622(082)(0.034.2)

669(082)(0.034.2)

INTERNATIONAL October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy (51 ; 2019 ; Borsko jezero)

Proceedings [Elektronski izvor] / 51st International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy - IOC 2019, Bor Lake, Serbia, October 16-19, 2019 ; [organized by] University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor and Mining and Metallurgy Institute Bor ; editors Srba Mladenović, Čedomir Maluckov. - Bor : University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty, 2019 (Bor : Tercia). - 1 USB fleš memorija ; 1 x 1 x 5 cm

Sistemske zahteve: Nisu navedeni. - Tiraž 100. - Preface / Srba Mladenović. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz radove. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Registar.

ISBN 978-86-6305-101-0

a) Рударство -- Зборници б) Металургија – Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 280007180

Bor Lake, Serbia, October 16-19, 2019



Conference is financially supported by
The Ministry of Education, Science and
Technological Development of the
Republic of Serbia

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MICROBIAL SOLUBILIZATION OF COPPER AND ZINC FROM POLYMETALLIC SULPHIDE ORE

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Abstract

The object of this study was to investigate the possibility of copper and zinc leaching from polymetallic sulphide ore from the Bobija deposit (Western Serbia) by *Acidithiobacillus sp. B2*. Iron-oxidizing *Acidithiobacillus sp. B2* was isolated from copper sulphide mine wastewater (Lake Robule) in Bor, Serbia. The bacterium was identified by 16SrDNA oligonucleotide sequence.

Leaching experiment by the shake flask testing technique was performed during a period of four weeks at a temperature of 28 °C. The percentage of Cu and Zn leached at the end of this experiment was 65% and 67% respectively.

This study shows that iron-oxidizing *Acidithiobacillus sp. B2* can have a very important role in the extraction of copper and zinc from polymetallic sulphide ore from the Bobija deposit.

Keywords: bioleaching, polymetallic sulphide ore, Bobija deposit

1. INTRODUCTION

Reserves of rich ores from year to year are getting lower. Investigation of the new procedures for the use of low-grade ores (e.g. Cu and Zn) is one of the current issues in the extractive metallurgy in the developed countries [1]. These ores include polymetallic ores from which is impossible to recover concentrates with a satisfactory content of metal for future processing [2].

In recent times, the focus of research are the biohydrometallurgical procedures, which are more selective than the classic ones and which could enable a more successful processing of this type of raw materials.

The object of this study was to investigate the possibility of copper and zinc leaching from polymetallic sulphide ore from the Bobija deposit (Western Serbia)

2. EXPERIMENTAL

2.1. Chemical analysis of polymetallic sulphide ore

The polymetallic sulphide ore was pulverized and sieved through a 63 µm stainless steel sieve in preparation for chemical and leaching studies. For determination of Cu and Zn the sample of polymetallic sulphide ore was decomposed with a mixture of HClO₄ and HF. The metals were determined by atomic emission flame spectrophotometry (PERKIN ELMER Analyst 300).

The contents of elements in solution (Cu and Zn) were determined by inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry (ICP-OES). ICP-OES measurement was performed using Thermo Scientific iCAP 6500 Duo ICP (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Cambridge, United Kingdom) spectrometer with iTEVA operational software according to the instrument instruction manual.

2.2. X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis of polymetallic sulphide ore

XRD patterns were obtained on a Philips PW-1710 automated diffractometer using a Cu tube operated at 40 kV and 30 mA. The diffraction data were collected in the 2 θ Bragg angle range from 5° to 60°, counting for 0.5 s at every 0.02° step. The divergence and receiving slits were fixed at 1 and 0.1 units, respectively. The XRD measurements were performed at room temperature in a stationary sample holder.

2.3. Leaching experiments

The leaching experiments were carried out with bacterium *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 (NCBI GenBank KC69130). Experimental conditions were: leaching period of 28 d, 50 ml leaching solution (g/L): (NH₄)₂SO₄ (3), K₂HPO₄ (0.5), MgSO₄ x 7H₂O (0.5), KCl (0.1), Ca(NO₃)₂ (0.01), at a pH of 2.5 in 150 mL Erlenmeyer flasks at a pulp density of 10% (m/V) (5 g leaching substrate-polymetallic ore in 50 ml solution). The initial number of microorganisms was 10⁷ per mL, determined by the Most Probable Number method [3]. The control suspension had the same chemical content and pH value as the suspension with *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2, but the *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 culture had been inactivated by sterilization. The study was realized on a horizontal shaker New Brunswick Scientific. The incubation temperature was 28 °C and the rotation speed 150 rpm [4].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample of polymetallic ore contained 1.66% Cu and 4.86% Zn.

The polymetallic sulfides ore had the following mineral composition: Pyrite (39.6%), Quartz (15.8%), Barite (38.9%), Sphalerite (4.3%), Galena (1.4%). XRD pattern of the polymetallic ore is shown in Figure 1.

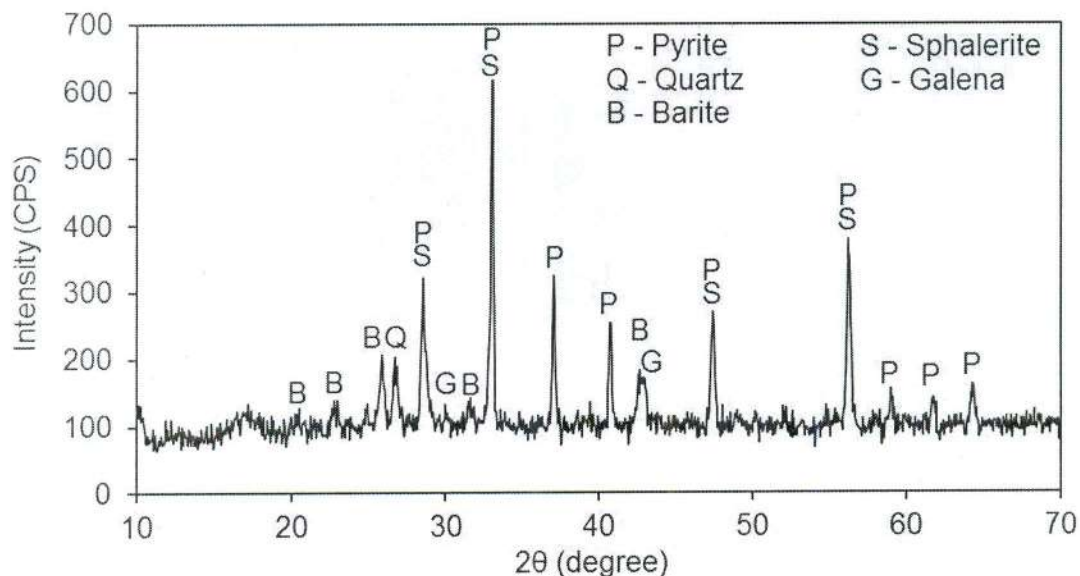


Figure 1. XRD diffractogram of untreated polymetallic ore

XRD pattern of the polymetallic ore after leaching experiments is shown in Figure 2.

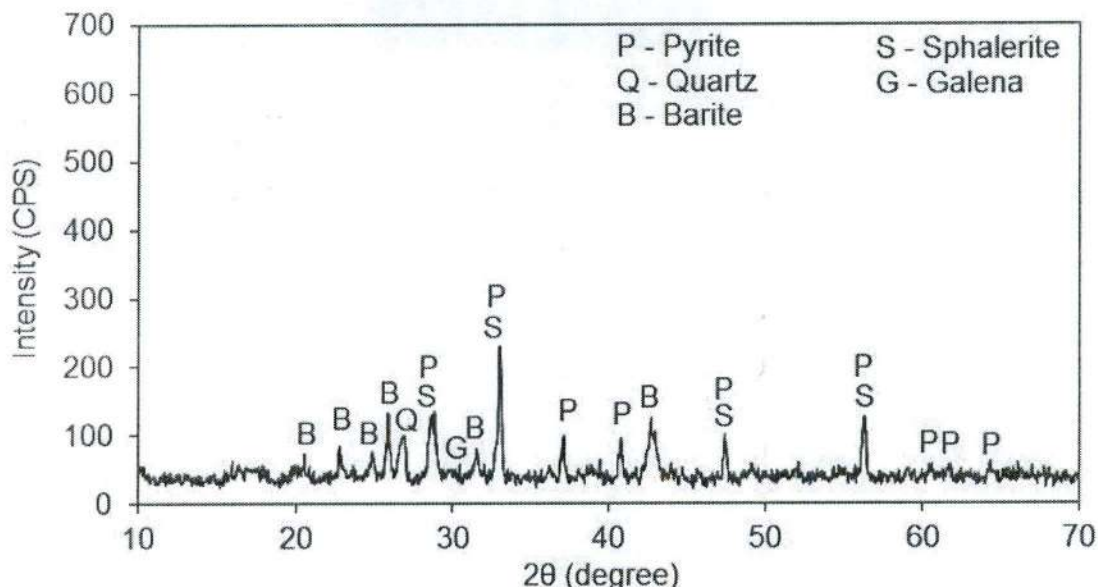
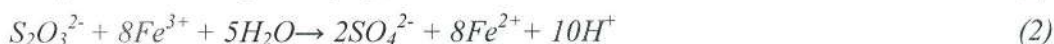
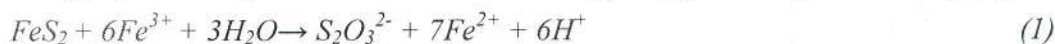


Figure 2. XRD diffractogram of residue after leaching experiments by *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2

The leaching experiment of polymetallic ore was performed using bacterial culture *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 and was completed after 28 d.

The process of leaching is based on the fact that acidophilic microorganisms provide metabolic energy by oxidizing ferrous iron released from pyrite, generating ferric iron [2,5].



Fe^{2+} (produced in reactions 1 and 2) can be reoxidized to Fe^{3+} by acting of iron-oxidizing microorganism *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2.



Key role of *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 is to regenerate sulphuric acid and Fe^{3+} , which is strong oxidizing agent, so it can oxidize metal sulfides, such as pyrite, sphalerite, enargite, and chalcopyrite. All these things lead to lower pH and leaching of metals from polymetallic sulphide ore [6, 7].

The obtained results are presented in Table 1. and Table 2.

Table 1- Number of iron-oxidizing *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 and pH profiles of suspensions during leaching

	pH		Number of microorganisms per mL	
	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2
0 d	2,42	2,41	/	10^7
14 d	2,64	1,88	/	10^9
28 d	2,34	1,47	/	10^7

The experiment of microbiological ore leaching was completed after 28 d with the same microorganism number as at the beginning, 10^7 per ml. This fact implicates than substrate did not have a toxic effect on the bacteria.

Tabele 2- Leaching of the tested metals during 28 d

	Zn (%)		Cu (%)	
	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2
0	7,22	7,19	6,32	6,16
14	16,35	40,27	13,33	45,71
28	20,91	67,11	15,69	65,23
The effective metal leaching	Zn (%)		Cu (%)	
	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2	control	<i>Acidithiobacillus</i> sp. B2
	13,69	59,92	9,37	59,07

At the end of the leaching process, the effective metal leaching (calculated by subtraction of percentage metal leaching in the control suspension from that in the *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 suspension) of zinc was 59,92% and copper was 59,07%. This shows that iron-oxidizing *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 can have a very important role in the dissolution of metals from polymetallic ore.

4. CONCLUSION

The results indicated that the polymetallic ore from the Bobija deposit was a suitable substrate for microbiological leaching processes. Also, this study shows that *Acidithiobacillus* sp. B2 can have a very important role in the dissolution of metals from polymetallic sulphide ore.

Due to its low cost and environmental acceptance, bioleaching of polymetallic sulfides ore by acidophilic iron- and sulphur-oxidizing bacteria could become an attractive and alternative way to recover of copper and zinc from the polymetallic sulfides ore.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was partially financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia as a part of the Projects III 43004 and TR 33007.

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