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# Single-step integrated CO<sub>2</sub> absorption and mineralization using fly ash coupled mixed amine solution: Mineralization performance and reaction kinetics

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#### ABSTRACT

Single-step integrated  $CO_2$  absorption and mineralization (IAM) using fly ash and mixed amine can reduce high energy consumption of absorbent regeneration while enabling the treatment of solid waste, however, the mineralization performance and kinetics are still unclear. This study adopted monoethanolamine (MEA)/N-Methyldiethanolamine (MDEA) mixed amine solution (MAS) as  $CO_2$  absorbent and fly ash as mineralizing materials to complete the IAM process in single-step, while realizing the regeneration of mixed amine. The mineralization performance was studied, and the reaction kinetics were analyzed by surface coverage model. The results demonstrated that fly ash effectively mineralized the absorbed  $CO_2$  in MAS and mixed amine regenerated. The mineralization efficiency reached maximum of 64.8 % at 40 °C, solid-liquid (S/L) ratio of 100 g/L, stirring rate of 500 r/min and 90 min, reaching 60.3 % after 10 cycles. The kinetic results demonstrated that surface coverage model exhibited excellent predictive capability for mineralization process (correlation coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) > 0.99), with identification of surface reaction governed by calcium leaching as the primary rate-limiting factor. The regeneration of mixed amine was achieved by forming carbamate and protonated amine. The  $CO_3^2$  /HCO $_3$  effectively reacted with the active  $Ca^{2+}$  ions in fly ash to realize mineralization, and the mineralization solid products was mainly  $CaCO_3$ .

## 1. Introduction

Post-combustion carbon capture is a promising technological for large scale  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  reduction from coal-fired power plants, steel plants and cement plants, of which organic amine chemical absorption is currently the most widely accepted technique for capturing  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  from flue gas, and it is suitable for retrofitting existing coal-fired power plants [1,2]. The organic amine chemical absorption method possesses the advantages of a rapid  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  absorption rate, high absorption efficiency, substantial absorption capacity and facile regeneration of the absorbent [3,4]. The technology, however, encounters some challenges such as the high energy consumption involved in  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  desorption and amine regeneration [5], degradation of absorbents and equipment corrosion [6], as well as the high cost in  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  transportation and compression and possible leakage risk of sequestered  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  [7]. To address these challenges, an improved  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  capture technology is imperative to be developed, which

can effectively minimize the energy consumption of amine regeneration and mitigate the potential risk of  ${\rm CO}_2$  storage.

 ${\rm CO_2}$  mineralization as a promising carbon capture technology has received a lot of attention [8]. The exothermic reaction exhibits thermodynamic advantages, which facilitates the reduction of energy consumption and costs [9,10]. The carbonates are very stable in nature and environmental risks such as leakage can be significantly reduced [11]. Calcium-rich ores, magnesium-rich ores and alkaline solid are used to carry out carbonation reactions with  ${\rm CO_2}$ . Carbon mineralization can be also applied with a variety of solid wastes, such as waste cement, fly ash, steel slag, mining tailings, etc [12,13]. Among them, fly ash, as the main solid waste from coal-fired power plants, can be used for  ${\rm CO_2}$  mineralization and has been studied extensively. By conducting  ${\rm CO_2}$  mineralization performance for fly ash at different temperature, Rao et al. [14] concluded that the promotion of mineralization reactions only occurred when the temperature exceeded 60 °C, and these reactions were

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observed after the hydration of CaO in fly ash into Ca(OH)<sub>2</sub>. The effects of temperature, gas flow rate and solid-liquid (S/L) ratio on the mineralization efficiency of fly ash were investigated Ji et al. [15]. It was observed that the mineralization efficiency remained barely affected by variations in gas flow rate and S/L ratio. Suitable additives can also be added to the process of CO<sub>2</sub> mineralization by fly ash to facilitate the mineralization reaction [16]. When fly ash was mixed with brine, CO<sub>2</sub> was sequestered in the form of carbonate, furthermore, the addition of NaOH to the mixture of fly ash and brine could enhance CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration [17]. However, this technology, encounters the synergistic treatment of fly ash and CO<sub>2</sub>, faces the challenge of slow chemical reaction rates, hindering its application in industrialization [18].

Considering the advantages of fast reaction kinetics in CO2 absorption by organic amines and low energy consumption with permanent CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration by CO<sub>2</sub> mineralization, combination of two technologies not only reduces the energy consumption of organic amine regeneration, but also promotes the mineralization reaction to generate stable products. Based on this concept, integrated CO2 absorption and mineralization (IAM) process has been proposed and investigated [19]. Typically, two pathways are commonly employed in current research for the IAM process. One common method employed approach involves the utilization of organic amine solution for pre-absorbing CO2, subsequently, the CO2-rich organic amine solution is combined with the calcium-based substances to generate calcium carbonate precipitation and simultaneously realize the regeneration of the organic amine. In this pathway, the IAM process is conducted separately, so it can be called two-step process [20]. The other pathway involves establishing a mixed reaction system of calcium-based substances and organic amine solution, wherein CO2 is continuously introduced into the system to accomplish the IAM process. This method is commonly referred to single-step process [11,21]. Some studies have utilized organic amine solutions, such as monoethanolamine (MEA), N-Methyldiethanolamine (MDEA), diethanolamine (DEA), 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol (AMP) and piperazine (PZ) for pre-absorption CO2, followed by the combination with CaO, Ca(OH)2 and CaCl2 to facilitate CO2 mineralization process [22-26]. It was found that the pro-absorbed CO2 in solution could be efficiently converted into CaCO<sub>3</sub> precipitation and showed high CO2 conversion, which verified the effectiveness of the two-step approach. Liu. et al. performed IAM process by pre-mixing CaO solids with MEA, AMP and sodium glycinate (NaGly) solutions in a slurry reaction system, resulting in exceptional CO2 absorption-mineralization performance [11,27]. The CO<sub>2</sub> conversion rate exceeded 80 %, demonstrating the feasibility of the single-step approach. The advantage of the this approach over two-step approach is its ability to allow CO2 absorption and mineralization to take place in the same unit. Additionally, both IAM reactions and organic amine regeneration can be performed at identical temperature, accelerating both reaction process while reducing the system energy consumption [11].

In exiting studies, single organic amine solutions have been widely used for IAM process [28-30], while few researches conducted the evaluation on the performance of mixed amine solution (MAS) for IAM process. In comparison to single amine solution, the mixing of different amines can enhance the limited absorption capacity of traditional amine solution, and resulting in lower energy consumption and superior recycling performance [31-33]. Thermodynamic model of system composed of CO2 and MDEA + PZ solution was established and analyzed by Moioli and Pellegrini [34], and the findings demonstrated that PZ enhanced the CO<sub>2</sub> absorption rate of MDEA solution and improved its absorption capacity. The CO2 absorption efficiency of MEA and diethylethanolamine (DEEA) solution separately mixed with N,N-dimethyl-1, 2-ethanediamine (N,N-DM12EDA), N,N-dimethyl-1,3-propanediamine (N,N-DM13PDA) and 4-amino-1-methylpiperidine (4-A1MPD), was investigated by Xiao et al. [35], founding that the addition of different amines increased CO<sub>2</sub> absorption load in single-amine solutions, and significantly enhanced absorption rate. However, few studies have been carried out to explore the performance of IAM process in MAS,

particularly with fly ash for mineralization in single-step IAM process. In our previous studies, we conducted research on CO2 mineralization using fly ash and CO<sub>2</sub> absorption using MAS were carried out [28,36]. The results demonstrated that mixed amine solution exhibited higher CO<sub>2</sub> absorption rate and absorption compared to single amine solution, offering an economically viable alternative by reducing the reliance on costly single amine, economy feasibility. Furthermore, its reaction rate was significantly higher than that of fly ash mineralization. Considering that water presence promoted fly ash mineralization and hydrolyzed product during mineralization facilitated mixed amine regeneration [36], therefore, the combination of mixed amine absorption and fly ash mineralization was considered as a viable approach to realize single-step IAM process. Considering the limited information available in the literatures, further investigation is required on the effects of reaction temperature, reaction times on the CO<sub>2</sub> absorption and mineralization performance in single-step IAM process. Additionally, the CO2 absorption performance by mixed amine and the regeneration properties of amines in single-step IAM process are not yet clear. The mineralization reaction kinetics and mechanism of IAM process using MAS coupled with fly ash is necessary to be discovered.

In this work, a mixture solution of MEA with rapid  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  absorption rate and MDEA with high  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  absorption capacity was selected as  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  absorbent, while the fly ash from coal-fired boiler as the target mineralization raw material. The IAM performance was investigated in single-step process. The mechanism of  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  absorption-mineralization by fly ash coupled with MEA/MDEA mixed solution was analyzed using different characterization methods. Additionally, the reaction kinetics of IAM process using fly ash was studied by surface coverage model. This study will provide a scientific foundation for the single-step IAM process by fly ash coupled with MAS.

## 2. Experimental materials and methods

#### 2.1. Materials

The MEA and MDEA used in the experiment were obtained from China Sinopharm Group, with purity of more than 99.7 %, which can be used without further purification. MEA/MDEA mixed solution was selected with a total organic amine concentration of 3 mol/L, containing 2 mol/L MEA and 1 mol/L MDEA, which based on the optimal proportion determined in the previous study [28]. The fly ash used in this study was collected from the outlet of an electrostatic precipitator of a coal-fired power plant in China, and its elemental composition was determined by X-ray Fluorescence spectrometer (XRF), as shown in Table 1.

#### 2.2. IAM experimental system and process

Fig. 1 illustrated the IAM experimental system. Before the experiment, the reaction vessel was first purged by continuously passing pure CO<sub>2</sub> gas for 5 min to remove the internal air, 200 mL of MEA/MDEA mixed solution was then added into the slurry reaction device. In addition, a certain mass of fly ash was weighed into the solution and stirred to make them thoroughly mixed. When the slurry temperature was raised to the reaction temperature, the reaction gas (1 L/min), including CO<sub>2</sub> (99.99 %,  $P_{CO2} = 15$  %) and N<sub>2</sub> (99.99 %,  $P_{N2} = 85$  %) was continuously introduced into the slurry reaction device for a period of time. The reaction time, S/L ratio and stirring rate were set at 25–60 °C, 50–200 g/L and 300–900 r/min respectively. The CO<sub>2</sub> concentration at the reactor outlet was measured by flue gas analyzer (Gasboard-3100P, Wuhan Cubic Optoelectronics), which was used to calculate the CO<sub>2</sub> mass at reactor outlet.

After completion of the reaction, the product was first separated using a high-speed centrifuge, followed by filtration of the centrifuged sediment through an organic filter membrane. The filtrate and solid product were collected separately, and the CO<sub>2</sub> loading of filtrate was

**Table 1** Elemental composition analysis of fly ash by XRF.

Oxide	$SiO_2$	$Al_2O_3$	CaO	MgO	$Fe_2O_3$	${ m TiO_2}$	$SO_3$	K <sub>2</sub> O	$P_2O_5$
wt/%	63.44	21.96	4.74	4.07	1.41	1.18	1.6	1.09	0.51

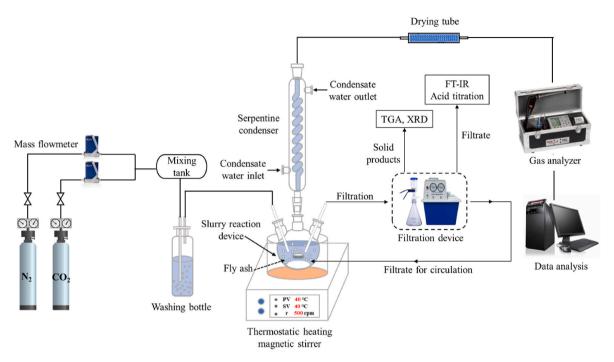


Fig. 1. IAM experimental system.

determined by acid titration. The solid product was dried at  $105\,^{\circ}\mathrm{C}$  and uniformly ground, then subjected to thermogravimetric experiments to determine the mineralization efficiency. The thermogravimetric experiments were performed on Thermogravimetric analyzer (TGA) (STA449F3, Netzsch) under the following conditions: the temperature was increased from 30  $^{\circ}\mathrm{C}$  to 950  $^{\circ}\mathrm{C}$  at a heating rate of 20  $^{\circ}\mathrm{C/min}$ , and the weight change of the sample was recorded within the temperature range of 500  $^{\circ}\mathrm{C-850}\,^{\circ}\mathrm{C}$ .

Finally, the filtrates obtained from each reaction were utilized for the next IAM experiment, and the above process was repeated for 10 times, which was the cycle experiment. Since the small amount of amine solution (< 2 %) was lost during the filtration of solid product, the filtrate was supplemented with MAS of the same concentration to maintain the same S/L ratio and good experimental performance after each cycle.

## 2.3. Experimental methods and characterization

As shown in Table 1, the main components in the fly ash were  $SiO_2$  and  $Al_2O_3$ , constituting over 85 % of all chemical components in fly ash. Assuming that the active components in fly ash react with  $CO_2$  completely, the theoretical maximum  $CO_2$  sequestration capacity can be achieved, and the theoretical maximum  $CO_2$  sequestration capacity of fly ash could be calculated according to equation (1) [36], which was 70.6 kg- $CO_2$ /t-FA. The mineralization efficiency in IAM experiments using fly ash was calculated as shown in the following equations [37].

$$Th_{-}CO_{2} = \frac{44}{56} \times \left( m_{CaO} - \frac{56}{100} m_{CaCO_{3}} - \frac{56}{80} m_{SO_{3}} \right) + \frac{44}{40} m_{MgO} + \frac{44}{62} m_{Na_{2}O} + \frac{44}{94} m_{K_{2}O}$$

$$\tag{1}$$

$$\eta_{CO_2} = \frac{Ac - CO_2}{Th - CO_2} \times 100\% \tag{2}$$

$$Ac_{-}CO_{2} = \frac{\Delta M_{CO_{2}} - \Delta M_{CO_{2}}}{M_{EA}} \tag{3}$$

$$\Delta M_{CO_2}' = \frac{44}{100} \times m_{CaCO_3} \times M_{FA} \tag{4}$$

where,  $m_{CaO}$  was the percentage of CaO content in fly ash, %;  $m_{CaCO3}$  was the percentage of CaCO<sub>3</sub> content in fly ash, 1.74 %;  $m_{SO3}$  was the percentage of SO<sub>3</sub> content in fly ash, %;  $m_{MgO}$  was the percentage of MgO content in fly ash, %;  $m_{Na2O}$  represented the percentage of Na<sub>2</sub>O content in fly ash, %;  $m_{K2O}$  represented the percentage of K<sub>2</sub>O content in fly ash, %.  $Th_{CO_2}$  represented the theoretical CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration capacity, kg-CO<sub>2</sub>/t-FA;  $n_{CO_2}$  was the actual CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration capacity, kg-CO<sub>2</sub>/t-FA;  $n_{CO_2}$  was the mineralization efficiency, %;  $\Delta M_{CO_2}$  represented the weight change after CO<sub>2</sub> release by decomposition at thermogravimetric warming to 500–850 °C, kg;  $\Delta M'_{CO_2}$  was the mass of CO<sub>2</sub> released by decomposition of CaCO<sub>3</sub> in fly ash during thermogravimetric process, kg;  $M_{FA}$  was the mass of fly ash used in thermogravimetric experiments, kg.

The  $CO_2$  mass balance between gas-liquid-solid phases was characterized by  $CO_2$  utilization rate by equations (5)–(7):

$$\xi_{CO_2} = \left(\frac{m_{CO_2\_out} + m_{AC\_CO_2} + m_{f\_CO_2}}{m_{CO_2\_in}}\right) \times 100\%$$
 (5)

$$m_{CO_2-out} = 44 \times Q_v \int_0^t \frac{C_{in} - C_{out}}{22.4} dt$$
 (6)

$$m_{AC\_CO_2} = AC\_CO_2 \times M_{tFA} \tag{7}$$

where,  $\xi_{CO_2}$  was the CO<sub>2</sub> utilization rate in experiments, %;  $m_{CO_2\_in}$  was the CO<sub>2</sub> total mass at reactor inlet during the reaction, g;  $m_{CO_2\_out}$  was the CO<sub>2</sub> total mass at reactor outlet during the reaction, g;  $m_{AC\_CO_2}$  was

the mass of  $CO_2$  involved in mineralization, g;  $m_{f\_CO_2}$  was the mass of  $CO_2$  absorbed in the filtrate after the reaction, g;  $Q_v$  was the volume of reaction gas, 1L/min; t was the reaction time, min;  $C_{in}$  and  $C_{out}$  were respectively the  $CO_2$  concentration at reactor inlet and outlet, %;  $M_{tFA}$  was the mass of fly ash used in IAM process, kg.

The functional groups composition in the filtrate before and after the reaction were analyzed using Fourier transform infrared spectrometer (FT-IR) (EQUINOX-55, Bruker), and X-ray Diffractometer (XRD) (D8, Bruker) was used to analyze the composition and crystalline structure of the mineralization products.

#### 2.4. Kinetic model

The surface coverage model was employed to determine  ${\rm CO_2}$  mineralization kinetic using fly ash. Assuming that the mineralization reaction process of fly ash was controlled by surface reaction, the relationship between mineralization efficiency and reaction time was shown in equations (8)–(13) [38,39].

$$\frac{d\eta_{CO_2}}{dt} = S_g M \bullet k_s \varphi \tag{8}$$

$$-\frac{d\varphi}{dt} = k_p \bullet k_s \varphi \tag{9}$$

$$k_1 = k_s S_g M \tag{10}$$

$$k_2 = k_p / S_g M \tag{11}$$

$$\varphi = \exp(-k_1 k_2 t) \tag{12}$$

$$\eta_{CO_2} = \left[1 - \exp(-k_1 k_2 t)\right] / k_2 \tag{13}$$

where,  $S_g$  was the initial specific surface area of fly ash,  $m^2/g$ ; M was the weight of fly ash required to consume each mole of reactive material (mainly CaO), g/mol;  $k_s$  was the rate constant,  $mol \bullet min^{-1}/m^2$ ;  $k_P$  was a proportionally constant,  $m^2/mol$ ; t was reaction time, min;  $\varphi$  was the fraction of surface reaction sites.

#### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Characteristics of IAM

3.1.1. Effect of different conditions on mineralization efficiency of fly ash The effect of temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate on the  $\rm CO_2$  absorption-mineralization performance of fly ash coupled with MAS was demonstrated in Fig. 2. In Fig. 2(a), the mineralization efficiency initially increased and then gradually stabilized with the increase in reaction time at different temperatures. With the increasing of reaction temperature, the mineralization efficiency first increased and then decreased, reaching the maximum mineralization efficiency of at temperature of 40 °C. As the reaction progressed, the dissolved concentration of the active ions  $({\rm Ca^{2+}}, {\rm Mg^{2+}}, {\rm etc.})$  in fly ash that could react with  ${\rm CO_3^2-/HCO_3^-}$  to precipitate in the MAS gradually saturated and adequately reacted with the absorbed  ${\rm CO_2}$  to form carbonate precipitate, resulting in an initial increase followed by gradual stabilization in mineralization efficiency. Previous researches demonstrated that

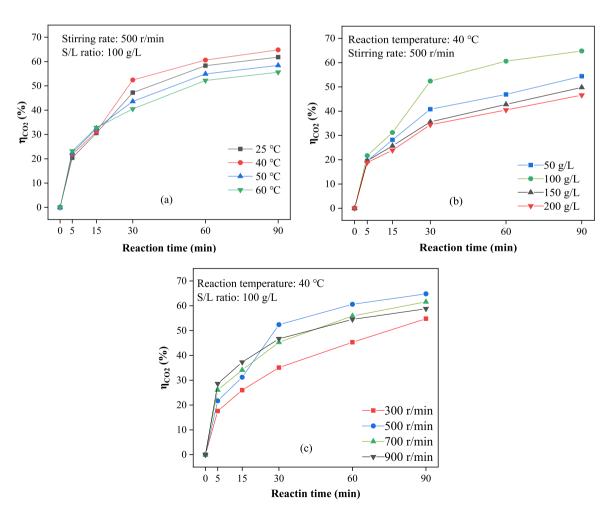


Fig. 2. CO<sub>2</sub> absorption-mineralization performance at (a) different temperatures, (b) different S/L ratios, (c) different stirring rates.

elevated temperature could enhance the mass transfer rate and molecular thermal motion [40], thereby facilitating the leaching and diffusion of active ions in solution as well as the diffusion of  $CO_2$ , which expediting the mineralization reaction. At 40 °C, the solubility and mass transfer rate of  $CO_2$  in MAS made the most  $CO_2$  to participate in reaction, which was conducive to the production of carbonate precipitate. However, the solubility of  $CO_2$  decreased with the further increase in temperature, leading to a reduction in concentration of  $CO_3^2$ /HCO $_3$  in solution, which was unfavorable for the mineralization reaction and consequently led to a decline in mineralization efficiency. These findings were consistent with previous literature on the impact of temperature [41].

Fig. 2(b) showed the effect of S/L ratio on CO2 absorptionmineralization performance of fly ash coupled with MAS at 40  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  and stirring rate of 500 r/min. It was observed that as reaction progressed. the mineralization efficiency of fly ash gradually enhanced and tended to be stable at different S/L ratios. Furthermore, the mineralization efficiency of fly ash increased first and then decreased with the S/L ratio increased from 50 g/L to 200 g/L. The maximum mineralization efficiency was achieved at S/L ratio of 100 g/L. At low S/L ratios, the reactive ions involved in the reaction in fly ash were less leached in solution. Increasing the S/L ratio enhanced dissolution rate and solubility of Ca<sup>2+</sup>, Mg<sup>2+</sup> and OH<sup>-</sup> ions, promoting mineralization reactions. However, as S/L ratio further increased, the concentration of active ions dissolved in solution gradually approached saturation. Consequently, there was a limitation on leaching of active ions from fly ash to MAS, resulting in a slowdown of dissolution rate, hindering the solid-liquid mass transfer and mineralization reactions, which was consistent with existing literature [42]. Meanwhile, most of active ions dissolved in the solution participated in mineralization reaction and converted into

carbonate precipitates, which covered the unreacted fly ash surface, hindering the leaching and diffusion of the remaining active ions in fly ash, resulting in lower mineralization efficiency.

The effects of stirring rate on the performance of fly ash absorptionmineralization of CO2 at S/L ratio of 100 g/L and 40 °C were given in Fig. 2(c). The mineralization efficiency of fly ash at different stirring rates all increased firstly and reached a stable stage as reaction continued. With the increase of stirring rate, the mineralization efficiency of fly ash initially increased and then decreased. At low stirring rate, an increase in stirring rate weakened the resistance of gas-liquid mass transfer, enhancing the mass transfer rate of CO2 between the two phases. Simultaneously, a low concentration of active ions dissolved in the solution, and intensified stirring rates facilitated leaching and diffusion of active ion in fly ash, thereby enhancing contact frequency among reactants in solution and promoting the mineralization reaction [43]. At a stirring rate of 500 r/min, the maximum rates of CO<sub>2</sub> mass transfer between gas and liquid as well as maximum mineralization efficiency were observed. However, with further increase in stirring rate, disturbance within the solution became more severe, leading to reduced residence time for CO2 during gas-liquid mass transfer along with decreased rates for both gas-liquid and solid-liquid mass transfers. This finding aligned with previous literature on excessive stirring rates impact on mineralization [44]. The reduction of  $CO_3^{2-}$  in solution for absorption and conversion weakened the mineralization reaction and reduced the mineralization efficiency. Additionally, as the reaction progressed, the generated carbonate precipitate would cover the unreacted fly ash particles, inhibiting further mineralization of fly ash, resulting in a gradual leveling off of mineralization efficiency. The maximum mineralization efficiency in experiments reached 64.8 % at 40 °C, S/L ratio of 100 g/L and stirring rate of 500 r/min, which

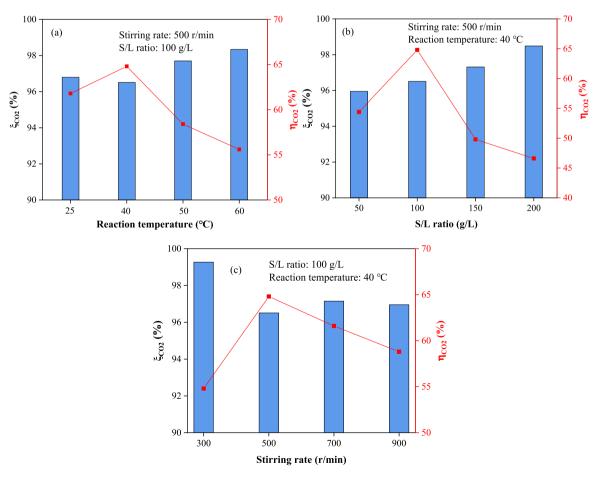


Fig. 3. Carbon balance in reactions at (a) different reaction temperature, (b) different S/L ratios, (c) different stirring rates.

represented a substantial improvement compared to exiting studies [36].

The  $CO_2$  utilization rate in the experiments, as shown in Fig. 3, exceeded 95 %. The results indicated that the discrepancy between inlet  $CO_2$  mass and the  $CO_2$  mass in products did not exceed 5 % and the experimental results were credible.

#### 3.1.2. Cyclic stability of IAM processes

The mineralization efficiency and the number of cycles played a crucial role in the cyclic stability performance of single-step IAM process by fly ash coupled with MAS. Fig. 4 illustrated the  $\rm CO_2$  sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency of IAM process using fly ash during 10 cycles, at 40  $^{\circ}$ C, stirring rate of 500 r/min and S/L ratio of 100 g/L.

It can be seen the CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency of fly ash decreased firstly and then gradually stabilized as the number of cycles increased. The CO2 sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency of the second cycle exhibited a significant decrease compared with the first cycle, from 46.74 kg-CO<sub>2</sub>/t-FA to 45.17 kg-CO<sub>2</sub>/t-FA for CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration capacity and from 66.2 % to 64 % for mineralization efficiency. The CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency showed a gradual decline with the increasing cycle times, while the descent rate gradually reached zero. The CO2 sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency remained relatively stable after 7 cycles. After 10 cycles, the CO2 sequestration capacity and mineralization efficiency of fly ash were finally stabilized at 42.6 kg-CO<sub>2</sub>/t-FA and 60.3 % respectively, which was 91.1 % of the original MAS. The results confirmed that the absorption capacity of the MAS for CO<sub>2</sub> did not significantly decrease with an increase in the number of cycles. Additionally, effective regeneration was achieved, which was consistent with previous literature findings [26]. Therefore, the utilization of fly ash coupled with MAS for IAM process is a viable option, as it not only exhibits high efficiency in mineralization but also enables the recovery and utilization of MAS, thereby effectively enhancing the economy of the process.

## 3.2. Reaction kinetics of IAM by coupling fly ash with MAS

In order to analyze the reaction kinetics of fly ash in MAS and determine the rate-limiting steps affecting the whole reaction process, the effect of reaction temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate on the performance of IAM using fly ash coupled MAS was investigated by surface coverage model.

The fitting results of the surface coverage model were presented in

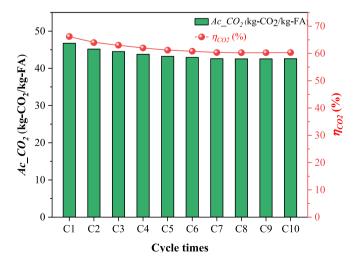


Fig. 4. Cycling performance of MAS after  $10~{\rm times}~{\rm CO}_2$  absorption-mineralization experiments.

Fig. S1 and Table S1. The experimental data were found to be strongly correlated with the fitted results of the surface coverage model, with correlation coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) values obtained from the regressions for each reaction condition exceeding 0.99. This indicated that it was accurate and feasible using the surface coverage model to describe the absorption-mineralization reaction process of fly ash. Furthermore, the increase in reaction temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate resulted in an initial increase and followed decrease in mineralization efficiency, which gradually stabilized with the increase of reaction time, consistent with the experimental results.

Table S1 presented the  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  values obtained using this model regression at different reaction conditions, and the  $k_s$  and  $k_D$  values were calculated according to equations (15) and (16). The M value and the  $S_q$ value in this experiment were 635.6 g-FA/mol-CO<sub>2</sub> and 9.046 m<sup>2</sup>/g respectively. The  $k_s$  was typically affected by various factors, including the solubility and diffusion rate of CO2 in the reaction system, the leaching rate of active ions from the solid phase to the liquid phase, and the generation rate of carbonate precipitation. Meanwhile, alternations in reaction conditions also had a significant impact on the  $k_s$  value. It can be seen from Table S1 that as reaction temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate increased, the value of  $k_s$  initially increased and then decreased. The trend was consistent with the observed change of mineralization efficiency of fly ash. The trend of  $k_p$  was the opposite of  $k_s$ value and mineralization efficiency. The higher the value of reaction rate constant  $k_s$ , the lower the corresponding  $k_p$  value, representing a greater mineralization degree. As the reaction proceeded, the active sites on fly ash surface were gradually covered by products, hindering the leaching and diffusion of active ions from fly ash to MAS, resulting in a deceleration in reaction rate. Combining the conclusions in section 3.1, it can be concluded that the mineralization efficiency was high when the leaching rate of active ions was high in the earlier reaction period due to uncovered fly ash surface. However, as the reaction progressed and products covered the fly ash, the leaching rate of ions decreased, resulting in a reduction in mineralization efficiency. Therefore, it can be concluded that the surface reaction influenced by active ion leaching is indeed the limiting factor for fly ash mineralization.

The fitting results of surface coverage model for predicting the maximum mineralization efficiency were given in Fig. S2, which was compared with the experimentally measured values under different reaction conditions. The experimental data exhibited a strong correlation with the fitted results, showing an  $\rm R^2$  value was as high as 0.99 and the prediction error within  $\pm 10$  %. This indicated that the surface coverage model could well describe the reaction kinetics of fly ash at different reaction conditions and accurately predict the maximum mineralization efficiency in experiments.

## 3.3. Mechanism analysis of the IAM processes

## 3.3.1. Characterization of solid products

To reveal the mechanism of IAM process using fly ash coupled MAS, XRD and TGA characterization of solid products obtained at reaction condition of 40  $^{\circ}$ C, S/L ratio of 100 g/L and stirring rate of 500 r/min were performed, as shown in Fig. 5.

It can be seen in Fig. 5(a) that the mineralogical characteristics of fly ash were complex, and the diffraction peaks representing lime (CaO) disappeared and calcite (CaCO $_3$ ) were significantly enhanced after the reaction, while the diffraction peaks of Portland (Ca(OH) $_2$ ) were not observed. It indicated that the active component CaO in fly ash reacted sufficiently with CO $_2$  to form calcite, which was consistent with the conclusion drawn in the literature that MEA and MDEA favored the formation of calcite [45]. The diffraction peaks of all components, except for calcite, showed no significant changes in intensity and no new diffraction peaks such as MgCO $_3$  and other carbonates were observed. This suggested that the mineralization reaction primarily occurred on CaO, while the other components in fly ash had negligible effects on IAM performance.

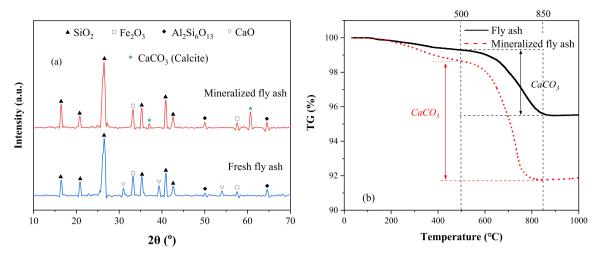


Fig. 5. (a)XRD patterns before and after the  $CO_2$  absorption-mineralization reaction of fly ash, (b)thermogravimetric analysis before and after  $CO_2$  absorption-mineralization reaction of fly ash.

The mass loss in the temperature range of 500–850  $^{\circ}$ C indicated the decomposition of CaCO<sub>3</sub> [46,47]. As demonstrated in Fig. 5(b), nearly all of the active CaO fraction in fly ash converted to CaCO<sub>3</sub> through

reaction with  $CO_2$ , and  $CaCO_3$  was the only calcium-containing carbonate phase at the end of the fly ash absorption-mineralization  $CO_2$  reaction, consisting with the XRD analysis results.

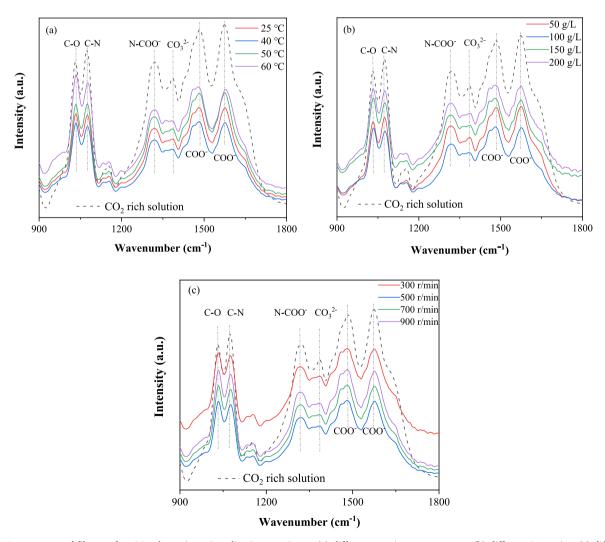


Fig. 6. FT-IR spectrums of filtrate after  $CO_2$  absorption-mineralization reaction at (a) different reaction temperatures, (b) different S/L ratios, (c) different stirring rates.

### 3.3.2. Characterization of filtrate

To further reveal the mechanism of IAM process with fly ash coupled MAS, FT-IR characterization of the filtrate obtained at different reaction conditions was carried out, as shown in Fig. 6.

It can be seen that typical peaks appeared in the FT-IR spectra of the  ${\rm CO}_2$  absorption enrichment solution when the  ${\rm CO}_2$  was absorbed by the mixed amines solution, including an asymmetric stretching peak at 1568 cm $^{-1}(\nu_{as}{\rm COO}^{-})$ , a symmetric stretching peak at 1486 cm $^{-1}(\nu_{s}{\rm COO}^{-})$  and a stretching vibration peak appearing at 1326 cm $^{-1}(\nu_{s}{\rm COO}^{-})$ . The characteristic peak appearing at 1388 cm $^{-1}$  corresponded to  ${\rm CO}_3^{-}$  and 1360 cm $^{-1}$  to  ${\rm HCO}_3^{-}$ . The stretching peak at 1076 cm $^{-1}$  was attributed to C–N bond and the bending peak at 1652 cm $^{-1}$  to the N–H bond, while the 1024 cm $^{-1}$  corresponded to the C–O stretching peak [48,49].

It was consistent with the findings in our previous study that [28], when mixed amines reacted with  $CO_2$ , it would first react with  $CO_2$  to form zwitterion, which would continue reacting with MEA to form carbamates and protonated amine (equation (14) and (15)), and the peak at  $1568~\rm cm^{-1}$ ,  $1486~\rm cm^{-1}$  and  $1326~\rm cm^{-1}$  were all corresponded to the carbamate (MEACOO<sup>-</sup>) produced in the reaction. The process proceeded rapidly but limited  $CO_2$  could be absorbed. The increasing  $CO_2$  loading facilitated the hydrolysis of carbamate to form  $HCO_3^-$  and free amines (equation (16)). Due to the absence of active hydrogen atoms surrounding the nitrogen atoms in MDEA, it did not react with  $CO_2$  to generate carbamate directly, but involved in reaction as a weak base [26]. The peak at  $1076~\rm cm^{-1}$  and  $1652~\rm cm^{-1}$  corresponded to the protonated amine produced (MEAH<sup>+</sup>/MDEAH<sup>+</sup>) (equation (18)). This process proceeded relatively slow but the  $CO_2$  absorption capacity effectively increased.

$$RNH_2 + CO_2 (aq) \leftrightarrow RNH_2^+COO^-$$
 (14)

$$RNH_2^+COO^- + RNH_2 \leftrightarrow RNHCOO^- + RNH_3^+$$
 (15)

$$RNHCOO^{-} + H2O \leftrightarrow RNH2 + HCO3^{-}$$
 (16)

$$CO_2 (aq) + H_2O \leftrightarrow H_2CO_3 \leftrightarrow H^+ + HCO_3^-$$
(17)

$$R_1R_2R_3N + H^+ \rightarrow R_1R_2R_3NH^+$$
 (18)

The results presented in Fig. 6 demonstrated that, the peak intensities of corresponding absorption peaks in the MAS showed a decrease followed by an increase with the increase of reaction temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate, but were all lower than those observed in the  $\rm CO_2$  rich solution. This trend was corresponded to the results in experiments and reaction dynamics, indicating the involvement and consumption of carbamate,  $\rm CO_2^3^-/HCO_3^-$  and protonated amine (MEAH<sup>+</sup>/MDEAH<sup>+</sup>) in the reaction. Carbamate did not participate in the  $\rm CO_2$  mineralization directly, however, its hydrolysis reaction provided part of  $\rm HCO_3^-$ , which directly reacted with  $\rm Ca^{2+}$  to form calcium carbonate precipitate and indirectly promoted the  $\rm CO_2$  mineralization reaction, as shown in equations (16) and (19)  $\sim$  (22).

$$CaO(s) + H_2O \rightarrow Ca^{2+} + 2OH^-$$
 (19)

$$Ca^{2+} + HCO_3^- \rightarrow CaCO_3 \downarrow + H^+$$
 (20)

$$HCO_3^- + OH^- \leftrightarrow CO_3^{2-} + H_2O$$
 (21)

$$\operatorname{Ca}^{2+} + \operatorname{CO}_3^{2-} \to \operatorname{CaCO}_3 \downarrow$$
 (22)

$$RNH_3^+ + OH^- \leftrightarrow RNH_2 + H_2O \tag{23}$$

$$R_1R_2R_3NH^+ + OH^- \leftrightarrow R_1R_2 R_3N + H_2O$$
 (24)

The  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  involved in reaction primary originated from the leaching and diffusion of calcium in fly ash, which reacted directly with the  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}/\text{HCO}_3^{-}$  formed by the  $\text{CO}_2$  absorption of MEA/MDEA solution to form  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitate. Moreover, the  $\text{OH}^-$  generated from  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  leaching also reacted directly with  $\text{HCO}_3^{-}$  and protonated amine (MEAH<sup>+</sup>/MDEAH<sup>+</sup>) (equation (19), (23) and (24)), thereby accelerating

the generated protonated amine to regenerate free amine, realizing chemical regeneration of the mixed amines solution, which was in good agreement with the previous research [45]. The gradual decrease in peak intensity of MEAH $^+$  and MDEAH $^+$  proved the regeneration of the MEA/MDEA solution. The coverage of fly ash surface by the generated products resulted in a decrease in the leaching amount of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and a reduction in the consumption of  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}/\text{HCO}_3^-$  in solution, as shown in Fig. 6. This observation further supported the conclusion in the reaction kinetics that the surface reaction influenced by  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  leaching was the main factor limiting the mineralization efficiency.

## 3.3.3. Mechanism of IAM processes by coupling fly ash with MAS

The component of fly ash was intricate, and the active CaO component in fly ash was identified to be suitable for CO<sub>2</sub> mineralization and served as the primary reactant in mineralization [36]. As illustrated in Fig. 7, MEA in MAS first reacted with CO<sub>2</sub> to form carbamate. CO<sub>2</sub> was continuously introduced and reacted with water, forming  $H^+$  and  $CO_3^{2-}$ , which resulting in a decrease in solution pH. Simultanouely, the acidic environment promoted the hydrolysis of carbamate into  $CO_3^{2-}$ , while the  $H^+$  reacted with amine to produce protonated amine. At the same time, MDEA facilitated greater CO<sub>2</sub> absorption by promoting  $HCO_3^-$  generation, aligning with existing literature on this mechanism [26]. Throughout this process,  $Ca^{2+}$  leached from fly ash reacted with  $CO_3^{2-}/HCO_3^-$  to precipitate CaCO<sub>3</sub>. Additionally, Additionally, OH<sup>-</sup> generated from the hydrolysis of active CaO in fly ash reacted with protonated amine in solution to generate amine, thereby completing mineralization and amine regeneration.

#### 4. Conclusions

Utilization of MAS coupled with fly ash on IAM process by single-step method was proposed. The mineralization efficiency increased as reaction time increased, while it initially increased and then decreased with increasing in reaction temperature, S/L ratio and stirring rate. The maximum mineralization efficiency reached 64.8 % at 40 °C, 90 min with S/L ratio of 100 g/L and stirring rate of 500 r/min. The kinetics results demonstrated that the surface coverage model exhibited excellent predictive capability for the mineralization process ( $\rm R^2>0.99$ ), with identification of  $\rm Ca^{2^+}$  leaching as the primary rate-limiting factor governing the surface reaction.

The characterization results revealed that the mineralization of fly ash was primarily attribute to active CaO in fly ash. The  ${\rm Ca^{2+}}$  generated from fly ash dissolved in MEA/MDEA solution, subsequently reacting directly with  ${\rm CO_3^{2-}/HCO_3^{-}}$  to form  ${\rm CaCO_3}$  precipitate. Additionally, it reacted with  ${\rm HCO_3^{-}}$  generated through carbamate hydrolysis to facilitate the gradual recovery of carbamate into free amine. Simultaneously, the active CaO component in fly ash provided a significant amount of OH<sup>-</sup> through hydrolysis reaction in the MEA/MDEA-H<sub>2</sub>O system, which directly reacted with the protonated amine to regenerated the mixed amine. This work provided a new process for  ${\rm CO_2}$  absorption and mineralization using fly ash coupled MAS, contributing to the development of carbon reduction as well as fly ash utilization and treatment.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jingwen Lu: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft. Zhonghui Wang: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft. Sheng Su: Supervision, Writing – review & editing. Hao Liu: Supervision. Zhiwei Ma: Investigation, Validation. Qiangqiang Ren: Investigation, Writing – review & editing, Validation. Kai Xu: Supervision. Yi Wang: Supervision. Song Hu: Supervision. Jun Xiang: Supervision.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial

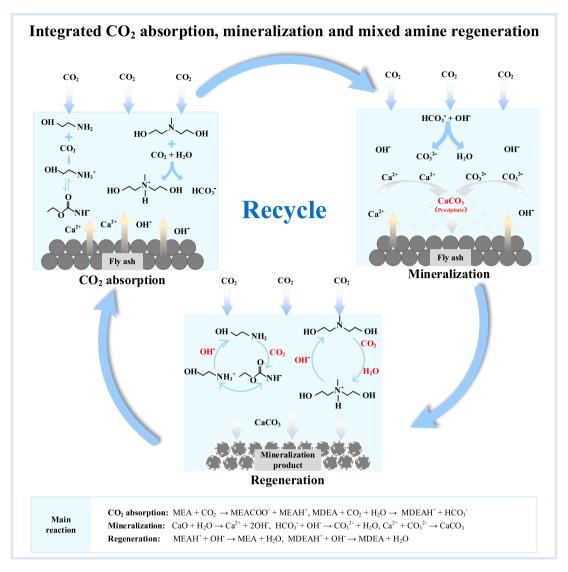


Fig. 7. Mechanism of IAM processes.

interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at  $\frac{https:}{doi.}$  org/10.1016/j.energy.2023.129615.

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