Simulation of positive and negative streamer in a CO2/O2 gas mixture

Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Nisar1, Muhammad Farasat Abbas1\* Guang Yu Sun2

1 High Voltage Lab, Department of Electrical Engineering Power, U.S.-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Energy (USPCAS-E), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), H-12, Islamabad, 44000 Pakistan

2 Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Swiss Plasma Center (SPC), CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

\*E-mail: [farasat.abbas@uspcase.nust.edu.pk](mailto:farasat.abbas@uspcase.nust.edu.pk)

Abstract

SF6 is commonly used as gaseous insulation media in high voltage equipment but it has high GWP and urgently needs to be replaced with ecofriendly alternatives. CO2 based mixtures have shown promising results as SF6 alternatives. Streamers belonging to the initial phase of electrical breakdown have become an important subject for the reliable design of high voltage equipment based on gaseous insulation. In this paper, positive and negative streamers in CO2/O2 mixtures are investigated using a 2D axisymmetric simulation model. Considering the low probability in gas mixtures with higher concentration of CO2, photoionization has been excluded andbackground ionization is used for the generation of free electrons along with Townsend ionization equation and the Gaussian approximation for the initial electron density distribution.

The influence of concentration ratio, pressure, electric field non-uniformity, and gap length on both positive and negative streamers is then investigated along with electron transport properties.

The results showed that with increasing the O2 content into CO2, electron density, electric field, streamer length, and velocity decreased/increased for positive streamer and what happened in the case of negative streamer??? Similarly, what was the impact of increasing the pressure, electrode radii, and gap length on positive and negative streamers???

The results showed that electron density, electric field and total ionization rate in negative streamer discharge is higher and concentrated as compared to positive streamer discharge. The electron density in positive and negative streamer increases by increasing the voltage and decreases with increase in the pressure, electrode radii and electrode distance. Similarly, the streamer propagation velocity in positive streamer is fast as compared with negative streamer. In positive streamer, the localized electric field is enhanced by the electron impact reaction and hence the streamer propagation velocity increases. From the graphical results, the electric field in negative streamer first increases and then decreases. The negative streamer propagates against the electric field. On the other hand, the positive streamer propagates in the direction of the electric field. Therefore, the electric field in positive streamer has the maximum peak during the propagation of the streamer discharge.

Keywords: We can write this on the end.

1. Introduction

Sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) is commonly utilized as a gas for quenching arcs during fault occurrences in various high-voltage devices like circuit breakers, gas-insulated switchgear (GIS), and gas-insulated lines (GIL), providing essential functions in high-voltage fault protection and insulation. However, its significant global warming potential (GWP) index classifies SF6 as one of the most potent gases ever generated [1]. The GWP index of SF6 is about 23,500 times higher than that of CO2 [2]. Therefore, it is important to replace the SF6 gas with a new eco-friendly gas or gas mixtures with properties comparable to SF6 [3]. CO2 plays an important role in switching performance and has a promising SF6 replacement capability either in pure form or mixed with other materials such as C4F7N, CF3I or C5F10O [4][5].

The literature has shown different authors have carried out streamer discharge experiments based on the CO2 mixed gases. Lin et al. performed the experiment on the positive streamer discharge under AC and DC composite voltage. The key characteristics of the positive streamer including streamer propagation, streamer velocity and luminous intensity have discussed in detail. The experiment results have proved that the positive streamer discharge characteristics under the AC and DC composite voltage are different from the pure DC voltage. The positive streamer discharge is dependent on the phase of the applied voltage [6]. Kumar et al. also performed the experiment on CO2/O2 under AC, DC and impulse applied voltage in a weak and strong non-uniform electric field at 0.1 to 1 MPa of the applied pressure. The results of this experiment have shown that in a weak non-uniform electric field, the breakdown electric field is followed by a constant ratio under AC and DC applied voltage. The positive impulse voltage has higher breakdown strength than AC and DC voltage. Similarly, the breakdown strength under negative impulse voltage is further higher than the positive impulse voltage in a non-uniform electric field [7]. Similarly, Huiskamp et al. worked on the effective streamer discharge propagation control with the help of nanosecond pulsed waveform generator. The results of the experiment have shown that streamer propagation can be controlled by controlling the stepped waveform but the pulse rise time has little effect on the streamer propagation. However, streamer velocity changes significantly by changing the rise and fall time pulsed waveform generator [8].

The streamer discharge simulation in CO2 mixture has also carried out by different authors. Bagheri et al. performed the simulation of positive streamer discharge in CO2 with and without air mixture. As the photoionization mechanism in CO2 has low probability, therefore background ionization mechanism has used for the study of the positive streamer [9]. The simulation results of this paper depicted that streamer propagation is less dependent on the level of the background ionization. The other factors like electric field, applied voltage, electron mobility (µ) and ionization coefficient (α) are strongly dependent on the streamer propagation. Furthermore, Li and other co-authors worked on the streamer discharge simulation in CO2 using particle-in-cell model. They proposed that photoionization in CO2 is much weaker when compared with air, because the probability of ionization photons in CO­2 is very low. The positive streamer can initiate and sustain with a small amount of photoionization but this requires a very high electric field around the streamer head. Hence the sustainability of positive streamer in CO2 depends on the electric filed value [10]. Similarly, Marskar performed the streamer discharge simulation in CO2 by using the 3D kinetic Monte Carlo model. The author concluded from the simulation results that electron attachment and photoionization both are required for the streamer to initiate and propagate. The electron attachment plays critical role in negative streamer whereas photoionization in positive streamer discharge. The author performed the computational analysis and concluded that positive streamer can propagate due to photoionization in CO2 based gas mixture[11]. CO2 is considered as the prominent alternative gas as from the above literature. As the photoionization in CO2 is weak, so the background ionization has selected as an alternative breakdown mechanism.

The main focus of this paper is to understand the positive and negative streamer discharge behavior under different parameters, such as time span, applied voltage, pressure, electrode radii, electrode distance and streamer velocity. The behavior of streamer formation in negative and positive streamer discharge has discussed in detail. This includes the influence of charged particles, including ions and electrons, and the streamer head formation during the propagation. The change of the streamer formation on the head is also analyzed and discussed in detail. (Rewrite)

three. firstsecondThe third section is based on the conclusion of the whole paper

[12]. [13]. [14]. [15]. The study also revealed that the influence of streamer discharge on electron density during propagation is still missing in different literature. For the negative streamer discharge, electrons are abundant, and the streamer head is carried by electrons, while in positive streamer discharge, the streamer head is carried by positive ions [16-18].

In this work, first calculate the swarm parameters of CO2 and O2 by considering the Boltzmann two-term approximation equation. CO2/O2 mixtures are selected as the study object in this work [19]. The swarm parameters include electron mean energy, diffusion coefficient, electron mobility, reduced ionization and attachment coefficient and electron energy distribution function. The purpose of swarm parameters calculation is to understand the streamer initiation and propagation by relating the swarm parameters with streamer discharge initiation and propagation [5, 20].

3. 2D Axis-Symmetric Simulation Model

The simulation model of CO2/O2 is shown in figure 8 below. The simulation is carried out in a FEM (Finite Element Method) based software COMSOL Multiphysics. In figure 8 below, (**a**) is a rod electrode with a diameter of 2mm, (**b**) is the plane electrode and having length 4mm, and (**c**) is the boundary of the streamer discharge as well as for the CO2/O2 mixture with a length of 6mm. The distance between the rod to plane electrode is 4mm. The entire simulation model is covered with a free mesh triangular network. To obtain more accurate results, the mesh near the rod electrode is significantly increased [5]. Furthermore, for the initial density distribution, the Gaussian approximation has been used, as explained in the below section.

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**Figure 8.** Streamer discharge plasma model

The streamer discharge plasma model of CO2/O2 is based on various studies, including the distribution and the density of the different components in the CO2/O2 mixture. Different studies have shown the simulation-based fluid modeling of CO2 mixed with other gases (O2, N2, SF6), but few of them have studied the specific component produced in the discharge during the streamer initiation process [5]. This paper focused on the streamer discharge initiation and propagation by analyzing the various parameters and ionization reactions, including the source term equations and the analysis of the streamer discharge velocity in CO2/O2 mixture.

The simulation of streamer discharge through fluid modeling involves the utilization of several equations, including the fundamental drift-diffusion and Poisson equations. In fluid modeling, a popular formulation for simulating streamer discharge in a background gas relies on the drift-diffusion technique. This approach takes into account the variations in densities of both positive and negative ions. Consequently, it leads to the derivation of a partial differential equation (PDE), expressed as follows [21].

where *n*e ­­is the electron density (m-3), *µ*e is the mobility (m2/Vs), *D*is the diffusion coefficient (m2/s), **E** is theelectric field (V/m)**,** *R*eis therateof generation and loss processes (m-3s-1) and t stand for time.

The initiation of the streamer process in a background gas is usually represented by their respective rates as given in equation 2. The first electron loss rate is an electron impact ionization and the rate of loss process is given as [15].

where *α* (m-1) is the ionization coefficient.

Similarly, the rate for the attachment and detachment of electrons to the electronegative gas (O2, CO2, SF6, etc.) is represented by the following equations [15].

where *η* (m-1) is the attachment coefficient.

Equations (5-10) represents the generation and loss of ions and electrons in a background gas such as CO2/O2. To understand the variation in ions with respect to the time, the ion drift-diffusion is used as given below [21].

*wk* represents the mass faction of the specie *k*, *R­k* represents the rate expression of generation and *ρ* represents the density of the gas mixture.

For the streamer to initiate and develop, Poisson equation plays a critical role in determining the electric field distributions as a result of the space charge formation in the process of streamer development. The Poisson equation is represented by the following equation [5].

*εr* represents the relative permeability, *ε*0 is the absolute permeability, q is the elementary charge and ∇V represents the gradient of the electric potential.

## 3.1 Parameter settings

The rod electrode as shown in figure 8 is (a) and plane electrode is (b). The boundary conditions for the rod electrode is given by the equation.

Whereas the boundary condition for the plane electrode is given by the following equation.

### Insulation and zero charge boundary

For the insulation and zero charge boundary condition of CO2/O2 as shown in above figure 8, it is assumed that no charge on the boundary and zero electron flux is on the boundary. These two boundary conditions are described by the following equations [5].

## 3.2 Background equations and initial density distribution

The initial density distribution for electron positive and negative ions is based on the Gaussian distribution. The streamer propagates within the boundary of the simulation under the background gas mixture can be controlled by controlling the Gaussian distribution parameters. The equation 10 represents the Gaussian approximation for initial density distribution for electrons, positive and negative ions [14].

where r and z is the coordinates of streamer discharge along the x and y axis. r0 and z0 is the coordinates of the rod electrode. s0 is the radius of the initial distribution particles. The maximum initial electron density in the beginning is at the tip of the electrode and hence the propagation of streamer along the z axis will become easy.

For the secondary emission of electrons Townsend first ionization coefficient has used to determine the secondary electron emissions from the electron impact reaction. The Townsend first ionization coefficient is given below in equation 11 [22].

where A and B are the constants. P is the pressure in Torr and E is the electric field (V/m).

## 3.3 Initial conditions and reaction mechanism

For the simulation of streamer discharge in CO2/O2 mixture, the initial electron density value is selected based on the accurate simulation results. The initial value of electron density is 1×1022 (m-3). The initial ion density value (CO2+, O2+, O2- etc.) is taken as 1×1019 (m-3) .The initial value of electron and ion mobility is 1.2×105 (m2/V.s) and 1.3×102 (m2/V.s) respectively. The initial value of longitudinal and transverse electron diffusion is in between the range of 1800 and 2190 (m2/s). The initial electric potential is 0 V, and the initial electron energy is 3 eV respectively [5].

The reaction mechanism for the streamer discharge in CO2/O2 is presented in table 1 as shown below. These reactions are not only used for the electron transport properties with the help of Boltzmann's two-term approximation but also used in the streamer discharge development in CO2/O2 gas mixture. Reaction R1-R27 has been taken from the LXCat database [23]. In this paper, four different reactions – elastic, excitation, attachment and ionization – are used for the study of insulation properties of CO2 and O2 gas mixture. Reaction R2 is the elastic collision reaction of CO2. Reactions R13 and R27 are the ionization reactions of CO2 and O2. R1 and R26 are the attachment reactions of CO2 and O2. The rest of the reactions are the excitation reactions. In this paper, the main focus is to study the influence of electronegative gas and the corresponding reactions on the streamer formation in CO2/O2 gas mixture.

**Table 1.** Reaction mechanism and collision cross section

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reaction number** | **Reaction formula** | **Energy loss** | **Type** |
| R1 | e+CO2 → CO + O- | 0 | Attachment |
| R2 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 1.24e-5 | Elastic |
| R3 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 8.3e-2 | Excitation |
| R4 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 1.67e-1 | Excitation |
| R5 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 2.52e-1 | Excitation |
| R6 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 2.91e-1 | Excitation |
| R7 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 3.39e-1 | Excitation |
| R8 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 4.22e-1 | Excitation |
| R9 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 5.05e-1 | Excitation |
| R10 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 2.5e0 | Excitation |
| R11 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 7e0 | Excitation |
| R12 | e + CO2 → e + CO2 | 1.05e1 | Excitation |
| R13 | e + CO2 →2e+ CO2+ | 1.33e1 | Ionization |
| R14 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 2e-2 | Excitation |
| R15 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 1.9e-1 | Excitation |
| R16 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 3.8e-1 | Excitation |
| R17 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 5.7e-1 | Excitation |
| R18 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 7.5e-1 | Excitation |
| R19 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 9.7e-1 | Excitation |
| R20 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 1.7e0 | Excitation |
| R21 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 4.5e0 | Excitation |
| R22 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 6e0 | Excitation |
| R23 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 8.4e0 | Excitation |
| R24 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 9.97e0 | Excitation |
| R25 | e + O2 → e + O2 | 1.47e1 | Excitation |
| R26 | e + O2 → O2- | 0 | Attachment |
| R27 | e + O2 → 2e + O2+ | 1.206e1 | Ionization |

4. Results and Discussion

## 4.1 Effect of concentration ratio

2 belowunderbar22 When the ionization energy (IE) increase, the value of σBEB bond formation in CO2 has higher value than O2. This indicates the lower stability and higher reactivity of O2 molecules than CO2 molecules

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Figure 2 Electron density of CO2/O2 mixture under different concentration ratios

The figure 3 below shows the electric field of CO2/O2 gas mixture under different gas mixture ratios. From the electric field results, the same pattern has observed as for the electron density results. By increasing the O2 ratio in the gas mixture the electric field will increase.

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Figure 3 Electric field of CO2/O­2 mixture under different ratios

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Figure 4 Streamer velocity of CO2/O2 mixture ratio under different concentration ratios

## 4.2 Effect of applied voltage

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Figure 3 Electron density of positive and negative streamer discharge at different voltage levels (1/m3). (a,b,c) represents negative streamer discharge. (d,e,f) represents positive streamer discharge.

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## 4.3 Effect of applied pressure

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Figure 4 Electron density of positive and negative streamer discharge at different pressure (1/m3). (a,b,c) represents negative streamer discharge. (d,e,f) represents positive streamer discharge.

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## 4.3 Effect of time

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[22, 27]

**Figure 9.** Electron density graph between the arc length and electron density (1/m3) at 0.3ns

On the other hand, positive streamer discharge propagates in the direction of the electric field with positive ions concentrated on the streamer head [18]. As a result, the secondary electron emission becomes less effective in positive streamer discharge as compared to negative streamer discharge. The secondary electron emission in a gas mixture occurs due to the Townsend ionization, and this emission is further converted into an avalanche process. The complete discharge will occur in a gas mixture when the streamer reaches the ground electrode [28]. Also, the number of different collision reactions undergo during the streamer initiation and the electron avalanche formation. These include attachment, ionization, excitation, and elastic [5, 12]. The ionization and attachment reaction plays a vital role in the streamer initiation and avalanche formation. The increase in the number of electrons in a gas mixture is due to the electron-neutral molecule ionization reaction [5]. Similarly, the attachment reaction reduces the generated electrons. As the applied voltage is high enough to ionize the gas mixture, therefore the ionization coefficient is higher than the attachment coefficient and hence (α-η) > 0. From the simulation results, it is observed that the negative streamer head is more pointed than the positive streamer head [13]. Hence, the shape of streamer discharge propagation will influence the electron number density. As negative streamer head is equipped with electrons, due to this reason the streamer forms the needle structure and propagate in z direction as shown in figure 9. The electron density at 0.3ns for negative streamer discharge is 4.77×1020, while for positive streamer the value of electron density is 4.43×1020.

**Figure 10.** Electron density of positive and negative streamer discharge at different time (1/m3). (a,b,c) represents negative streamer discharge. (d,e,f) represents positive streamer discharge.

The negative and positive streamer discharge electric field graph has shown in figure 11. From the figure below the maximum electric field peak in positive streamer discharge corresponds to the maximum electron density. The electric field in negative streamer discharge shows the maximum value in beginning of the arc length and then decreases respectively. The negative streamer discharge propagates in the opposite direction of the electric field. Therefore, during the propagation the electric field in the negative streamer channel travels against the propagation till the discharge completes the path from rod to plane electrode. The figure 12 demonstrates the electric field distribution of streamer discharge over various time spans. Figure 12 shows that the electric field follows the same trend as the electron density, i.e., the electric field in negative streamer discharge is greater than in positive streamer discharge [29]. Higher the electric field value in negative streamer discharge indicates that the space charge produced has a greater influence on the electric field [29]. As in negative streamer discharge, the head is mainly formed by electrons, and these electrons significantly distort the electric field near the streamer head [18]. In positive streamer discharge, the streamer head is mainly formed by positive ions, and the relevant speed of positive ions is lower than that of the electrons [18]. Due to lower relevant speed as compared to electrons, the electron density is lower in positive streamer discharge. Therefore, the electric field at the tip of the streamer discharge will be reduced, as illustrated in figure 10. The electric field value for negative streamer discharge at 0.3ns is 6.13×106, whereas for positive streamer discharge, the electric field value is 3.31×106.

**Figure 11.** Electric field graph between arc length and electric field (V/m) at 0.3ns.

**Figure 12.** Electric field of positive and negative streamer discharge at different time (V/m). (a,b,c) represents negative streamer discharge. (d,e,f) represents positive streamer discharge

## 4.4 Effect of electrode distance

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Figure 5 Electron density of positive and negative streamer discharge at different electrode distances (1/m3). (a,b,c) represents negative streamer discharge. (d,e,f) represents positive streamer discharge

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the streamer discharge initiation and propagation behaviour of CO2/O2 mixture is carried out with the simulation of rod to plane geometry in a two dimensional axis-symmetric space dimension along with plasma physics domain. The paper is distributed in three different sections. The first section is based on the electron transport properties of CO2/O2. The electron transport properties are obtained with the help of the Boltzmann two-term approximation equation. The electron transport properties show that by increasing the amount of CO2 ratio the electron mean energy, longitudinal diffusion coefficient, electron mobility, reduced ionization coefficient, reduced attachment coefficient and EEDF decreases. While at a specific ratio of CO2/O2 the EEDF increases with an increase of reduced electric field (Td). The increase of reduced electric field results in the increase of kinetic energy of a gas mixture and hence the EEDF will also increase. Similarly, the decrease in the electron mean energy with an increase of CO2 in a gas mixture is due to the attachment reaction of CO2 that reduces the ionization reaction in a gas mixture. The longitudinal diffusion coefficient and electron mobility decreases is due to the reason that CO2 is a heavier gas than O2 so diffusion of the gas mixture will reduce by increasing the CO2 content. Similarly, the reduced ionization coefficient decreases as CO2 content increases is due to the reason that CO2 has higher ionization energy than O2 due to this reason more energy is required to breakdown the mixture gas. The increase in the attachment reaction of CO2/O2 mixture is due to the reason that collision cross section of CO2 is lower than O2 that makes it more stable in a gas mixture. The second section is based on the model formation and the establishment of the reaction mechanism for the CO2/O2 gas mixture. The Boltzmann two-term approximation equation, Poisson equation, Gaussian approximation and Townsend first ionization coefficient are used to study the streamer discharge behaviour in a gas mixture.

The third part of the paper is based on the positive and negative streamer discharge simulation results under different conditions. The simulation results show that negative streamer discharge is greater than the positive streamer discharge. The electric field in negative polarity is higher than in positive polarity. The streamer discharge increases with an increase of external applied voltage and decreases with an increase of applied gas pressure. By increasing the voltage electrons gain more energy and streamer propagate more rapidly. Similarly, increasing the pressure in a gas mixture decrease the effective ionization collision between the atoms and as a result the streamer discharge decreases. In the same way by increasing the amount of CO2 in a gas mixture the ionization coefficient decreases, and due to this reason the electron density decreases. The decrease in the electron density results in the decrease of streamer discharge. The total ionization rate also depends on the gas mixture ratio. The total ionization of CO2/O2 decreases by increasing the CO2 ratio in a gas mixture The simulation results also show that in negative polarity the streamer form the rod like formation at the head of the streamer. On the other hand, in positive polarity, the sphere like formation was observed on the head of the streamer. The higher streamer formation, the higher will be ionization of the gas mixture and electron density will increase. The simulation results show that electric field in negative streamer discharge first increases and then decreases with the propagation of the streamer discharge. Similarly, the positive streamer travels in the direction of the electric field, hence the electric field in positive streamer discharge is maximum where the electron density has the maximum peak.

The streamer discharge also depends on the degree of non-uniformity and the electrode length. By increasing the electrode tip radius the streamer discharge decreases and requires more time to travel. Also, by increasing the electrode length the streamer discharge decreases at a specific time. The higher the electrode length the streamer discharge will take more time to reach and hence gas mixture will require more time to break. The streamer velocity in case of positive streamer is higher than in negative streamer. In positive streamer localized electric field and in negative streamer detachment of electrons are responsible for the streamer velocity. The simulation results used in this paper are based on the ideal conditions, which means that external impact like the metal contamination particles are not considered for the study.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors acknowledged the financial support from the high voltage laboratory, department of electrical engineering in power U.S.-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Energy (USPCAS-E), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Pakistan.

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