

# 10.012 Introduction to Biology 2D Report 1

Dicson Wijaya (1002289), Wenkie Lau (1002219),  
Mok Jun Neng (1002219), Charlotte Phang (1002277),  
Martin Tan (1002173)

## I. OBJECTIVES

This report aims to determine the effect of different environmental factors on algal growth. We subjected the different algal flasks to their respective environment over the period of 3 to 4 weeks and periodically measured the growth using a spectrophotometer.

## II. EXPERIMENT

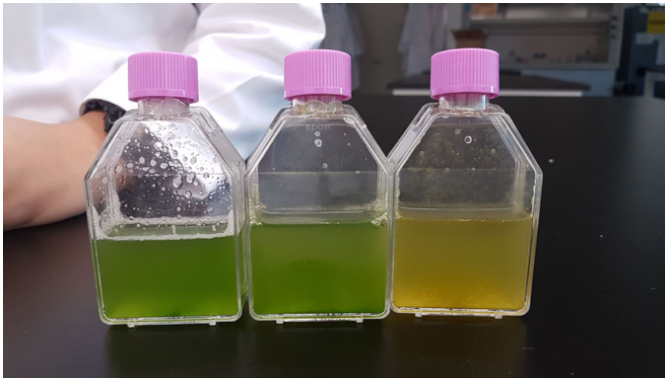


Fig. 1: Algal Samples

Culture Flask A was cultured while placed on a shaker which ensured the constant mixture of the contents of the flask.

Culture flask B was cultured in stationary state.

Culture flask C was cultured while placed in an environment with strong light intensity.

The spectrophotometer results were used to compare the transmittance and absorbency of 3 algal samples grown under different conditions with a control water.

This experiment works on the basis that the flask with the highest algal growth will have the highest transmittance and absorbance, which will be discussed further in the discussion and analysis section.

## III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULT

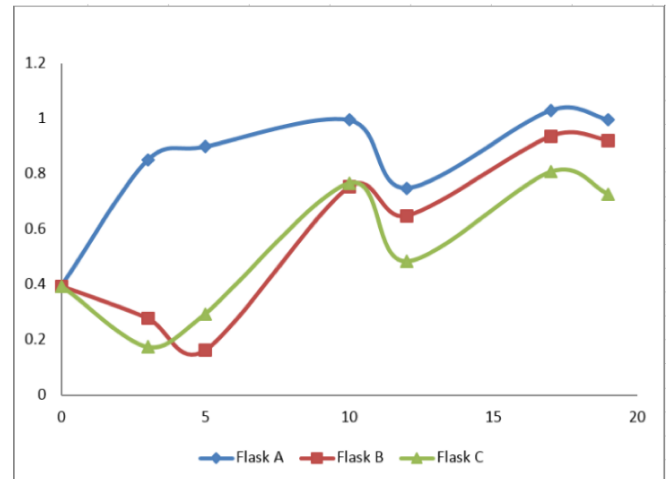


Fig. 2: Graph of spectrophotometer reading against time in days

TABLE I: Spectrophotometer readings

No. of days	Flask A	Flask B	Flask C
0	0.3645	0.3945	0.3945
3	0.8498	0.2786	0.1741
5	0.8986	0.1634	0.2946
10	0.9948	0.7528	0.7663
12	0.7490	0.6481	0.4836
17	1.0303	0.9359	0.8074
19	0.9964	0.9217	0.7269

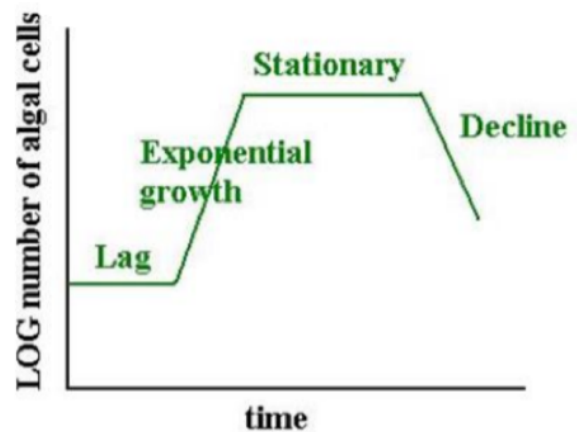


Fig. 3: Standard Algal Growth Curve

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF RESULT

##### A. *Flask A & B*

Comparing Figure 1 and Figure 3:

For the first 12 days, the curve representing flask A has a similar shape to that of the standard algal growth curve, with an initial exponential increase in spectrophotometer reading values, followed by a stationary period and finally a period of decline, however, without the initial lag period. However, after the 12<sup>th</sup> day, the number of algal cells decrease for a short period of time, followed by another exponential increase and then a slight decrease recorded during the last reading.

Initially, the algal cells number in flask B experienced a decrease, in contrast to the supposed lag time period as predicted by the standard algae growth curve. Subsequently, for both flasks, an exponential increase in algal numbers was observed followed by a few cycles of increase and decrease. There was no stationary point observed for the results of both flask B and C.

For both flasks A and B, the algae samples experienced positive growth.

The increase after day 12 (Flask A) can be attributed to the previous drop in algal cell number. This means that the previous decrease in algal cell numbers have increased the nutrients needed for growth per algae cell, causing an increase in algal cells number. The following decrease can be attributed once again to nutrient level per algae cell, which in this case has decreased due to a higher cell count sharing the same amount of nutrients. It can be hypothesised, though low possibility, that cycles of positive growth followed by negative growth will be observed if the experiment is carried out over a longer period of time due to reasons listed above. However, it is more realistic to take the general trend of the curve from day 3 to day 20, which is a gentle increase that can be liken to a plateau representing the stationary portion of the standard algal growth curve. The anomaly observed, a dip in reading value on day 9 can be attributed to experimental error. This is because when negative growth is observed, it is usually associated with a certain requirement that limits cell division or inhibit reproduction, which is often unrelated to environmental factors such as light intensity, temperature, nutrient levels etc. Thus, a continuous decrease in spectrophotometer readings after the first decline will be more likely,

unlike the observed results in flask A. The same explanation can be used to explain the consecutive increase and decrease in algal cells number.

In flask B, a trend similar to that of flask A is observed after day 9 so in a similar sense, the general trend of increasing spectrophotometer readings, coupled with a dip in recorded value on day 9, can be attributed to either experimental/instrumental error which is highly possible or the other option explained above to account for flask A, which has a low probability of happening. For day 1 to day 9, the spectrophotometer readings are very much lower than the corresponding values of flask A. It is possible that this scenario is a result of experimental inaccuracy where flask B was not shaken properly with most of the algae being stuck at the bottom of the flask. This means that when readings are taken, inaccurate samples are being analysed, thus resulting in the discrepancy between the curve of flask B and the standard algal growth curve.

##### B. *Flask C*

Flask C was subjected to artificial lighting at high intensity for all 24 hours of the day.

- Hypothesis: Under high intensity lighting, the growth rate of algae will increase. Since algae contains chlorophyll a and b, major light harvesting pigments that are highly sensitive to light, high intensity lighting allows the algae to photosynthesise continuously and reproduce at a higher average rate.
- Observation: Algae sample from flask C changed from a light green colour to a yellow-brown colour. The general trend of spectrophotometer readings for flask C is lower than both flask A and B.

According to our methodology, the higher the spectrophotometer reading, the larger the number of algal cells in the sample. According to this experimental principle, it means that flask C contains the sample with the lowest algal cells count. However, upon deeper analysis, this is an inaccurate method to determine algal growth rate.

First, the change in the colour of the algal sample in flask C suggest the presence of other impurities, for example, fungi, breeding in the flask. The presence of such organisms affects the spectrophotometer readings which makes the result

an inaccurate representation of the number of algal cells in the flask at each reading in comparison to the other flasks.

Second, the curve of flask C algal growth rate appears to be inconsistent with the standard algae growth curve. However, upon deeper analysis, we observe that flask C's curve has a very similar shape to that of flask B: decline followed by exponential increase and subsequent cycles of decrease and increase in spectrophotometer meeting. From this, the same argument for flask B can be applied to flask C and it is possible to argue that algae cells count has increased since spectrophotometer readings indicate that the sample has gotten denser overtime. The discrepancy between our hypothesised outcome and observations can be attributed to the presence of foreign impurities in the flask, thus affecting the transmittance and absorbance of the sample.

#### V. REFERENCES

- 1) Syed Azhar, M. (May 1974). Determination of Algae Growth Potential in Natural Environment. 1-17.
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- 3) H. (2015, July 05). Enhancing Algal Growth by Stimulation with LED Lighting and Ultrasound.