Flow of polymolecular films

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Abstract - Experimental investigation of film flow over the molecularly smooth surfaces of quartz capillaries has shown that the films of nonpolar liquids having the thickness h = 1 nm flow as viscous bulk liquids. This is also the case for thin water films, but the corresponding calculations are complicated due to the nonuniformity in the film thickness on the partially wetted quartz surface.

Introduction

The flow of polymolecular films, depending on their thickness, may be considered as viscous flow, or as two-dimensional surface diffusion. In the first case, equations of hydrodynamics must be used for describing the flow of films; and in the second case, the equations of diffusion. It is important to establish the scope of application of those approaches.

In this connection, here will be considered the experimental results relating to the flow of polymolecular liquid films over the molecular-smooth surface of fine cylindrical capillaries (having the radius on the order of 0.1 to 1 μm) drawn from pure quartz (the content of SiO₂ > 99.99%).

Film flow under the effect of pressure gradient

The first technique consisted in measuring the evaporation rates of liquids from the capillaries. For this purpose the rate of the meniscus retreat was measured with means of a microscope. In the case of low volatile liquids a considerable contribution to the evaporation rate is given by the film flow over the wall of the capillary.

In Fig. 1 are represented the results of such experiments on decane during its evaporation at low Knudsen numbers Λ/λ (λ is the free path) into an evacuated chamber, where a definite relative pressure of vapour P₀/Pₘ was maintained. Measurements were carried out for the capillaries having the radii r from 0.18 to 1.5 μm. Here K is the permeability coefficient, included in the mass flow equation q = K (Pₘ - P₀)/l, g/cm² sec, where Pₘ, P₀ is the pressure of vapour over the meniscus, and l is the distance from the mouth to the meniscus in a capillary. The values of K are related to the coefficient of Knudsen diffusion of vapour K₁ = (8r/3)(μ/2πRT)³/² at r/λ → 0, where μ is the mass of a mole.

![Diagram](image-url)

Fig. 1. The influence of the flow of polymolecular films on evaporation of decane from fine capillaries.
R is the gas constant, and T is temperature. The dashed line indicates the theoretical dependence of $K_1(r/\lambda)$ for vapour flow. The experimental points for fine capillaries are located above this curve, and this is associated with an additional mass transfer in a polymolecular film of decane.

The experimental data relating to the film thicknesses of about 5 to 1 nm, can be described on the basis of the equation of hydrodynamics of liquid films, $q = \left( \frac{p h^2}{3 \eta} \right) v \lambda$, where $\eta(h)$ is the disjoining pressure, $\rho$ is the density, and $\mu$ is the viscosity of liquid in the film. The condition of the local equilibrium of the curved film with vapour

$$\eta(h) + \left( \frac{\mu}{r} \right) = - \left( \frac{\rho RT}{\mu} \right) \ln \left( \frac{p}{p_s} \right),$$

one can obtain the following expression for $K/K_1$ [3]:

$$\frac{K}{K_1} = 1 - \frac{\rho^2 RT (2 \pi RT / \mu)^{1/2}}{4 \eta \mu r^2 (p_m - p_o)} \int_{p_m}^{p_o} \frac{d^3(p)}{p} \ln \left( \frac{p}{p_s} \right)$$

The second term in Eq. (1) characterise the capillary pressure in the film, where $\Sigma$ is the surface tension of the liquid. The wetting films of nonpolar decane are stable due to the action of long-range dispersion forces. The $\eta(h)$ isotherm correlating the thickness of a film with the disjoining pressure acting in it, has the form $\eta = A/6 \pi h^3$, where $A = 1.6 \times 10^{-22} J$, the Hamaker constant. Its value was calculated on the basis of the spectral data of quartz and decane [4], in accordance with the macroscopic theory of dispersion forces [5]. Using Eq. (1), we shall find the isotherm of polymolecular adsorption $h(p)$. Then after integrating Eq. (2) we obtain:

$$\frac{K}{K_1} = 1 + \frac{A (2 RT / \pi \mu)^{1/2}}{24 \eta r^2 (p_m - p_o)} \ln \left[ \frac{\ln(p_o / p_s) - (\mu \delta / \rho RT)}{\ln(p_m / p_s) - (\mu \delta / \rho RT)} \right]$$

The theoretical dependence $K/K_1(r/\lambda)$, represented in Fig. 1 by a continuous curve, was plotted with Eq. (3), using the bulk values of $\delta$, $\rho$, and $\eta$. The experimental points are located close to that curve. This enables one to consider that wetting films of decane (h > 1 nm) preserve the properties of the bulk liquid, and that the equations of viscous flow apply to these.

In Fig. 2 are presented the results of similar experiments carried out on water [3]. As is known, not only dispersion forces, but also electrostatic and structural forces act in the films of polar water [2]. This complicate the theoretical determination of $h(p)$ isotherm. In this case the known experimental isotherm $h(p)$ [4] was used to make calculations with Eq. (2). The thickness of the films is small, and the experimental data tally with the theoretical curve 1 for the Knudsen flow of vapour, when a low relative pressure of vapour is maintained in the chamber (points 1). Now, at higher values of $p_o/p_s = 0.97 - 0.98$ the experimental points are located close to the curve 2, which was plotted by using Eq. (2). However, the theory can be in agreement with the experimental data (points 2 and 3) only when 4 times higher values of film viscosity $\eta$ are adopted. Yet the viscosity of water can hardly be increased so much. In accordance with the measurements done in fine pores ($r = 2$-3 nm) of silica gels and porous glasses [2] the largest changes in the viscosity of water amount to 1.5 $\eta_o$. The detected increase in the viscous resistance is probably associated with the formation of water film of nonuniform thickness on the surface of quartz. This may be attributed to the microheterogeneity of the quartz surface, containing not only hydrophilic silanol areas, but also siloxane ones that are less hydrophilic. As a result, the thicker films that are formed over the hydrophilic areas prove to be separated by thinner ones that give rise to a higher viscous resistance. The isotherms $h(p)$ of polymolecular water film on flat quartz surface, which are experimentally obtained by the ellipsometric method, are characteristic of only the mean thickness of the film.

As appears from Fig. 2, for water films the equations of viscous flow may be also formally used, but in this case including some effective values of either viscosity or thickness of the film. However, it is difficult to predict theoretically these effective values. To obtain more reliable
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The flow of polymeric films of water requires carrying out the experiments on more uniform surfaces.

Thermocapillary film flow

The second applied technique consisted in observing the film flow over the portion of the capillary located between the menisci (Fig. 3) [6]. The flow of the films occurred under the effect of the temperature gradient $\nabla T$ which gave rise to the gradient of the surface tension of the film. The velocity of the gas bubble shift $V$ is determined by the thermocapillary flow of the film $V_f$, and the diffusion of vapour $V_d = \left[ \frac{h^2}{\pi \eta} \right] \left[ \frac{\rho \gamma}{\rho \gamma R T} \left( \frac{\partial p}{\partial T} \right) \right] V_T$, (4)

where $D$ is the coefficient of diffusion of vapour through gas.

The film flow rate was calculated from Eq. (4) as the difference between the directly measured velocity of bubble shift $V$, and the calculated value of $V_d$. In Fig. 3 are shown the results for low volatile dodecane in a glass capillary $r = 0.73 \mu m$. The experimental dependence $V(V_T)$ (curve 1) is linear in agreement with Eq. (4). The dashed line 2 indicate the $V_t$ values calculated according to Eq. (4) using the known values of $D$ and $d\gamma/dT$ for dodecane. The difference between the curves 1 and 2 gives the rate of the film flow, amounting up to about 40% of the total flow rate.

The obtained values of $V_t$ tally well with those calculated by the aid of Eq. (4), using the bulk values of $\gamma (T)$ and $\eta$ for dodecane. The thickness of films was determined from the isotherms $\Pi = A/\pi h^2 = \xi/r$, with the Hamaker constant $A = 1.35 \times 10^{-20} J$ [4]. The applicability of the equations of viscous flow was corroborated by the series of experiments done on the capillaries having the radii from 0.4 to 17 $\mu m$, which corresponds to the film thicknesses from 2 to 10 nm.

The thermocapillary flow of water films is complicated by the hysteresis of the contact angle. In distinction to dodecane, water is able to wet quartz but partially. Between the retreating and advancing menisci arise a difference in the pressure $\Delta P = (2 \gamma/r)(\cos \Theta_R - \cos \Theta_A)$ that caused.
the counter flow in the film. However, in the case of relatively thick water films \( (h = 5-10 \text{ nm}) \) the flow may also be described by the viscous flow equations.

**Thermocrystallization film flow** We have eliminated the influence of hysteresis, when examining the thermal flow of nonfreezing, polymolecular adsorbed water films between two ice menisci in a capillary. The flow of a liquid film is accompanied by the phase transitions taking place on the menisci. In this case the thermocrystallization film flow occurs, that is described by the following equation \([7]\):

\[
V_f = \left( 2 \rho_l \frac{L}{h^3} / 3 \eta r \right) \nabla T,
\]

where \( L \) is heat of fusion, and \( \rho_l \) is the density of ice.

In Fig. 4 is shown one of the experimentally obtained dependences \( x(t) \). As in Fig. 3, the dashed line 2 indicates the calculated contribution of the diffusion of vapour. A low pressure of vapour over ice, and the excess gas pressure in a bubble (increased up to 1.7 atm by sealing up the capillary in the nitrogen medium), enabled one to suppress the diffusion of vapour [6]. On the basis of \( x(t) \) dependences one can calculate the rate of displacement \( V = V_f + V_d = dx/dt \) and compare the results with theory.

Measurements done in capillaries having the radii from 1 to 10 \( \mu \text{m} \) within the temperature range of minus 6°C to minus 0.5°C have shown that the flow of nonfreezing films from 1 to 8 nm thick obeys the Eq. (5).

**Conclusion** The films of nonpolar liquids having the thickness \( h > 1 \text{ nm} \) flow as viscous bulk liquids. This approach may also be applied to polymolecular water films; yet a possible nonuniformity in the thickness of thin polymolecular water films on microheterogeneous, only partially wettable surfaces interferes with the quantitative comparison with theory.

**REFERENCES**