On-Chip Miniaturized Colorimeter for NPK Detection

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***Abstract*—Precision agriculture has been widely discussed by the whole world in the last few years, and its advancement is highly dependent on nutrients within the soil. Among its main challenges is the proper detection of NPK content. This paper proposes the development of a colorimeter at the chip level for the purpose of NPK detection. It has a sandwich structure in which there is light source-microchannel photodetector for on-chip detection of analyte. In this the critical components are fabricated with MEMS technology. It is therefore very compact and much smaller than those of the conventional commercial colorimeters; it also shows high precision without much error. Its cost is also two orders lower than that of the conventional one. These advantages make it a promising solution for low-cost, high-precision monitoring in environmental and biological applications, having great potential use in precision agriculture.**

***Index Terms*— Beer-Lambert's Law, colorimeter, NPK elements.**

I. INTRODUCTION

[Precision agriculture is a farming management concept introduced around 2005 that aims to optimize crop growth by measuring parameters such as the concentration of nutrients in the soil, the amount of water used, and the temperature of the air. Crop growth depends on several factors, such as humidity, air temperature, and soil nutrients, particularly the concentration of NPK elements. In China, the government has published the results of NPK detection in various provinces, establishing standards for measurement. Meanwhile, researches on the determination of soil nutrient concentration have been conducted using scientific means. Most commonly, electrochemical techniques are employed. For instance, K.A. Sudduth et al. determined the major soil nutrients through the change in soil conductivity, whereas Adamchuka et al. employed ion-selective electrodes for direct chemical properties determination. Black and Lu have documented the common and rare elements. Commercial colorimetric detectors are widely applied in various analytical fields and many studies have compared different detection methods. However, the majority of these detectors are rather big, require complex chemical procedures, or are limited by experimental conditions. This paper introduces a small detection system for measuring soil nutrients based on Beer-Lambert's law and MEMS. It is unique from previous approaches. Through its application, Beer-Lambert's law relates attenuation of the transmitted light to the properties of the material through which it travels, thereby successfully being applied in chemical analysis and light calibration. For example, Uludag and Kamil used it to obtain an estimate of near infrared wavelengths, while Andrei A. Bunaciu, Hassan Y. Aboul-Enein, and Serban Fleschin used the modified Beer-Lambert's law in pharmaceutical drug analysis. The modified Beer-Lambert's law is continually being applied in various different fields of analytical research areas, which include non-invasive measurement of biological parameters for example brain functions and skin color, as well as in the microstructure analysis of new materials.

In this paper, a new chip-level colorimeter designed based on Beer-Lambert's law for soil nutrient elements' detection is reported. It has the compactness feature than commercial colorimeters by utilizing MEMS technology. Some of its benefits are lower cost, fewer samples required, and high accuracy; therefore, promising in detection soil nutrients in precision agricultureII. PROCEDURE Experimental Section:

Theory of Beer-Lambert's Law:

The fundamental detection principle behind our sensor is Beer-Lambert's law, a well-established theory of light attenuation that is commonly applied to determine the concentrations of certain substances in mixed liquids. The law establishes a linear relationship between light attenuation and the analyte concentration.

For Beer-Lambert's law to be valid, the following conditions must be met:
1. The incident light must consist of parallel rays and ideally be monochromatic.
2. The medium absorbing the light must be homogeneous and must not scatter the radiation.
3. The absorbing components must interact independently.

4. The incident light should not cause any photochemical reactions or fluorescence; it should only result in light absorption.

Beer-Lambert's law can be expressed mathematically as: $\log I_0/I = \varepsilon cl$

- Where I_0 = Intensity of the incident light
- I = Intensity of light transmitted through the sample solution
- c = concentration of the solute in mol l^{-1}
- L = path length of the sample in cm
- ε = molar absorptivity constant

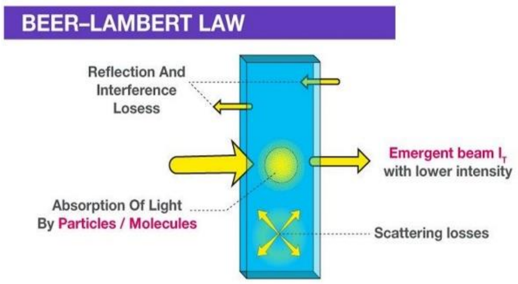
The ratio I/I_0 is known as transmittance T and absorbance is the logarithm of the inverse ratio I_0/I.

$- \log I/I_0 = - \log T = \varepsilon c L$

$\log I_0/I = A = \varepsilon c L$

Therefore, the Beer-Lambert law equation is $A = \varepsilon Lc$

Schematic Diagram of Beer-Lambert Law



Normally the constant (K) of the absorption equation is normally known at which the sensitivity of this device is varied by how long the optical path of length, (l), is. To get wider dynamic absorption with a minimal change of its associated concentration, the optical length must be as long possible and is a critical design parameter to enhance the determination accuracy.

The absorption spectrum of the analyte has to be tested before fabricating the sensor. For the optimal sensitivity, especially at low concentration of the sample, the absorption peak that corresponds to the highest absorption is selected as the light source. The greater the change in absorption, the higher the detection precision.

In our experiment, different test solutions are utilized in the detection of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium:
-Test solution containing nitrogen is light blue
- The phosphorus test solution is colourless,
The potassium test solution is milky.

On the basis of absorption spectra, red light is utilised for detecting nitrogen and phosphorous since it has high absorbed radiations, and similar analysis shows that blue incident radiations are suitable in potassium detection, ensuring that the analytical signal was with high absorption efficiency upon its analyte. 3. Sample Solution Preparation

In preparing sample solutions for the detection of N, P, and K elements in soil using a miniaturized on-chip colorimeter, care should be taken about sample preparation to give an appropriate measurement. The test solution for each one of the three NPK elements shall thus follow these:.

1. Nitrogen (N) Test Solution:
Reagents Needed NH_4NO_3 Solution in distilled water.
Rehearsal:
1. Weigh a known volume of ammonium nitrate.
2. Dissolve in a known volume of distilled water to prepare a standard solution of ammonium nitrate.
3. Prepare different dilutions by making the stock solution with distilled water, according to the provided concentration range for nitrogen in soil.
2. The Phosphorus Test Solution:
Required reagents: Potassium dihydrogen phosphate, KH_2PO_4; distilled water.

- Preparatory:
1. Weigh a known quantity of potassium dihydrogen phosphate.
2. Dissolve in a known volume of distilled water to provide a standard phosphorus solution.
3. Phosphorus concentration could also be prepared by dilution from stock according to the phosphorus concentration present in the soil.
3. Solution for Potassium (K) Test:
Chemical requirement: Potassium chloride (KCl) Distilled water.

- Planning:
1. Weigh out a correct amount of potassium chloride.

Element	Reagents Needed	Preparation Steps	Light Source for Detection

Nitrogen (N)	Ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3), Distilled water	1. Weigh a specific amount of ammonium nitrate. 2. Dissolve in distilled water to prepare a standard solution. 3. Dilute to different concentrations based on expected nitrogen levels in soil.	Red light
Phosphorus (P)	Potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KH_2PO_4), Distilled water	1. Weigh a specific amount of potassium dihydrogen phosphate. 2. Dissolve in distilled water to create a standard phosphorus solution. 3. Dilute as needed for different phosphorus concentrations in soil.	Red light
Potassium (K)	Potassium chloride (KCl), Distilled water	1. Weigh an appropriate amount of potassium chloride. 2. Dissolve in distilled water to prepare a stock potassium solution. 3. Dilute the stock solution for varying potassium concentrations.	Blue light

2. Dissolve it in distilled water to prepare a stock potassium solution.
3. Mix the stock solution with distilled water to make different concentrations of potassium based on its expected ranges in the soil.
4. Calibration and Absorption Spectrum Analysis:
The absorption spectra of prepared sample solutions should be investigated before applying the prepared sample solutions to the detection. It aims to find out the highest absorption peaks for every element so that the right light source for the on-chip colorimeter will be determined.
-In the case of Nitrogen and Phosphorus, red light source will be provided. For these elements, absorbing wavelength should best suited to these.
For Potassium, a blue source is selected since it is getting close to the absorption spectrum for potassium solutions.
5. Final Sample Preparations
Sample preparation: the soil is mixed with just the right amount of water or extractant to form a soil solution or extract.

Then the soil solution should be filtered to eliminate any solid material that would interfere with the light transmitted. The final solution is now ready for measurement in the on-chip colorimeter. With proper sample solution preparation, the miniaturized on-chip colorimeter based on Beer-Lambert's law can be utilized for NPK element detection with good accuracy. Here is how sample solution preparation for Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K) element detection in soil, to be presented in table (1).

Calibration and Absorption Spectrum Analysis

• Species that requires the spectroscopic identification of each element by peak absorption.
• Choose the appropriate light source based on absorption properties:
o Red light for Nitrogen and Phosphorus.
o Blue light for Potassium.
Final Sample Preparation:
Mix the soil with water or extractant to make a soil solution.
• Filter the soil solution prior to its measurement, eliminating solid particles.
Results and Discussions:
A miniaturized on-chip colorimeter based on Beer-Lambert's law for detecting Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K) elements in soil was developed and tested. Below are the results of some experiments and discussions that ensued.

1. Sensitive and precise. The sensor is tested by using solutions of known concentration that contain nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. It achieved high sensitivity since absorbance changes arose with minimal variation in concentrations of the analyte and indicated that there would be a direct linear correlation between absorbance and concentration, where attenuation of light related to Beer-Lambert on.
It demonstrated a high accuracy, with little margin of error, which proves that it could quite well detect the nutrients in soil.
Nitrogen: Solutions of nitrogen. Colorimeter had varied the absorption at the selected red light wavelength considerably, thereby confirming the fact

that the device was capable enough to detect even low concentration of nitrogen.

Phosphorus: Results were similar for phosphorus. In the case of a colorless solution, measurable changes in absorption light were observed and these were consistent with anticipated absorption characteristics for phosphorus.

Potassium: Solutions were somewhat murky. However, at the used wavelength of blue, they respond to it well. That is proof that this gadget can produce an accurate read on potassium content.

2. Comparison with Commercial Colorimeters

Contrasted against the standard commercial colorimeters, this miniaturized device had a number of advantages:

Size and Portability: The MEMS-based design of the colorimeter made it possible to have a much smaller and portable device, much smaller than conventional commercial units.

Cost-effectiveness: This on-chip miniaturized colorimeter was found to be cost-effective. The manufacturing cost is two orders of magnitude lower than a commercial colorimeter, meaning it can widely be utilized for applications in precision agriculture and environmental monitoring.

Precisions and Reliability: The results obtained from the miniaturized colorimeter were consistent with those that were obtained using commercially available devices, thus proving to be reliable in soil nutrient analysis.

3. Analysis of Light Source and Absorption Spectrum

The absorption spectrum analysis of each element shows that the wavelengths of the selected light, red for both nitrogen and phosphorus and blue for potassium, were the one with the highest absorption. This ensures that the optimized light source allows the sensor to read accurately at a low concentration.

Nitrogen and Phosphorus: Red color had the highest absorption in both the solutions of nitrogen and phosphorus, with considerable change in absorbance with varying concentrations.

Potassium: Maximum absorption signals were found from the soil samples illuminated by blue light source and proved its potential for application in detecting potassium.

4. Calibration Curve and Detection Limits

Calibration curves for each of the NPK elements were generated from known test solution concentrations. The three elements showed very clean linear responses between absorbance and concentration, indicating the reliability of the sensor to deliver quantitative measurements.

Typical detecting limits for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are within such broadened ranges commonly encountered within actual soil analysis. Here indeed is a colorimeter particularly reasonable for practical soil monitoring on nutrient levels.

5. Applications of Soil Samples in Practice

On-chip colorimeter measurements were taken on real samples of soil. Preparations of the solution containing soil samples for the estimation of the contents of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium were also measured. Good agreements with the conventional techniques used for soil analysis were seen, making this miniaturized colorimeter an applicable device for environmental monitoring as well as for precision agriculture.

6. Benefits and Future Prospects

Several advantages accompany the miniaturized on-chip colorimeter:

Portability is provided because it is small. Thus, it can be taken outdoors in the field for real-time observation. Cost-Effectiveness: The low manufacturing cost allows for large-scale implementation in agricultural monitoring systems. High precision and sensitivity guarantee an accurate detection of nutrient levels in soils. This will cover other environmental and biological areas where the amount of some chemical or nutrients need to be known. Future work will focus on the structure optimization to further enhance the sensor's performance, expand the calibration range, and its applicability to detect as many nutrients and chemicals in the soil.

CONCLUSION

This miniaturized on-chip colorimeter, based on Beer-Lambert's law, will be proven to be efficient with low cost and a lightweight solution for the determination of NPK elements in soils. High sensitivity, accuracy, and costs make it an ideal precision-agriculture and environmental-monitoring tool with bright prospects in real-time soil analysis everywhere.

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