Economic analysis of hydrogen production by methane thermal decomposition: Comparison to competing technologies

This study is a comparative analysis of hydrogen production costs in current and potential future market environments. The economic feasibility of hydrogen production by thermal decomposition of methane was compared to two other technologies, namely steam methane reforming and water electrolysis. According to the results, thermal decomposition of methane would be most suited for on-site demand-driven hydrogen production in small or medium industrial scale. Hydrogen production by thermal decomposition of methane would be economically competitive with steam reforming with a product carbon value of at least 280-310 EUR/tonne. By contrast, the main benefit of thermal decomposition of methane in comparison with water electrolysis is the feedstock availability via the current natural gas infrastructure, whereas electrolysis is highly dependent on the cost and availability of renewable electricity. The major factors affecting the economic feasibility were identified as product carbon value in thermal decomposition of methane, natural gas cost in steam reforming, and electricity cost in electrolysis. Thus, the effect of these variables on the hydrogen production costs was analyzed. Additionally, the specific carbon dioxide emissions in hydrogen production by thermal decomposition of methane (40 kgCO2/MWhH2) were found to be much less that by steam reforming coupled with carbon dioxide capture from the syngas (133 kgCO2/MWhH2).

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Techno-economic analysis of four concepts for thermal decomposition of methane: Reduction of CO2 emissions in natural gas combustion

This paper presents a techno-economic analysis of four concepts that apply the thermal decomposition of methane (TDM) with the aim of reducing carbon dioxide emissions in natural gas combustion. Different technical solutions are applied to convert methane in natural gas to gaseous hydrogen, which is combusted to produce electricity with a steam power cycle, and solid carbon, which is assumed to be sold as carbon black. The cost of electricity production and the potential to reduce CO2 emissions in each concept were evaluated and compared to the reference case of direct methane combustion. With a moderate emission allowance price (20 €/tCO2) and product carbon price (500 €/tcarbon) the cost of
electricity production in the concepts was 12–58% higher than in the reference case. However, the price of product carbon had a significant effect on the feasibility of the concepts. Thus, the methane burner, which showed the best performance, produced 17% less CO₂ emissions per MWhₑ and had a smaller cost of electricity production than the reference case already with the carbon price of 600–700 €/tcarbon.

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