



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The basic principles about the plasmas and the electric discharge environment are mainly described within this chapter. Beginning with some basic knowledge about natural gas, the chemical properties of the methane molecule, and few aspects about the plasmas will then be introduced to eventually describe how the plasma can be generated for activating methane molecules in order to initiate the direct methane conversion. Along with these, some experimental studies on the direct methane conversion process under the different types of the electric discharges will be mentioned so as to be the evidence on the advances of the working in this field. Finally, the aspects of the gliding arc discharge reactor relating to the present work will be explained.

#### 2.1 Natural gas

Natural gas is a gaseous fossil fuel, which is composed of the hydrocarbon gases methane (70-90 wt.%) and ethane (5-15 wt.%), with varying smaller amounts of other heavier hydrocarbons (< 5 wt.%), and other gases, such as nitrogen, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, and water vapor. Natural gas exists in nature under pressure in rock reservoirs in the earth's crust, either in conjunction with and dissolved in heavier hydrocarbons and water (called associated gas) or by itself (called non-associated gas). It is produced from the reservoir similarly to or in conjunction with crude oil (Dawe, 2000). Before natural gas can be used as a fuel, it must undergo extensive processing to remove almost all materials other than methane. The by-products of that processing include ethane, propane, butanes, pentanes, and higher molecular weight hydrocarbons, elemental sulfur, and sometimes helium and nitrogen.

The major difficulty in the use of natural gas is transportation and storage because of its low density. Normally, natural gas can be stored in storage tanks or underground, in old gas wells. And, it can be transported by pipe line, truck, or ship.

Natural gas can be used as power generation, feed stock for hydrogen production, fuel for vehicle, residence domestic use, such as cooking, heating/cooling, fertilizer, aviation, and others.

## 2.2 Physical and Chemical Properties of Methane

The methane is commercially well known as a very inexpensive and environmentally safe feedstock of fuel supplies. It is, in a chemical point of view, the smallest molecule in the entire hydrocarbon series, which consists of only one carbon surrounded by four hydrogen atoms. The most abundant and unique source of methane is the natural gas reserves, which are located in many parts of the world. With its low molecular weight and non-polar nature, the boiling point of methane is extremely low ( $-164^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and can only be found in the gaseous state under ambient conditions. This property, coupled with the fact that many natural gas reserves are now located in very remote areas, makes this resource somewhat expensive to transport.

The fact that methane is very flammable when presents in the oxygen containing atmosphere makes some people confused that methane is one of the very reactive molecules. Indeed, methane is somewhat unreactive compound by its nature. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 compare the average bond energy of C-H bond inside the methane molecule and its first ionization potential with some of those other common gases, respectively. Based upon these data, although the ionization potential of the methane molecule is in the same order of magnitude with those of other common gases, its bond energy between C-H is markedly high compared to other covalent bonds.

In the most cases, methane can be made reactive only by using very reactive species, such as radicals, and so the radical chemistry is among the few effective techniques that have been traditionally applied for reaction with methane. At present, the oxidation of methane with oxygen is one of the most well known radical reaction, which thermally converts the methane molecule into wide range of products depending upon the reaction conditions used, but thermodynamically, this application favors for the production of  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{CO}$ , and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Poonphanapricha, 1997).

**Table 2.1** Average chemical bond energy of some covalent bonds (Perry *et al.*, 1996)

Bond	Bond energy (kJ/mol)	Bond	Bond energy (kJ/mol)
C-H	463	H-H	436
C-C	344	O-H	463
C=C	615	O-O	142
C-O	350	O=O	539

**Table 2.2** The first ionization potential of some common gases (Perry *et al.*, 1996)

Gas	Ionization (eV)	Gas	Ionization (eV)
CH <sub>4</sub>	12.5	O <sub>2</sub>	12.2
H <sub>2</sub>	15.6	CO	14.1
N <sub>2</sub>	15.51	CO <sub>2</sub>	14.4

$$1 \text{ eV} = 1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J}$$

### 2.3 Gaseous Plasmas for Activating Methane Molecules

Since the gaseous plasma is an effective source of active species formation, including the electron, ions and radicals, a number of studies of the methane reaction using such plasma to initiate the reaction have been carried out extensively.

#### 2.3.1 Fundamental Properties of Plasma

In its simplest definition, gaseous plasma consists of negatively and positively charged particles in an otherwise neutral gas. The positively charged particles are mostly cations, but the negatively charged particles can be either electrons or anions. The neutral species may be the mixture of free radical species with stable neutral gases. Plasma possesses the following two important properties (Eliasson and Kogieschatz, 1991).

##### 1) Quasi-neutral property

The total density of negative charge carriers must be equal to the total density of positive charge carriers.

## 2) Interaction with electromagnetic fields

Plasma can have some interactions upon applying of an electromagnetic field due to the fact that they consist of charged particles.

Normally, plasma can occur in all states (Nasser, 1971). Plasma in solid is called solid-state plasma, while plasma generated in the liquid and gaseous states does not have any specific names. Only gaseous plasma is shortly called as “plasma”. There are many differences between plasmas and gases. Their differences include pressure, distributions of charged-particle density in the entire plasma volume, and temperature.

### 2.3.2 Generation of Plasmas

There are several means of generating charged particles to produce plasmas, e.g. collisions between cosmic rays and gases in atmospheric layers. However, in the present study, an externally intense electric field is applied across metal electrodes to cause the reduction in its “potential barrier” and eventually reach the energy that each electron requires for leaving the metal surface. The most interesting phenomena on the metal surface under an extremely high electric field are that many electrons can leave the surface despite its less kinetic energy to overcome the potential barriers. This phenomenon is known as “tunnel effect”. Afterward, the plasma is first generated by the collisions between the electrons emitted from the surface of metal electrodes and the neutral molecules. This process of plasma generation is normally known as the “field” emission process.

The electrons liberated from the metal surface will immediately be accelerated to move corresponding to the direction of the electric field and then can collide with any neutral gaseous particles in their vicinity to form the ionized gases with an additional set of electrons. Accordingly, these electrons can further move and collide with other species. As a result, a large quantity of electrons, as well as the excited atoms and molecules, ions and radicals, can be formed in the bulk of the gases within a very short period of time after the application of electric field has been started. Many active species can initiate the chemical reactions, leading to the production and destruction of the chemical species (Kruapong, 2000). The combined steps of the field emission process among these plasma species and the collision

between the species and the electrode surfaces are referred to as “electric discharges” phenomena. Table 2.3 shows some important collision mechanisms.

**Table 2.3** Collision mechanisms in the plasma (Nasser, 1971)

Collision	Reaction
Elastic Collision	$e^- + A \rightarrow e^- + A$
Excitation	$e^- + A \rightarrow e^- + A^*$
Ionization	$e^- + A \rightarrow 2e^- + A^+$
Attachment	$e^- + A \rightarrow A^-$
Dissociative Attachment	$e^- + B_2 \rightarrow B^- + B$
Recombination	$e^- + B_2^+ \rightarrow B_2$
Detachment	$e^- + B_2^- \rightarrow 2e^- + B_2$
Ion Recombination	$A^- + B^+ \rightarrow AB$
Charge Transfer	$A^+ + B \rightarrow A + B^+$
Electronic Decomposition	$e^- + AB \rightarrow e^- + A + B$
Atomic Decomposition	$A^* + B_2 \rightarrow AB + B$

Plasma can be classified into two types:

1) Thermal Plasma or Equilibrium Plasma

In this kind of plasma, the temperature between gas and electron are approximately equal, which is close to thermodynamic equilibrium (Fridman *et al.*, 1999). An essential condition for the formation of their plasma is sufficiently high working pressure. An example of such plasma is those produced in the arc discharge and plasma torches.

2) Non-Thermal Plasma or Non-Equilibrium Plasma

This type is characterized by low gas temperature and high electron temperature. Those typical energetic electrons may have energy ranging from 1 to 10 eV, which corresponds to the temperature of about 10,000 to 100,000 K (Rosacha *et al.*, 1993). This plasma is divided into several types depending on their

generation mechanism, their pressure range, and the electrode geometry (Eliasson *et al.*, 1987).

## 2.4 Types of Non-Equilibrium Plasmas

When the potential difference is applied across the plasma, the electric field will exert an influence on the charged particles and impart energy to them. The field does not directly influence the neutral species in the bulk of the plasma. The electrons, due to their light mass, are immediately accelerated to much higher velocities than those of heavier ions during the time available between collisions. Their collision partner takes up the energy that they lose through the collisions. If the pressure is small enough or the field strength is high enough, the electrons and some of ions will, on average, have a kinetic energy, which is much higher than the energy corresponding to the random motion of the molecules. This plasma type is called a non-thermal or non-equilibrium plasma and can be classified into several categories, as follows:

### 2.4.1 Glow Discharge

This is the stationary low-pressure discharge usually occurring between flat electrodes encapsulated in a tube. The typical pressure involved is normally below 10 mbar and, therefore, needs only comparatively low electrical potential difference (i.e. voltage) and current to operate. Due to its low pressure and the resulting low mass flow, the discharge type is mostly used for the application in the manufacture of fluorescent and neon tubes and is not appropriate to the industrial production of chemicals (Nasser, 1971).

### 2.4.2 Corona Discharge

When the pressure is increased during of the glow discharge, the applied electric field will have to be increased accordingly. This, unfortunately, makes the glow discharge very unstable and usually turns into a high current arc discharge, which is rarely controllable. The use of inhomogeneous electrode geometry; e.g. pair of pointed and plane metal electrodes oriented in a perpendicular direction to each other, is another way used for stabilizing the high pressure discharge. The discharge generated from this kind of electrode configuration is

termed a corona discharge. The behavior of this type of discharge is not only different from that of the glow discharge but also depends significantly upon the type of electrodes used, either negative or positive types.

#### 2.4.3 Radio Frequency Discharge (RF Discharge)

This high frequency discharge is used extensively to produce plasma for optical emission spectroscopy. The electrodes are normally kept outside the discharge volume whereas the plasma is generated inside by the induction technique. This can help avoid the contamination by the plasma and the corrosion of electrode. The homogeneous plasma can be generated when the wavelength of the electric field is much larger than the vessel dimensions. Radio frequency discharge works very well at low temperatures, and it is also used at atmospheric pressure, in which thermal plasma can sometimes occur.

#### 2.4.4 Microwave Discharge

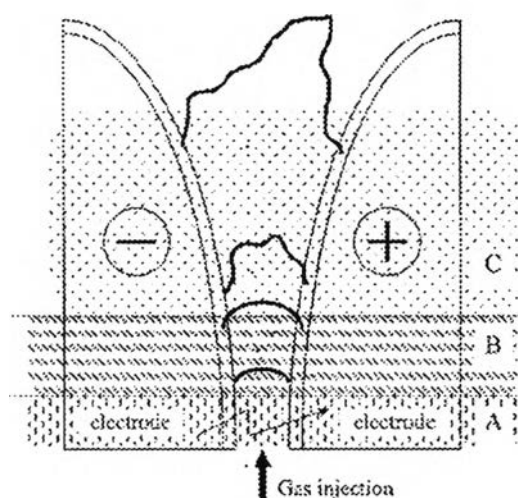
Another type of high frequency discharge that can be practiced presently is the microwave discharge, which is induced by a microwave (0.3-10 GHz) radiation source that must be guided or directed into the gaseous vessel by using a wave guide structure or resonant cavity. As the dimensions of the cavities diminish when the frequency increases, the maximum microwave frequencies used for discharge applications are usually below 3 GHz. The typical frequency is 2.45 GHz. Microwave discharge is another attractive method for plasmachemical investigation because of the ease of operation and the possibility of imposing a gas flow to influence plasma parameters.

#### 2.4.5 Dielectric Barrier Discharge

This type of electric discharge is defined by the discharge generated within the gas-filled gap between a pair with metal electrodes of homogeneous geometry; e.g. the gap between two planar electrodes or in the annular space between two concentric cylinders. A dielectric layer that is commonly made of glass covers either one or both electrodes. Many previous works referred this kind of discharge to the silent electric discharge, in which it has long been known to use in many studies on the plasmachemical reactions (Thanyachotpaiboon *et al.*, 1998).

#### 2.4.6 Gliding Arc Discharge

The gliding arc discharge is a cold plasma technique, which has at least two diverging knife-shaped electrode. These electrodes are immersed in a fast flow of feed gas. A high voltage and relatively low current discharge are generated across the fast gas flow between the electrodes. The electric discharge forms at the closet point, spreads along the knife-edges of the electrodes, and ultimately disappears. Another discharge immediately reforms at the initial spot. Figure 2.1 is considered to be the simplest case for a better physical understanding of the gliding arc phenomenon (Fridman *et al.*, 1999).



**Figure 2.1** Phase of gliding arc phenomena: (A) reagent gas break-down; (B) equilibrium heating phase, and (C) non-equilibrium reaction phase.

The reagent gas break-down (A) of the processed gas begins the cycle of the gliding arc evolution. The high voltage generator provides the necessary electric field to break down the gas between the electrodes.

The equilibrium-heating phase (B) takes place after the formation of stable plasma channel. The electric discharge spreads along the electrodes, which the velocity of the gas flow and the gliding arc are very close.

The non-equilibrium reaction phase (C) begins losing heat from the plasma, where the heat loss exceeds the energy supplied by the source, and it is therefore not possible to sustain the plasma in the state of thermodynamic equilibrium. As a result, the discharge plasma rapidly cools to the gas temperature. After the decay of the non-



equilibrium discharge, there is new break-down at the shortest distance between the electrodes, and the cycle repeats (Fridman *et al.*, 1999).

## 2.5 Related Research Works

In recent years, the plasma technology has been very interesting to be used for reforming methane for synthesis gas and higher hydrocarbon production, in replacing the catalytic reforming process, which encounters many problems. The role of catalysts in the reforming process is to create radical species enhancing the reaction. The role of plasma would be then to provide the energy and to create free radicals needed for methane reforming. The combined catalytic and non-thermal plasma systems for hydrocarbon reforming to produce hydrogen and for other reactions have also been demonstrated in several papers.

In 2001, Zhang *et al.* studied the conversion of methane with carbon dioxide to produce synthesis gas and higher hydrocarbons over quartz fleece, zeolite NaX, zeolite HY, and zeolite NaY catalysts promoted by dielectric barrier discharges at low temperature and ambient pressure. Experimental results showed that methane conversion decreased in the order: fleece (without catalyst) > NaY > HY > NaX. The highest CO<sub>2</sub> conversion reached 40% when using zeolite NaY as the catalyst. CO<sub>2</sub> conversion decreased in the order: NaY > fleece > NaX > HY. Compared to the results from fleece, zeolite NaY was the most promising catalyst for producing synthesis gas and liquid hydrocarbons (C<sub>5</sub>+). In the range tested (100-500 W), syngas was the main product and increased significantly with increasing input power. The ratio of H<sub>2</sub>/CO increased sharply when the ratio of CH<sub>4</sub> to CO<sub>2</sub> increased. When the flow rate increased, the yield of syngas decreased. One year later, Jiang *et al.* reported methane conversion to higher hydrocarbons in the presence of carbon dioxide via dielectric barrier discharge reactor with and without zeolite A. In the presence of zeolite A, no plasma-polymerized carbon film was produced, leading to a better production of light hydrocarbons (C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>4</sub>).

Krawczyk and Młotek (2001) studied the gliding arc discharge combined with catalysts for nitrous oxide processing in oxygen-containing gases. The results showed that under conditions of the gliding arc, nitrous oxide in mixtures with

oxygen or air is not only decomposed to oxygen and nitrogen, but is also oxidized to nitric oxide. The overall conversions of nitrous oxide, as well as the degree of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  oxidation to NO, were studied as a function of its initial concentration, flow rate, and discharge power. The overall  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  conversion and degree of oxidation to NO decreased with increasing flow rate and initial  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  concentration, and increased with increasing discharge power. The degree of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  oxidation to NO varied within 20–37%. The overall conversion and degree of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  oxidation increased when granular dielectric materials ( $\text{TiO}_2$ ,  $\text{SiO}_2$  (quartz glass), and  $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ) were introduced into the reaction zone. The energy efficiency and the overall conversion of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  were still further increased due to catalytic effects of a number of metal oxides ( $\text{CuO}$ ,  $\text{NiO}$ ,  $\text{MnO}_2$ ,  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$ ,  $\text{ZrO}_2$ ) deposited on  $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ . The activity of the oxide catalysts within the active power range of 300–360W decreased in the order:  $\text{CuO} > \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 > \text{NiO} > \text{MnO}_2 > \text{Co}_3\text{O}_4 > \text{ZrO}_2$ . It has been concluded that the combined plasma-catalytic processing may be an efficient way for the reduction of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  emissions.

Rusu and Cormier (2003) investigated the methane steam reforming using a gliding arc discharge reactor. The experiments clearly demonstrated the ability of gliding arc to accelerate chemical reaction at low temperatures and with very low energetic costs. The experimental results indicated that a higher methane content and a lower total flow rate yielded better selectivity, but methane conversion value was quite low (15-20%) because of the only small fraction (10-15%) of inlet gas passing through the discharge zone. In the same year, Supat *et al.* studied synthesis gas production from simultaneous steam reforming and partial oxidation of methane using an AC corona discharge. The benefits of the combination of the two reactions reduced the pure oxygen requirement in the system and increased the thermal efficiency by transferring heat between the exothermic and endothermic reactions. It was found that the coupling of methane increased with increasing  $\text{CH}_4/\text{O}_2$  ratio, but the oxidation of methane to carbon dioxide and water was more favorable at higher oxygen concentrations. Adding water vapor in the feed stream greatly enhanced the conversions of methane and oxygen in an oxygen-lean system but reduced the conversion of methane in the oxygen-rich system. Furthermore, the energy consumption for methane conversion could be substantially reduced by adding water

vapor. The product distribution was strongly influenced by the feed gas concentrations rather than the input power and applied frequency.

Kado *et al.* (2003) studied the conversion of methane to acetylene or syngas using non-equilibrium pulsed discharge under the conditions of ambient temperature and atmospheric pressure. It was found that increasing the fixed current value led to a proportional increase in the pulse frequency. In the region of a relatively low methane conversion, methane conversion increased in proportion to the pulsed frequency. However, the rising slope decreased with the increase in methane conversion due to a decrease in the probability of collision between a methane molecule and an electron. Methane conversion increased under the condition of the existence of rare gas like argon or helium, because the pulsed frequency in the presence of rare gas becomes higher than that without any other kinds of coexisting gas under the condition of the same supplied energy. Using a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide or steam caused the reforming of methane to produce syngas, as well as acetylene. Oxygen gas also promoted the reaction and gave syngas, as well as acetylene, while suppressing the carbon dioxide formation. The addition of oxygen was the most effective way in suppressing the carbon deposition by the converting  $\text{CH}_x$  into carbon monoxide.

Zhang *et al.* (2004) studied the oxidative dehydrogenation of ethane under pulse corona plasma over various catalysts using carbon dioxide as oxidant. The experiments have confirmed that the rare earth metal oxide catalysts, such as  $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$  and  $\text{CeO}_2/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ , enhanced the conversion of ethane and the yields of ethylene and acetylene. The optimum Ce content for the oxidative dehydrogenation of ethane under pulse corona plasma was 10%. Conversion of ethane increased with increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide in the feed over  $\text{CeO}_2/\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ . The total yields of ethylene and acetylene reached maximum value when the  $\text{CO}_2$  content in the feed was 50%.

Sekine *et al.* (2004) investigated the steam reforming of methane, propane, hexane, cyclohexane, methanol, and ethanol using non-equilibrium pulsed discharge under the condition of atmospheric pressure and low temperature without the use of catalyst. In each case, steam reforming proceeded efficiently and selectively, and hydrogen was formed as a main product. Carbon deposition and wax formation were

inhibited under the condition of steam/carbon molar ratio was 1. The conversion of methane and formation of hydrogen increased with increasing pulse discharge frequency, while selectivity to products other than hydrogen was independent of pulse discharge frequency. The waveforms of current and voltage were not influenced dramatically by changing pulse discharge frequency. The changes in electrode distance and flow rate affected hydrogen formation but not the other products.

Chavadej *et al.* (2005) studied the effects of electrical parameters of a corona discharge reactor on the partial oxidation of methane in air and on carbon dioxide reforming of methane in the presence and absence of Pt-loaded KL zeolite. For the partial oxidation, it was found that the reactant conversion increased with decreasing applied frequency and increased with input low side voltage both in the presence and absence of Pt/KL except that the oxygen conversion was 100% in the presence of Pt/KL. For the carbon dioxide reforming of methane, applied frequency and input low side voltage affected only the reactant conversions with no significant effect on reaction pathways both in the presence and absence of Pt/KL.

Chavadej *et al.* (2007) used the same system to study the removal of gaseous volatile organic compound (VOC). The results showed that an increase in either applied voltage or stage number of plasma reactors enhanced both benzene conversion and CO<sub>2</sub> selectivity, which was in contrast with the effects of frequency and feed flow rate. Commercial TiO<sub>2</sub> (Degussa P25), sol-gel TiO<sub>2</sub>, and 1% Pt/sol-gel TiO<sub>2</sub> were used as catalysts in the present study. The presence of all studied catalysts hardly affected the benzene conversion, but markedly increased the CO<sub>2</sub> selectivity. The synergistic effect of catalysts in the plasma reactor system reasonably resulted from the activation of TiO<sub>2</sub> by the energy generated from the plasma, leading to the enhancement of the CO oxidation.

Chavadej *et al.* (2007) investigated a combined plasma and catalytic process for ethylene removal by using multistage corona discharge system in the absence and presence of Pt/TiO<sub>2</sub>. The effects of commercial TiO<sub>2</sub>, sol-gel TiO<sub>2</sub>, and 1% Pt/sol-gel TiO<sub>2</sub> loaded on glass wool used as catalyst packed in the plasma reactors were studied. For the plasma system without a catalyst, it was found that both the ethylene conversion and the CO<sub>2</sub> selectivity increased with increasing applied voltage and the

stage number of the plasma system, in vice versa increasing the frequency and feed flow rate gave the opposite effects. In the presence of all studied catalysts in the plasma system, an increase in both  $C_2H_4$  and  $O_2$  conversions was obtained. The  $CO_2$  selectivity increased under the presence of the catalysts in the following order: 1% Pt/sol-gel  $TiO_2$  > sol-gel  $TiO_2$  = commercial  $TiO_2$ . When the  $TiO_2$  was present in the plasma reactor system, it enhanced the ethylene oxidation reaction because its reducible property provides both the reaction sites and oxygen for the reaction. The presence of 1% Pt on the sol-gel  $TiO_2$  was found experimentally to promote the CO oxidation, leading to a higher  $CO_2$  selectivity.

Nair *et al.* (2007) investigated plasma-assisted methane conversion in gas phase by partial oxidation at low energy density (80-200 kJ/mol  $CH_4$ ) and low reactor temperatures (130-140°C). Although non-thermal plasma has the inherent advantage for initiating reactions, a disadvantage is the unfavorable selectivity to the desired product. The investigation attempted to identify the plasma-initiated chemical reaction pathways by combining experiments and kinetic modeling. Sensitivity analysis indicated reaction intermediates, leading to formation of oxygenates as an alternative oxidation pathway at the investigated temperatures ( $T < 200^\circ C$ ). The selectivity for synthesis gas formation could be increased by partial oxidation at higher  $CH_4/O_2$  ratios. Combined partial oxidation and steam reforming was as well investigated in order to increase  $H_2$  concentration. Isotopes were used in order to identify reaction pathways for the case of steam reforming experiments. However, experiments at lower energy density indicated negligible steam conversion. At lower temperatures, the input plasma energy is primarily used for  $CH_4/O_2$  conversion.

Zou *et al.* (2007) studied a hydrogen production from partial oxidation of dimethyl ether (DME) using corona discharge plasma performed at ambient conditions. Partial oxidation can help avoid the undesired carbon deposit formed from the decomposition of DME, and a stable operation has been obtained. The carbon deposit was completely avoided when the  $O_2/DME$  ratio was 1.05. The partial oxidation could also greatly improve the conversion rate and energy efficiency. The optimal  $O_2/DME$  ratio was 1.38, with which the rate of  $H_2$  production was 1.33 times higher, and the energy efficiency was 1.72 times higher than that of

DME decomposition. The higher O<sub>2</sub>/DME ratio results in complete oxidation and reduces the rate of H<sub>2</sub> production. AC plasma is more efficient than the DC plasma, and the optimum frequency was 2 kHz.

Kim *et al.* (2007) applied a plasma-catalytic system for the conversion of methane to C<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, or higher hydrocarbons in a dielectric barrier discharge (DBD) reactor at atmospheric pressure. Methane conversion was increased with the increase in Pt loading on  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The highest C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub> selectivity was 50.3% when 3 wt% Pt/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst was calcined at 573 K. Methane conversion was increased with the increase in the catalyst weight in DBD reactor. The major products were C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub> and C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, which were independent of catalyst weight.

Indarto *et al.* (2007) investigated the effect of variation of total gas flow rates and addition of auxiliary gases (N<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>2</sub>, air, water) on the CO<sub>2</sub> conversion process. The experimental results indicated that the conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> reached 18% at total gas flow rate of 0.8 L/min and produced CO and O<sub>2</sub> as the main gaseous products. Among auxiliary gases, only N<sub>2</sub> gave positive effect on CO<sub>2</sub> conversion, and the power efficiency at N<sub>2</sub> concentration of 95% and total gas flow rate of 2 L/min increased about three times compared with pure CO<sub>2</sub> process.

Sreethawong *et al.* (2007) investigated the partial oxidation of methane with air for synthesis gas production by using multistage gliding arc discharge system. The results showed that increasing stage number, voltage, or electrode gap distance enhanced both CH<sub>4</sub> and O<sub>2</sub> conversions, which were in contrast with the effects of increasing CH<sub>4</sub>/O<sub>2</sub> molar ratio, feed flow rate, and frequency. The optimum conditions were found at a CH<sub>4</sub>/O<sub>2</sub> feed molar ratio of 3/1, a feed flow rate of 150 cm<sup>3</sup>/min, and a frequency of 300 Hz for the maximum CH<sub>4</sub> and O<sub>2</sub> conversions, high synthesis gas selectivity, and very low energy consumption. The energy consumption of the gliding arc system was found to be very low about  $2.45 \times 10^{-18} - 2.96 \times 10^{-18}$  Ws (15.3-18.5 eV)/molecule of methane converted as compared with  $3.36 \times 10^{-18}$  Ws (21 eV)/molecule of methane converted obtained from the corona discharge system with pin and plate electrodes.

Rueangjitt *et al.* (2007) studied the reforming of simulated natural gas via the non-thermal plasma process with the focus on the production of hydrogen and higher hydrocarbons. The plasma reactor was operated with different feed

compositions: pure CH<sub>4</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>/He, CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/He, CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>/He and CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>/CO<sub>2</sub>. The effects of all gaseous hydrocarbons and CO<sub>2</sub> present in the natural gas were investigated. The results showed that the addition of gas components to the feed strongly influenced the reaction performance and the plasma stability. By comparisons among all the studied feed systems, both hydrogen and C<sub>2</sub> yields were found to depend on the feed gas composition in the following order: CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>/CO<sub>2</sub> > CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>/He > CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/He > CH<sub>4</sub>/He > pure CH<sub>4</sub>. The CH<sub>4</sub>/C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>/C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>/CO<sub>2</sub> feed system provided the maximum yield of hydrogen and C<sub>2</sub> products (35 and 42%, respectively) and also required the lowest input energy for producing hydrogen in the range of  $3.58 \times 10^{-18}$  –  $4.14 \times 10^{-18}$  Ws (22.35-25.82 eV) per molecule of produced hydrogen.

From the previous work, Rueangjitt *et al.* (2008) continued to investigate the effects of operational parameters; applied voltage and input frequency, as well as the effect of oxygen addition, on the reaction performance and discharge stability in the reforming of the simulated natural gas containing a CH<sub>4</sub>:C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>:C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>:CO<sub>2</sub> molar ratio of 70:5:5:20. The results revealed marked increase in both CH<sub>4</sub> conversion and product yield with increasing applied voltage and decreasing input frequency. At higher applied voltage and at lower frequency, the selectivities for H<sub>2</sub>, CO, and all hydrocarbon products, except C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>, were observed to be enhanced. The use of oxygen was found to provide a great enhancement of the plasma reforming of the simulated natural gas. For the combined plasma and partial oxidation in the reforming of CO<sub>2</sub>-containing natural gas, air was found to be superior to pure oxygen in terms of reactant conversions, product selectivities, and specific energy consumption. The optimum conditions were found to be a hydrocarbons-to-oxygen feed molar ratio of 2/1 using air as an oxygen source, an applied voltage of 17.5 kV, and a frequency of 300 Hz, in providing the highest CH<sub>4</sub> conversion and synthesis gas selectivity, as well as extremely low specific energy consumption. The energy consumption was as low as  $2.73 \times 10^{-18}$  Ws (17.02 eV) per molecule of converted reactant and  $2.49 \times 10^{-18}$  Ws (16.60 eV) per molecule of produced hydrogen.