

Simulation study on the geological storage and transport of CO₂ in the saline aquifer

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of the global economy and the massive consumption of fossil energy, CO₂ emissions are increasing year by year, leading to global warming and triggering a series of ecological and environmental problems. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology is one of the most promising CO₂ emission reduction technologies. Subsurface storage of CO₂ in deep saline aquifer has received much attention due to its potential huge storage volume and technical feasibility. The large-scale implementation of CO₂ storage in saline aquifers is still confronted with complex reservoir structure, unclear spatial and temporal evolution of CO₂, and difficult to predict spatial spreading, and there is an urgent need to clarify the carbon migration behavior and influencing factors in the reservoir. In this paper, a simulation study of CO₂ storage in deep saline aquifer will be carried out in the Yaojia Formation of Sanzhao Depression in Songliao Basin. The 100-meter-deep sandstone stratum of the Yaojia Formation was selected for the study and divided into 10 lithologic layers, and the property parameters of each lithologic layer were assigned according to the actual situation. CO₂ was injected at a rate of 10kg/s for a total simulation time of 250 years, including 10 years of injection, and the stationary observation is 240 years. The results show that the density of supercritical CO₂ is slightly lower than that of water, and most of the CO₂ will float upward and a small amount of CO₂ will diffuse downward. After reaching the bottom of the cap layer, the CO₂ plume will migrate laterally along the cap layer. At the beginning of injection, most of the CO₂ will accumulate at the bottom of the cap, and a few will dissolve in the formation water. After injection stops, CO₂ has a tendency to continue to accumulate and migrate laterally to the cap layer. Over time, convection phenomena favoring CO₂ dissolution will occur.

Keywords: CO₂ geological sequestration ; Deep saline aquifer; Numerical simulation

1. INTRODUCTION

Global climate change is increasing due to anthropogenic influences, and this phenomenon has been recognized by many countries. CO₂ is a major greenhouse gas, which is formed due to the massive consumption of fossil energy such as coal, oil and natural gas, so how to reduce CO₂ emissions is an urgent issue facing the world in the coming decades. Subsurface storage of CO₂ in deep saline aquifers has received much attention due to its potential application prospects and technical feasibility. In this paper, a simulation study of CO₂ storage in the deep saline aquifer will be conducted in the Yaojia Formation of Sanzhao Depression in Songliao Basin.

Several scholars in China and abroad have conducted research on geological storage of CO₂ in deep saline aquifers. Solomon^[1] et al. constructed a complete three-dimensional axisymmetric CO₂ transport model and concluded that the saturation of liquid-phase CO₂ will increase by about 1% after CO₂ transport through the formation, mainly related to the salinity of the formation water^[2, 3]. Pruess^[4] et al. concluded that the effect of CO₂ sequestration tends to decrease with increasing vertical permeability. Ennis-King^[5] et al. suggested that high vertical permeability is more beneficial to improve CO₂ sequestration. Ghanbari^[6] et al. studied the dissolved sequestration of CO₂ in saline formations using STARTS simulator and concluded that dissolved sequestration is the dominant means of CO₂ sequestration and that the strong convective effect due to the dissolution of CO₂ during dissolved sequestration also leads to the capture of CO₂ during dissolved sequestration. Nicot^[7] conducted a large-scale numerical simulation study of CO₂ injection in the Gulff-Coste Basin, Texas, USA, using Modflow96, and

showed that over a 50-year period, with CO₂ injection at a rate of 0.5 Mt per year, the saline aquifer of the basin rose by about 1 m.

Based on the analysis of geological data of the Songliao Basin, it is tentatively concluded that the Sanzhao Depression is a more suitable site for CO₂ sequestration, in which the Yaojia Group formation can be considered as an ideal reservoir.

2 Numerical modeling of CO₂ sequestration in the saline aquifer

2.1 Introduction to the study area

The Songliao Basin is home to the world's largest onshore oil and gas field, the Daqing Oilfield is one of the richest oil and gas regions in the world. The basin is rhombus-shaped, spanning Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regions. The basin has a length of 750 km and a width of 330-370 km, covering an area of about 260,000 square kilometers.

First of all, in terms of geological factors, the Yaojia Formation can be sealed at depths of up to 1000-2000 m in some geological units, and CO₂ can exist in a supercritical form within a certain range. The upper part of the Yaojia Formation cover is mainly mudstone, which has good permeability and continuity, and its thickness also exceeds 200 m, which has strong confining ability. The stratigraphic

thickness of the Yaojia Formation is in the range of 0-220 m. It has a high storage potential and is a site for longer-term and larger-scale CO₂ sequestration. There is no volcanic eruption around the Yaojia Formation in Sanzhao Depression, and the risk of geological disaster is low. Moreover, the CO₂ storage area in Sanzhao Depression is large and the distribution density of the waste well cluster is low, so its potential danger is very small in terms of CO₂ storage safety.

2.2 Model Building

The Yaojia Formation of Sanzhao Depression in Songliao Basin was selected as the object of simulation study to establish a geological model close to the actual situation. The thickness of the Yaojia Formation is 0-210m, the depth is about 1300m, and the sandstone lithology is dominant. In this simulation study, the depth from the upper to the lower 100 meters is selected as the reservoir for simulation. The geological model is 140 m in the Z-direction, of which the upper 20 m is the cover and the lower 20 m is the basement cover, with a grid dissected every 10 m. The X-direction is 10,000 m, with 40 grids dissected, and the Y-direction is 5,000 m, with 20 grids dissected. The injection well is in the center with a length of 100 m. The total number of grids in the model is 11,200, and the specific model is shown in Figure 1.

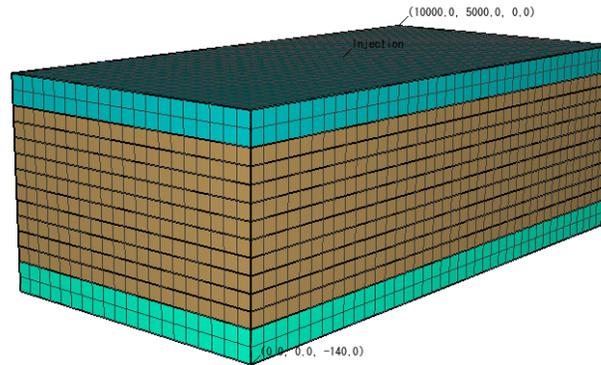


Fig. 1. Model View

The CO₂ injection point is 20 m away from the bottom of the reservoir, and the injection rate is 10 kg/s. The continuous injection is 10 years, and 240 years are observed after termination of injection, so the calculation period of the whole model is 250 years.

2.3 Model Parameters

The porosity and permeability of the formations in the Songliao Basin are variable. According to Gao Ruiqi^[8], who defined the relationship between sandstone porosity and depth in the study of oil and gas generation, transport and

accumulation in the Yaojia Formation of the Songliao Basin, the relationship is as follows:

$$\phi = 0.4 \exp(-0.5z) + 0.05$$

where ϕ is the porosity and Z is the stratigraphic depth (km).

In addition, the permeability of the rock body is also a critical parameter. The results show that the logarithmic value of permeability in the same type of rock mass is approximately linearly correlated with its pore coefficient, according to Xie Xignon^[9] et al. on the high-pressure anomalous characteristics of the Tenaya Fault Trap in the Songliao Basin and the simulation study of fluid dynamics

under different temperature and pressure conditions mentioned that:

$$K_x = 10^{22.58\phi - 18.15}$$

where K_x denotes the permeability in the x-direction and ϕ is the porosity.

The permeability varies vertically and laterally in the rock mass and can be determined according to the following equation:

$$J = \frac{k_x}{k_z}$$

Where J is the ratio of horizontal and vertical permeability and k_z denotes the permeability in the vertical direction.

In this simulation, the 100 m formation was divided into 10 lithological layers, that is, the porosity and permeability of each lithological layer were the same, and the burial depth z was chosen as the center point height of each layer when performing the calculation. The values of porosity and permeability of each layer are shown in Table 1. In addition, an injection well with a diameter of 0.4 m was set up, and the characteristic parameters of the injection well are shown in Table 2. The initial pressure condition of the model is hydrostatic equilibrium pressure, and the temperature gradient is 3.8°C/100 m. The initial conditions of the injection point of the model are shown in Table 3. Except for the CO₂ inflow at the CO₂ injection point, the upper and lower boundaries and both boundaries are symmetric boundaries without mass flow

Tab. 1. Geological model lithological properties parameters calculation table

Rock layer number	Z (m)	ϕ	Kx	J	Kz
cap layer	1310	0.03	1.0E-16m ²	1	1.0E-16m ²
1	1325	0.258297	4.81E-13m ²	4	1.2E-13m ²
2	1335	0.257258	4.56E-13m ²	4	1.14E-13m ²
3	1345	0.256224	4.32E-13m ²	4	1.08E-13m ²
4	1355	0.255196	4.10E-13m ²	4	1.02E-13m ²
5	1365	0.254172	3.88E-13m ²	4	9.71E-14m ²
6	1375	0.253154	3.68E-13m ²	4	9.21E-14m ²
7	1385	0.252141	3.49E-13m ²	4	8.74E-14m ²
8	1395	0.251133	3.32E-13m ²	4	8.29E-14m ²
9	1405	0.250129	3.15E-13m ²	4	7.87E-14m ²
10	1415	0.249131	2.99E-13m ²	4	7.47E-14m ²

Tab. 2. Table of parameter values for injection wells

Parameters	Density (kg/m ³)	ϕ	k_x	Specific heat	Compression factor	Thermal conductivity
Injection well	2600×10 ⁴⁰	0.3	10×10 ⁻¹³	920 J/kg°C	4.5×10 ⁻¹⁰ Pa ⁻¹	2.51W/m°C

Tab. 3. Model injection point initial conditions

Injection speed	Injection time	Temperature	Pressure	Salinity
10kg/s	10years	333.15K	135bar	0.40%

TOUGH2 provides a total of eight models available for the relative permeability coefficient and capillary pressure models. By default, the Van Genuchten-Mualem and Corey functions are used for the relative permeability coefficient model, and the Van Genuchten model is used for the capillary pressure model, as shown in the following functional forms.

Relative permeability coefficient model (liquid phase - Van Genuchten):

$$k_{rl} = \sqrt{S^*} \{1 - (1 - [S^*]^{1/m})^m\}^2$$

$$S^* = \frac{S_l - S_{lr}}{1 - S_{lr}}$$

Where k_{rl} denotes the relative permeability coefficient of the liquid phase, S_l denotes the liquid phase saturation, residual liquid saturation $S_{lr}=0.30$, and exponent $m=0.457$.

Relative permeability coefficient model (gas-phase-Corey):

$$k_{rg} = (1 - \hat{S})^2 (1 - \hat{S}^2)$$

$$\hat{S} = \frac{S_l - S_{lr}}{S_l - S_{lr} - S_{gr}}$$

where k_{rg} denotes the relative permeability coefficient of the gas phase and the residual gas saturation $S_{gr}=0.05$.

Capillary pressure model (Van Genuchten):

$$P_{cap} = -P_0 ([S^*]^{-1/m} - 1)^{1-m}$$

$$S^* = \frac{S_l - S_{lr}}{1 - S_{lr}}$$

Where P_{cap} denotes capillary pressure, residual liquid saturation $S_{lr}=0$, $m=0.457$, and concentration factor $P_0=19.61\text{kpa}$.

2.4 Model Results

The distribution of CO₂ gas saturation at different times and the amount of CO₂ sequestration at different states are monitored by numerical simulation.

2.4.1 Injection period

The variation of CO₂ gas saturation during the injection period is shown in figure 2-figure supplement 4. The CO₂ storage capacity is shown in Table 4.

During the CO₂ injection process, the following conclusions were drawn: As can be seen from figure 2, during the injection stage, the injected CO₂ migrates upward under buoyancy because the density of supercritical state CO₂ is smaller than water, and the saturation of gas-phase CO₂ in the pore space gradually increases. After about 120 days, CO₂ reaches the bottom of the cap layer, and CO₂ starts to migrate along the bottom by lateral diffusion under the blockage of the cap layer. At the termination of gas injection, CO₂ accumulates 81% at 10 meters from the upper cap layer and 88% at 20 meters from the upper cap layer. CO₂ uplift and lateral transport have a certain regularity, which has high requirements on the stability of the cap layer, and the lower permeability, larger thickness and better continuity of the cap layer are more favorable for CO₂ sequestration.

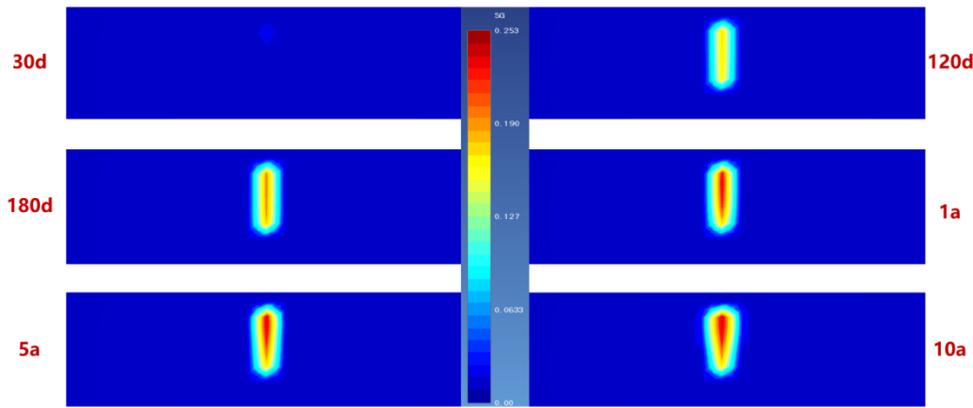
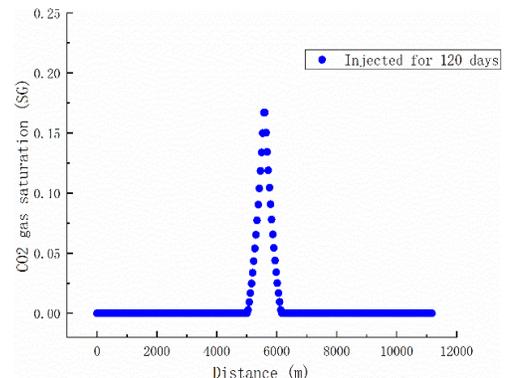
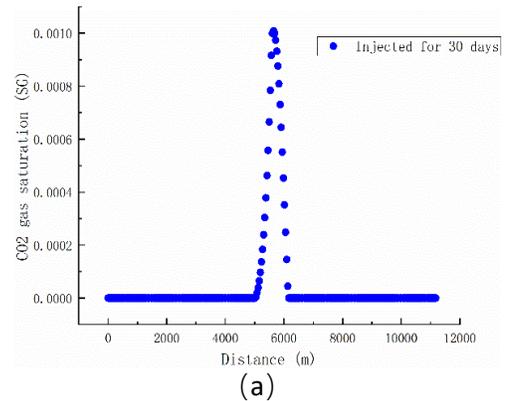


Fig. 2. Cloud map of CO₂ gas saturation during injection

From figure 3, it can be seen that due to the effect of vertical permeability, the vast majority of the injected CO₂ dissolves in the formation water along the injection well before 30 days, when the peak CO₂ gas saturation is 0.001. At 120 days the peak CO₂ gas saturation rises to 0.17. After one year, the CO₂ gas saturation reaches the maximum value of 0.23 during the injection period, and with the passage of time, the The CO₂ gas saturation decreases slightly over time because the rate of CO₂ diffusion downward is slightly greater than the rate of CO₂ migration upward. 605 m of CO₂ is migrated to both sides after 5 years. After 10 years, the migration distance is about 752 m.



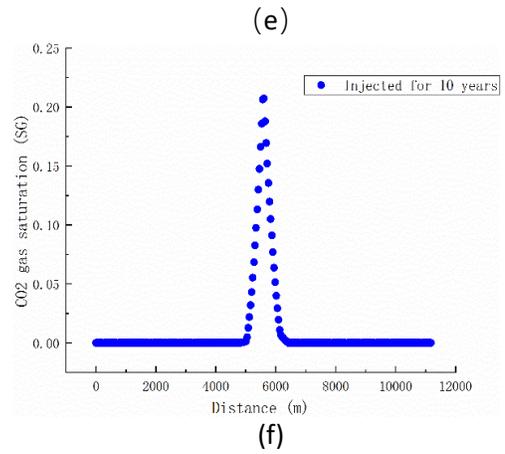
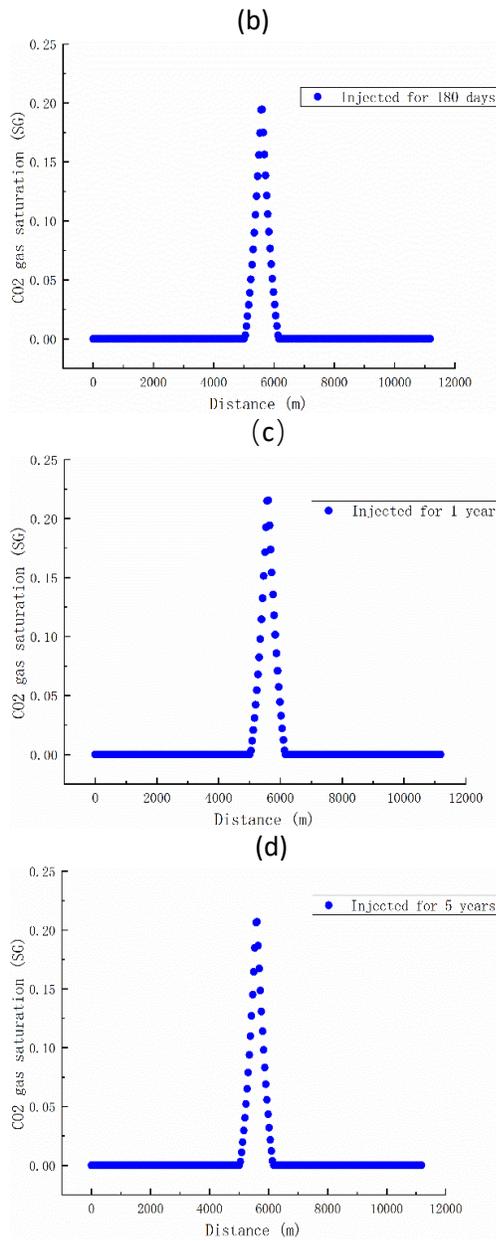


Fig. 3. Variation of CO₂ gas saturation with distance during injection

As can be seen from Table 4, the fraction of the mass of CO₂ dissolved in formation water to the total storage during the injection period ranged from 25% to 34.39%, and the mass of CO₂ dissolved in formation water accounted for less and less of the total sequestered CO₂ mass as time increased, indicating that CO₂ existed mainly in the gaseous (supercritical) form, with a small amount dissolved in formation water, and the gas phase sequestration rate is larger than the dissolved sequestration rate. On day 1, there are 2.97×10^5 kg of CO₂ dissolved in the formation water and 5.66×10^5 kg in the free gaseous state. In year 10, there are 7.87×10^8 kg of CO₂ dissolved in the formation water and 2.36×10^9 kg in the free gaseous state.

Tab. 4. CO₂ sequestration during injection

Times	Gas phase (kg)	Liquid phase (kg)	Total (kg)
1day	5.6651E+05	2.9694E+05	8.6345E+05
30 days	1.7813E+07	8.0703E+06	2.5883E+07
60 days	3.5673E+07	1.6095E+07	5.1768E+07
100 days	5.8844E+07	2.7501E+07	8.6345E+07
120 days	7.1535E+07	3.2395E+07	1.0393E+08
180 days	1.0280E+08	5.3099E+07	1.5590E+08
1 year	2.1086E+08	1.0395E+08	3.1481E+08
5 years	1.1530E+09	4.2601E+08	1.5790E+09
8 years	1.8664E+09	6.5201E+08	2.5184E+09
10 years	2.3611E+09	7.8703E+08	3.1481E+09

It can be seen from figure 4 that the slope of CO₂ gas phase sequestration is significantly higher than that of liquid phase sequestration, which can also indicate that

CO₂ exists mainly in gaseous form, with a small amount dissolved in the formation water, and the upward migration rate is larger than the dissolution rate.

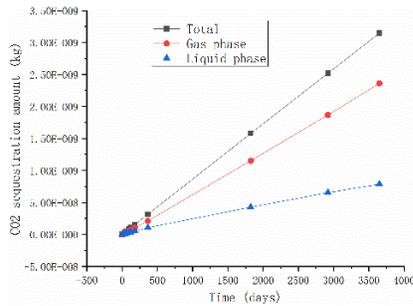


Fig. 4. CO₂ sequestration during injection

2.4.2 Changes between cessation of injection and 250 years

After the injection was stopped, CO₂ continued to diffuse outward. Figures 5-figure 7 show the variation of CO₂ gas saturation. The CO₂ storage is shown in Table 5.

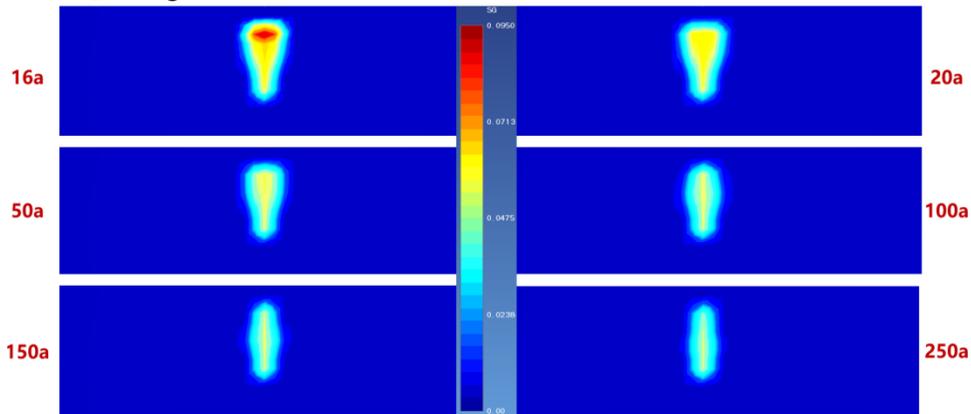
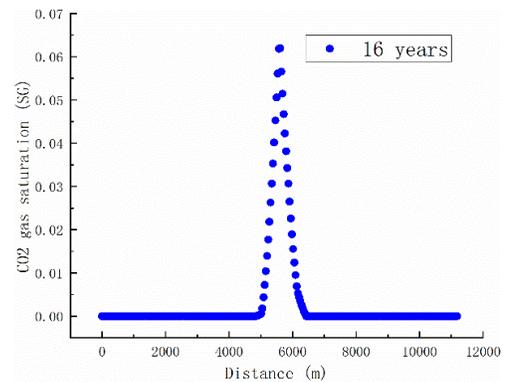
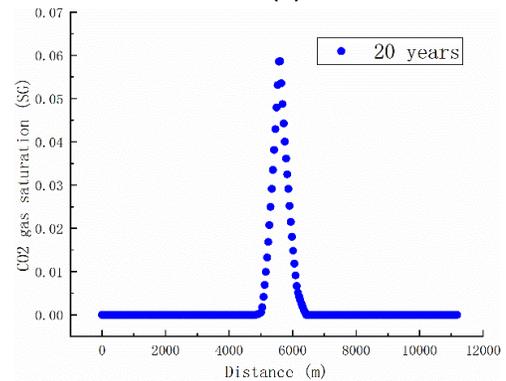


Fig. 5. Cloud map of CO₂ gas saturation after stopping injection

From figure 6, it can be seen that the CO₂ gas saturation corresponding to different moments after stopping injection varies with distance. The CO₂ saturation in the supercritical state varies between 0.05 and 0.065. The CO₂ gas saturation reaches a maximum of 0.065 at about 16 years. After that, the CO₂ gas saturation no longer increases and decreases as time advances. As the distance from the injection well increases, the The CO₂ gas saturation also decreases as the distance from the injection well increases. In years 50 and 100, CO₂ migrates about 875 m and 1050 m to both sides of the injection well. In year 250, the CO₂ gas saturation decreases to 0.05 and CO₂ migrates a total of 1350 m to both sides of the injection well.

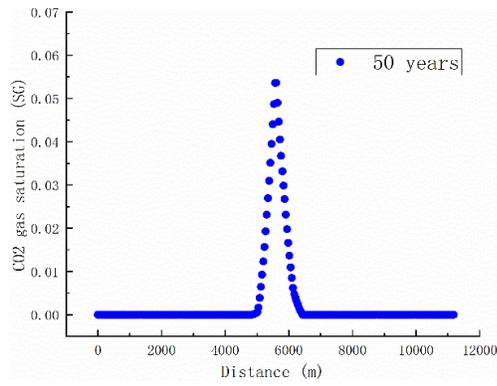


(a)

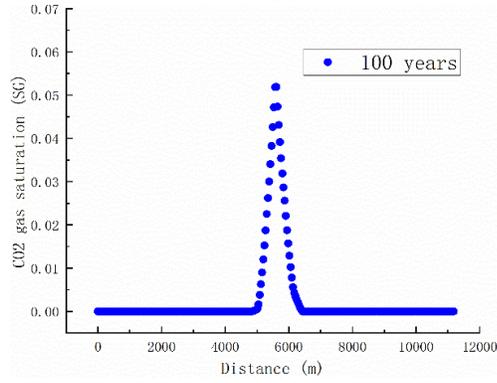


(b)

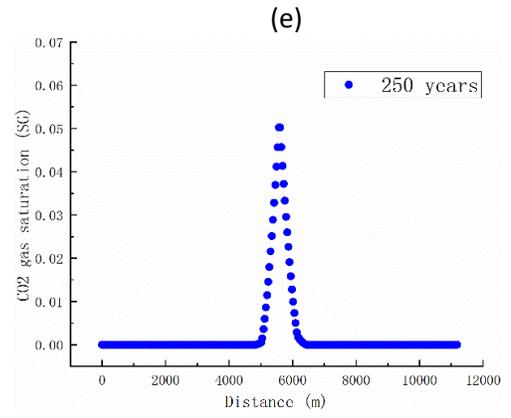
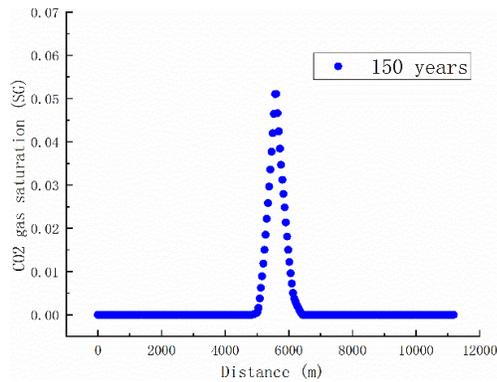
The main conclusions obtained were as follows: From figure 5, it can be seen that the CO₂ gas saturation is decreasing year by year after the cessation of injection. Due to the multiple effects of gravity, concentration gradient and buoyancy, CO₂ is further dissolved in formation water, forming dissolved sequestration, which is because the rate of CO₂ diffusion into formation water is greater than the rate of CO₂ upward and lateral migration. More and more gaseous CO₂ in the reservoir dissolves in the formation water as time goes by. However, within 50 years, the amount of gaseous (supercritical) CO₂ is still much greater than the amount of CO₂ dissolved in formation water.



(c)



(d)



(f)

Fig. 6. Plot of CO₂ gas saturation with distance when injected and stopped

From the CO₂ storage volume after the cessation of injection in Table 5, it can be seen that in the 20th year, the mass of gas-phase CO₂ is 2.04×10^9 kg and the mass of liquid-phase CO₂ is 1.11×10^9 kg, and 35.31% of the injected CO₂ is dissolved in the formation water. In 100 years, the mass of gas-phase CO₂ is 1.66×10^9 kg and the mass of liquid-phase CO₂ is 1.49×10^9 kg. At 180 years, about half of the CO₂ was dissolved in the formation water. And at 200 years, the proportion of injected CO₂ dissolved in the formation water had exceeded 50%, reaching 50.87%. At 250 years, the dissolved amount reached 52.53%.

Tab. 5. CO₂ sequestration status

Times	Gas phase (kg)	Liquid phase (kg)	Total (kg)	Percentage of liquid phase
20 years	2.0363E+09	1.1115E+09	3.1478E+09	35.31%
40 years	1.9617E+09	1.1861E+09	3.1478E+09	37.68%
50 years	1.9053E+09	1.2425E+09	3.1478E+09	39.47%
90 years	1.6749E+09	1.4729E+09	3.1478E+09	46.79%
100 years	1.6560E+09	1.4918E+09	3.1478E+09	47.39%
125 years	1.6255E+09	1.5223E+09	3.1478E+09	48.36%
160 years	1.5899E+09	1.5579E+09	3.1478E+09	49.49%
200 years	1.5465E+09	1.6013E+09	3.1478E+09	50.87%
220 years	1.5273E+09	1.6205E+09	3.1478E+09	51.48%
240 years	1.5068E+09	1.6410E+09	3.1478E+09	52.13%
250 years	1.4942E+09	1.6536E+09	3.1478E+09	52.53%

As can be seen from the slope of the curves of gas-phase and liquid-phase CO₂ storage in Figure 7, a significant convection phenomenon occurs around 50 years. This is caused by CO₂ dissolving in saline aquifer and increasing its density, moving downward under the effect of gravity. This convective effect promotes the dissolution rate and spatial distribution range of CO₂, increasing the effective storage of CO₂ and the security of long-term storage. Both structural and dissolved storage are mainly considered, so the total storage volume remains constant, and the gas-phase storage volume is gradually decreasing after the cessation of injection, while the liquid-phase storage volume is gradually increasing, and the dissolved storage volume exceeds the structural storage volume at 180 years.

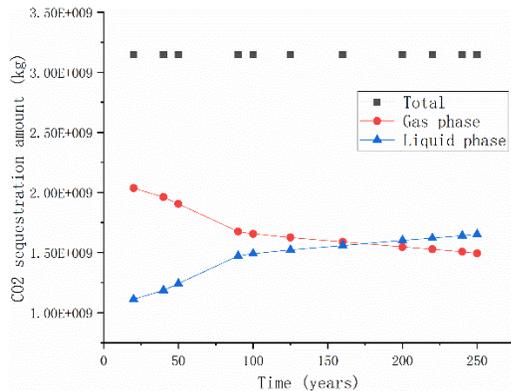


Fig. 7. Amount of CO₂ sequestered after injection has stopped

3. Conclusions

(1) Injection period: Because the density of CO₂ is less than water in the supercritical state, most of the CO₂ will migrate upward with the injection well, and a small amount of CO₂ will diffuse downward. Due to the effect of vertical permeability, most of the injected CO₂ is dissolved in the formation water along the injection well before 30 days. After about 120 days, CO₂ reaches the bottom of the cap layer, and CO₂ is transported laterally under the blockage of the cap layer. After one year, the CO₂ gas saturation reaches the maximum value of 0.23 during the injection period and decreases slightly with time. At the end of injection, 7.87×10⁸ kg of CO₂ is dissolved in formation water, 2.36×10⁹ kg of CO₂ is in free gas state, and about 25% of CO₂ is dissolved in formation water. At the end of the 10th year of gas injection, 81% of CO₂ was accumulated at 10 meters from the upper cover layer and 88% at 20 meters from the upper cover layer.

(2) After the cessation of injection: CO₂ further diffuses into the formation water under the effect of gravity, and the proportion of liquid-phase CO₂ becomes higher and higher. In the 20th year, 35.31% of the injected CO₂ is dissolved in the formation water, and the CO₂ storage

volume after the cessation of injection shows that the mass of gas-phase CO₂ is 2.04×10⁹ kg and the mass of liquid-phase CO₂ is 1.11×10⁹ kg. The slope of the curve shows that after 50 years, there is an obvious convection phenomenon. This is due to CO₂ dissolving in saline water and increasing its density, moving downward under the effect of gravity. This convective action promotes the contact between CO₂ and formation water and facilitates the convective diffusion of CO₂. At 100 years, the mass of CO₂ in the gas phase is 1.66×10⁹ kg and the mass of CO₂ in the liquid phase is 1.49×10⁹ kg. At 185 years, about half of the CO₂ is dissolved in formation water. And at the 200th year, the proportion of the injected CO₂ dissolved in formation water has exceeded 50% and it reached 50.87%. At 250 years, the CO₂ migrated to both sides of the injection well for a total of 1350 meters.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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