

DESCRIPTION

TITLE OF THE INVENTION: TREATMENT METHOD OF FLUID TO BE TREATED
BY ZEOLITE MEMBRANE

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001]

The present invention relates to a treatment method of a fluid to be treated that increases the life of a zeolite membrane.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002]

In recent years, a membrane separation method using a zeolite membrane with excellent heat resistance and chemical resistance has been actively adopted as a method of separating water from bioethanol containing impurities such as water to refine high-purity ethanol and as a method of separating and removing hazardous substances such as PCB from contaminated liquid. In a commercial plant using the membrane separation method, a membrane module formed by arranging many zeolite membranes formed in cylindrical shapes is used as a configuration unit of a membrane separation device and multiple membrane modules are connected in series to increase treatment performance (permeable flux) while maintaining selective permeation performance (permeation substance concentration) at an extremely high level. For such multiple membrane modules, there is a concern that when a substance to be treated such as, for example, bioethanol contains components such as organic acids and inorganic acids that destroy the zeolite membrane, such components hinder a membrane separation operation and destroy the zeolite membrane. The number of cylindrical zeolite membranes arranged in one membrane module is about 38 to 4000 and replacing many expensive zeolite membranes in a relatively

short period leads to high cost and a large amount of labor and there is a concern of an increase in treatment cost of membrane separation. Accordingly, an operation of separating and removing the components that destroy the zeolite membrane from the substance to be treated by distillation or the like needs to be performed before the separation treatment using the membrane module. However, a unit operation such as distillation has such a problem that energy consumption is large and the operation cannot always sufficiently remove the components that destroy the zeolite membrane.

[0003]

Patent Document 1 proposes a technique of increasing the life of a zeolite membrane by bringing a substance to be treated into contact with zeolite particles filling an inside of a pretreatment device independent of a membrane separation device before the substance to be treated is brought into contact with the zeolite membrane. However, there is a demand for a treatment method that performs the aforementioned pretreatment more efficiently with less energy to further improve membrane separation efficiency and further increase the life of the zeolite membrane.

PRIOR ART DOCUMENT

PATENT DOCUMENT

[0004]

[Patent Document 1] Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 2012-35163

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION

[0005]

An object of the present invention is to provide a method

of efficiently treating a fluid to be treated containing a compound that destroys a zeolite membrane to prevent destruction of the zeolite membrane.

MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS

[0006]

A treatment method of a fluid to be treated by a zeolite membrane in the present invention that achieves the aforementioned object is characterized in that the treatment method treats the fluid to be treated formed of a liquid mixture or a gas mixture and containing a compound that destroys the zeolite membrane, and the treatment method comprises: filling a pretreatment device installed upstream of a membrane module including the zeolite membrane or a portion upstream of the zeolite membrane in the membrane module with particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane; and bringing the fluid to be treated into contact with the particles to destroy the zeolite forming the particles and causing the fluid to be treated to contain a component generated by the destruction.

EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0007]

In the treatment method of a fluid to be treated by a zeolite membrane in the present invention, the pretreatment device installed upstream of the membrane module or the portion upstream of the zeolite membrane in the membrane module is filled with the particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane and the fluid to be treated containing the compound that destroys the zeolite membrane is brought into contact with the particles to destroy the zeolite forming the particles and is made to contain the component generated by the destruction. Accordingly, the fluid to be treated can be

efficiently treated without destroying the zeolite membrane.

[0008]

The compound that destroys the zeolite membrane includes at least one selected from the group consisting of an organic acid, an inorganic acid, 3-methyl-1-butanol, acetal, dimethyl sulfide, and dimethyl sulfoxide, and the content thereof is preferably 2000 ppm or less.

[0009]

When the fluid to be treated is a liquid mixture, contact time with the particles is preferably 60 to 600 seconds. When the fluid to be treated is a gas mixture, contact time with the particles is preferably 1 to 60 seconds.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010]

[Fig. 1] Fig. 1 is a schematic explanatory diagram illustrating an example of an embodiment of a treatment method in the present invention.

[Fig. 2] Fig. 2 is a schematic explanatory diagram illustrating an example of a pretreatment device used in the treatment method of the present invention.

[Fig. 3] Fig. 3 is a schematic explanatory diagram of a pretreatment device used in Examples 1 and 2 of the present invention.

[Fig. 4] Fig. 4 is a schematic explanatory diagram of a dehydration system used in Example 3 of the present invention.

MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0011]

In a dehydration process of separating water from bioethanol containing impurities such as water, distillation and dehydration using a zeolite membrane are combined and this can

improve dehydration efficiency while reducing energy required for the dehydration. Adjusting an ethanol concentration of the bioethanol in transition from a distillation step to a membrane separation step, that is, an impurity concentration, to a high level is advantageous in reduction of energy consumption. However, the impurities include components that destroy the zeolite membrane such as, for example, organic acids, inorganic acids, 3-methyl-1-butanol, acetal, dimethyl sulfide, and dimethyl sulfoxide. When the impurity concentration is adjusted to a high level, the zeolite membrane cannot perform the separation and there is a risk of the zeolite membrane being destroyed in a relatively short period. The treatment method of the present invention is a method of efficiently treating fluid to be treated by being subjected to membrane separation treatment using the zeolite membrane to prevent the fluid from destroying the zeolite membrane.

[0012]

The fluid to be treated is formed of a liquid mixture or a gas mixture and contains a compound that destroys the zeolite membrane. Examples of the fluid to be treated include solutions such as bioethanol that are produced or by-produced in biomass industries, industrial organic waste liquids, solutions produced in chemical industrial processes and containing water, solutions of chemical reaction such as esterification reaction whose by-product is water, sea water, salt lake water, and the like. Furthermore, specific examples of the liquid mixture or the gas mixture include mixtures of water and alcohols such as methanol, ethanol, and isopropanol or carboxylic acids such as acetic acid, propionic acid, and butyric acid, mixtures of the aforementioned alcohols and ketones such as acetone and methyl ethyl ketone,

halogenated hydrocarbon such as carbon tetrachloride and trichloroethylene, or organic solutions such as the aforementioned carboxylic acids, or mixtures of the aforementioned alcohols or carboxylic acids and aromatic compounds such as benzene and cyclohexane. Particularly, typical examples include dehydration separation of water-ethanol, water-propanol, water-acetic acid, water-methyl methacrylate, and the like.

[0013]

Examples of compounds that destroy the zeolite membrane include organic acids, inorganic acids, 3-methyl-1-butanol, acetal, dimethyl sulfide, and dimethyl sulfoxide. The content of these impurities is preferably 2000 ppm or less, more preferably 10 to 1000 ppm in the fluid to be treated. Setting the content of impurities to 2000 ppm or less can further increase the life of the zeolite membrane in the membrane separation operation applying the treatment method of the present invention.

[0014]

Moreover, when the water concentration in the fluid to be treated is high, water sometimes turns into a compound that destroys the zeolite membrane. When the water concentration in the fluid to be treated is, for example, 50% by weight or more, preferably 70% by weight or more, water has an effect of destroying the zeolite membrane. However, a membrane separation operation employing the treatment method of the present invention can increase the life of the zeolite membrane.

[0015]

In the membrane separation method, the liquid mixture can be subjected to the membrane separation treatment by using a

pervaporation method in which the liquid mixture is brought into contact with one side (supply side) of a separation membrane and depressurization is performed on the other side (permeation side) to vaporize and separate a specific liquid (permeable substance). Moreover, the gas mixture or the liquid mixture may be subjected to the membrane separation treatment by using a vapor permeation method in which the mixture is heated and supplied in a vapor state to be brought into contact with the separation membrane and depressurization is performed on the permeation side to separate a specific vapor.

[0016]

In the treatment method of the present invention, the fluid to be treated formed of the liquid mixture or the gas mixture is brought into contact with particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane to destroy the zeolite forming the particles and a component generated by the destruction is contained in the fluid to be treated. Performing this treatment can prevent the fluid to be treated from destroying the zeolite membrane when the fluid comes into contact with the zeolite membrane.

[0017]

Figs. 1 and 2 are schematic explanatory diagrams illustrating an example of the embodiment of the treatment method in the present invention. In Fig. 1, three membrane modules 1 are connected in series from the upstream side to the downstream side. A fluid to be treated 10 is supplied to the most-upstream membrane module 1 and is brought into contact with a separation membrane 2. A permeating fluid 11 permeating the separation membrane 2 is transferred to permeating fluid collection means or a product tank (both are not illustrated). Moreover, a

concentrated fluid 12 not permeating the separation membrane 2 is supplied to the downstream membrane module 1 and brought into contact with the separation membrane 2. The downstream membrane module 1 performs treatment of separating the supplied fluid into the permeating fluid 11 and the concentrated fluid 12 and the permeating fluid 11 and the concentrated fluid 12 are transferred to the permeating fluid collection means or the product tank and supplied to the further downstream membrane module 1, respectively, as described above.

[0018]

In the embodiment, a layer 3 filled with particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane 2 is arranged upstream of the separation membrane 2 in the most-upstream membrane module 1. Although the zeolite membrane 2 is illustrated in a simplified manner as a diagonal line in Fig. 1, it is assumed that the zeolite membrane 2 has a cylindrical shape and the outside of the cylindrical zeolite membrane is filled with the zeolite particles to form the particle filled layer 3 when the fluid to be treated 10 is supplied to the outside of the cylindrical zeolite membrane and the permeating fluid 11 permeates into the cylindrical zeolite membrane. Causing the fluid to be treated 10 to pass through the particle filled layer 3 and come into contact with the zeolite particles destroys the zeolite forming the particles and the component generated by the destruction is contained in the fluid to be treated 10. Since the fluid to be treated 10 passing the particle filled layer 3 contains the component of destroyed zeolite, the fluid to be treated 10 does not destroy the zeolite when coming into contact with the zeolite membrane 2 and desired membrane separation treatment is performed. Moreover, the life of the zeolite

membrane 2 can be increased.

[0019]

Fig. 2 is a schematic explanatory diagram of a pretreatment device 4 installed upstream of the membrane module 1. A layer 5 filled with particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane 2 is arranged inside the pretreatment device 4. Causing the fluid to be treated 10 to pass through the particle filled layer 5 and come into contact with the zeolite particles destroys the zeolite forming the particles and the component generated by the destruction is contained in the fluid to be treated 10 and the fluid to be treated 10 is discharged as pretreated fluid 13. Since the pretreated fluid 13 passing the particle filled layer 5 contains the component of destroyed zeolite, the pretreated fluid 13 does not destroy the zeolite when coming into contact with the zeolite membrane 2 and desired membrane separation treatment is performed. Moreover, the life of the zeolite membrane 2 can be increased.

[0020]

As described above, in the treatment method of the present invention, the fluid to be treated is made to destroy the zeolite particles and contain the destroyed component as it is. The fluid to be treated that comes into contact with the zeolite membrane thereby contains components in the same composition ratio as the components forming the zeolite membrane. An effect of the fluid to be treated damaging, breaking, or destroying the zeolite forming membrane can be thus made as small as possible when the fluid to be treated comes into contact with the zeolite membrane. Conventionally, there has been proposed a technique of suppressing ion exchange and dealumination of the zeolite forming the membrane by increasing the amount of cations that

are the same as those contained in the zeolite membrane such as, for example, Na^+ , K^+ , Ca^{2+} , Ba^{2+} , and Mn^{2+} by ion exchange or addition of cation supplier to the fluid to be treated. Meanwhile, in the treatment method of the present invention, the fluid to be treated is made to destroy the zeolite particles and thereby contain silicon, aluminum, and cations forming the zeolite in the same composition ratio in a large amount. Accordingly, damage, breaking, or destruction of the zeolite membrane can be greatly suppressed when the fluid to be treated comes into contact with the zeolite membrane in a later step.

[0021]

When the fluid to be treated is the liquid mixture, contact time of the liquid mixture and the zeolite particles is preferably 60 to 600 seconds, more preferably 60 to 300 seconds. Setting the contact time within such a range can prevent destruction of the zeolite membrane without a decrease in treatment efficiency of the fluid to be treated. The contact time of the liquid mixture and the zeolite particles can be adjusted by adjusting: one or all of the cross-sectional area of the layer filled with the particles, the height of this layer, and the diameter of the particles; the number of baffles provided substantially orthogonal to a direction of flow of the fluid to be treated in the particle filled layer; or the length of substantial flow passages in the particle filled layer.

[0022]

When the fluid to be treated is the gas mixture, contact time of the gas mixture and the zeolite particles is preferably 1 to 60 seconds, more preferably 1 to 5 seconds. Setting the contact time within such a range can prevent destruction of the zeolite membrane without a decrease in the treatment efficiency

of the fluid to be treated. The contact time of the solid mixture and the zeolite particles can be adjusted by adjusting: one or all of the cross-sectional area of the layer filled with the particles, the height of this layer, and the diameter of the particles; the number of baffles provided substantially orthogonal to a direction of flow of the fluid to be treated in the particle filled layer; or the length of substantial flow passages in the particle filled layer.

[0023]

Examples of the present invention are described below. The examples do not limit the scope of the present invention.

EXAMPLES

[0024]

Example 1

Preparation of Fluids to be Treated

As the fluid to be treated, ethanol and water were mixed at a weight ratio of 85/15 and each of compounds of formic acid, butyric acid, 3-methyl-1-butanol, dimethyl sulfide, and nitric acid was mixed into the mixture of ethanol and water as an impurity at an impurity concentration of 500 ppm. In addition to the fluids to be treated containing these impurities, a fluid to be treated containing no impurities was prepared for comparison.

[0025]

Preparation of Pretreatment Device

Fig. 3 schematically illustrates the pretreatment device 4. In Fig. 3, the pretreatment device 4 is formed of a container 15 having the particle filled layer 5 whose inside is filled with the zeolite particles. The pretreatment device 4 has a supply port 16 which is provided in a lower portion of the

container 15 and through which the fluid to be treated 10 flows in and a discharge port 17 which is provided in an upper portion of the container 15 and through which the pretreated fluid 10 flows out. A partition plate 18 is arranged above the supply port 14 in the container 10 and the particle filled layer 5 made of zeolite particles is formed above the partition plate 18. Multiple small holes that allow only the fluid to be treated 10 to pass are opened in the partition plate 18. A buffer phase 19 for preventing entrance of the fluid to be treated 10 into the particle filled layer 5 in an uneven flow state is formed below the partition plate 18. The residence time of the fluid to be treated 10 can be adjusted by changing the height of the particle filled layer 5 (height from an upper surface of the partition plate 18 to an upper surface of the particle filled layer 5) and a supply flow rate of the fluid to be treated 10. The height of the particle filled layer 5 can be adjusted by adjusting the fill amount of the zeolite particles (granulated bodies containing NaA zeolite, product name A-4, produced by Tosoh Corporation, average particle size 6 mm). In the example, the residence time was set by combining the height of the particle filled layer 5 and the supply flow rate of the fluid to be treated 10 as illustrated in Table 1.

[0026]

[Table 1]

Fill height of particle filled layer	Supply flow rate of fluid to be treated (mL/min)				
	80 mL/min	96 mL/min	175 mL/min	350 mL/min	700 mL/min
20 mm	57 seconds	52 seconds	26 seconds	12 seconds	5 seconds
130 mm	371 seconds	337 seconds	168 seconds	79 seconds	34 seconds

[0027]

We prepared the fluid to be treated containing no impurities (ethanol/water in a weight ratio of 85/15, hereinafter sometimes referred to as "blank") and the fluids to be treated containing the impurities that were each obtained by mixing 500 ppm of one selected from formic acid, butyric acid, 3-methyl-1-butanol, dimethyl sulfide, and nitric acid as the impurity. These fluids were pretreated in various residence times, under the conditions of the supply flow rate and the particle filled layer height illustrated in Table 1. Specifically, each of the fluids to be treated was made to flow in from the supply port in the lower portion of the pretreatment device and the pretreated fluid discharged from the discharge port in the upper portion of the pretreatment device was collected. Only a solution directly discharged from the pretreatment device was collected as the collected pretreated fluid. The collected solution was evaluated by using an ICP (Inductively Coupled Plasma) analysis method to check presence of Na ions and the concentration thereof.

[0028]

Measurement results of the Na ion concentrations in the fluids to be treated subjected to no pretreatment (residence time was 0 seconds) and the pretreated fluids (residence times were 5 to 371 seconds) passing the pretreatment device with the residence time varied are illustrated in Table 2 for the blank and the fluids to be treated containing the impurities. The Na ion concentrations in the case where the blank was pretreated were the lowest and the Na ion concentrations in the case where the fluids to be treated containing 3-methyl-1-butanol and DMS were pretreated were the lowest next to the pretreated blank.

Meanwhile, the Na ion concentrations were high in the fluids containing acid substances of formic acid, nitric acid, and butyric acid as the impurities.

[0029]

Since Na ions reached solubility equilibrium when the concentration thereof was about 1 ppm in the pretreatment of the blank, it can be assumed that this value is a solubility equilibrium value at which Na ions in a fluid to be treated with water concentration of 15% by weight can be emitted in a stable state without destroying fillers made of NaA zeolite particles. Meanwhile, it can be assumed that this solubility equilibrium is altered when there is a hydrocarbon compound of 3-methyl-1-butanol or DMS or an acid substance of formic acid, nitric acid, or butyric acid in the fluid to be treated. Specifically, the following two considerations can be made. First is assumption that the hydrocarbon compound or the acid substance destroys a zeolite structure in the NaA zeolite that is the material of the filler and the Na ions contained in the zeolite structure, which are not emitted in the pretreatment of the blank, are emitted and reach the solubility equilibrium. Second is assumption that electric charge in the water solution becomes uneven due to the hydrocarbon compound or the acid substance and the Na ions in the NaA zeolite, which do not dissolve in the pretreatment of the blank, dissolve to achieve equilibrium with respect to this unevenness and reach the equilibrium.

[0030]

[Table 2]

Residence time (second)	Type of impurity in fluid to be treated and Na ion concentration in pretreated fluid obtained by pretreating fluid to be treated					
	Blank	Formic acid	Butyric acid	3-methyl-1- butanol	DMS	Nitric acid
0	0.14	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
5	0.22	6.8	2.1	0.2	0.3	6.4
12	0.22	9	3.8	0.3	0.5	4
26	0.41	12	7.3	0.5	0.6	7.7
34	0.55	26	11	1.4	1.6	12
52	0.44	–	11	–	–	–
57	0.43	–	11	–	–	–
79	0.63	42	17	2.3	1.8	23
168	0.9	41	24	2.4	2.7	26
337	1.2	48	29	3	2.6	28
371	0.93	–	32	–	–	–

* Numerical values in the table indicate Na ion concentrations [ppm].

* Values for residence time of 0 seconds indicate Na ion concentrations in the fluids to be treated

before supply to the pretreatment device.

[0031]

Example 2

Effects of presence or absence of the pretreatment on a performance decrease of the zeolite membrane in the case where an isopropanol/water mixture is dehydrated with the zeolite membrane as the fluid to be treated were demonstrated, assuming actual refinement and collection of isopropanol.

[0032]

A fluid to be treated obtained from an isopropanol refinement collection plant was isopropanol/water in a weight ratio of 90/10 (% by weight) and contained 500 ppm oxalic acid as an impurity. The pretreatment was performed by using the same pretreatment device as that in Example 1 under the condition where the residence time was 337 seconds. The pretreated fluid subjected to the pretreatment and the fluid to be treated not subjected to the pretreatment were subjected to dehydration treatment with the zeolite membrane and the levels of the performance decrease in the zeolite membrane were compared.

[0033]

The dehydration treatment was performed by a pervaporation method (PV method) using a NaA zeolite membrane with an effective membrane area of 14.5 cm². A batch dehydration method was performed at operation temperature of 110°C by using a liquid nitrogen trap with the permeation side set to vacuum pressure of 6 Torr. A charge amount was set to 300 ml. The dehydration was started after the operation temperature reached 110°C and the permeation amount (permeable flux) per unit time on the permeation side and the water concentration on the permeation side were measured every predetermined time. The zeolite membranes were prepared for the respective fluids and were

continuously used without being replaced while the tests were repeatedly performed.

[0034]

The test results of the dehydration treatment are illustrated in Table 3. Dehydration treatment for 300 ml of fluid to be treated was repeatedly performed four times without performing the pretreatment, and a dehydration test for 1200 ml of fluid was performed. As a result, the water concentration in the permeating liquid did not greatly change but the permeable flux gradually decreased and, in the fourth test, dropped to about half of that in the first test. Meanwhile, when the fluid to be treated was subjected to the pretreatment and then subjected to the dehydration treatment, the water concentration in the permeating liquid changed within a higher water concentration range than that in the case where the fluid to be treated was directly subjected to the dehydration treatment, and the permeable flux did not change even after the dehydration treatment test was repeated five times for 1500 ml of fluid. Accordingly, we can assume that, when the treatment method of the fluid to be treated in the present invention was not performed, oxalic acid contained in the fluid to be treated adversely affected the zeolite membrane used for the dehydration treatment and the membrane performance (permeable flux) decreased.

[0035]

[Table 3]

Fluid to be subjected to treatment (not subjected to pretreatment)				Pretreated fluid			
Test number	Accumulated operation time [hour]	Total permeable flux (g/m ² h)	Permeating liquid water concentration (% by weight)	Test number	Accumulated operation time [hour]	Total permeable flux (g/m ² h)	Permeating liquid water concentration (% by weight)
First	1	4612	97	First	1	4659	99.4
	2	2501	97		2	2019	97.5
	4	815	94		2.5	971	91.2
Second	5	3682	97	Second	3.5	4489	99.9
	6	2622	97.5		4.5	1940	98.2
	8	1156	96		5.0	958	95.7
Third	9	2823	96.5	Third	6.0	4681	99.4
	10	2476	97.3		7.0	2158	98.4
	12	1479	96.2		7.5	948	96.0
	13	476	92				
Fourth	14	1950	96.5	Fourth	8.5	4722	99.9
	15	1997	97		9.5	2124	98.5

	17	1632	97		10.5	400	96.0
	19	624	94.5				
				Fifth	11.5	4699	99.9
					12.5	2109	98.5
					13.0	967	96.2

[0036]

Example 3

This example demonstrates that high-concentration water contained in the fluid to be treated is a compound that destroys the zeolite membrane and the treatment method of the fluid to be treated in the present invention can suppress the performance decrease of the zeolite membrane.

[0037]

Two types of liquids of a mixture 1 that contained 10/90% by weight of isopropanol/water and a mixture 2 that contained 35/65% by weight of isopropanol/water were prepared as the fluids to be treated. These fluids to be treated were subjected to dehydration treatment by a flow-type pervaporation method (PV method) using a device whose outline is illustrated in Fig. 4. Operation temperature in the dehydration treatment was 110°C and a liquid nitrogen trap with the permeation side set to 6 Torr was used. A pump 6 fed the fluid to be treated 10 into the pretreatment device 4, including a predetermined amount of NaA zeolite particles, via a heater 7 at a supply flow rate of 2.4 g/min and the pretreated fluid 13 passing the pretreatment device 4 directly flowed into the membrane module 1 formed of a NaA zeolite membrane (having an effective membrane area of 14.5 cm²). The concentrated fluid 12 not permeating the NaA zeolite membrane was cooled by a cooler 8 and entered a concentration tank (not illustrated).

[0038]

Three types of pretreatment devices filled with 0 g, 0.5 g, and 1.0 g of NaA zeolite particles were prepared as the pretreatment devices and the dehydration treatment was performed in the aforementioned flow-type PV operation method. Continuous

operation time required for the water concentration on the permeation side to reach or fall below 99.5% by weight was measured and set as breakthrough time to be used as a performance index of the zeolite membrane. The longer the breakthrough time is, the more the performance decrease of the zeolite membrane is suppressed.

[0039]

When the mixture 1 that contained 10/90% by weight of isopropanol/water was made to pass the pretreatment device in which the fill amount of the NaA zeolite particles was 0 g, the breakthrough time for the dehydration treatment was about 3.3 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 15 kg/m²h. For the mixture 2 that contained 35/65% by weight of isopropanol/water, the breakthrough time was about 17 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 12.6 kg/m²h. It can be seen that the higher the concentration of water in the fluid to be treated is, the shorter the breakthrough time is, and the more likely the performance decrease of the zeolite membrane is to occur.

[0040]

When the mixture 1 that contained 10/90% by weight of isopropanol/water was made to pass the pretreatment device in which the fill amount of the NaA zeolite particles was 0.5 g, the breakthrough time for the dehydration treatment was about 10 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 15.3 kg/m²h. For the mixture 2 that contained 35/65% by weight of isopropanol/water, the breakthrough time was about 47 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 11.1 kg/m²h. For both mixtures, the breakthrough time was about 2.7 times longer than that in the case where the mixtures were not brought into contact

with the NaA zeolite particles, and the performance decrease of the zeolite membrane was suppressed.

[0041]

When the mixture 1 that contained 10/90% by weight of isopropanol/water was made to pass the pretreatment device in which the fill amount of the NaA zeolite particles was 1.0 g, the breakthrough time for the dehydration treatment was about 9.5 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 16.2 kg/m²h. For the mixture 2 that contained 35/65% by weight of isopropanol/water, the breakthrough time was about 75 hours and the permeating liquid flux was about 13.4 kg/m²h. For both mixtures, the breakthrough time was about 3 to 4.4 times longer than that in the case where the mixtures were not brought into contact with the NaA zeolite particles, and the performance decrease of the zeolite membrane was suppressed.

[0042]

Example 4

In an isopropanol refinement collection system, a pretreatment device in which NaA zeolite particles were filled to height of 1 m was arranged upstream of a membrane module formed of a NaA zeolite membrane for a fluid to be treated containing isopropanol and water and was made to operate for about one year, that is about 8000 hours. The fluid to be treated contained approximately 90/10% by weight of isopropanol/water and contained about 500 ppm oxalic acid on average as an impurity. This fluid to be treated was vaporized by using a vaporizer and supplied to the pretreatment device in a vapor state at linear speed of 0.8 m/sec to perform the pretreatment.

[0043]

After the pretreatment of the fluid to be treated was performed for about 8000 hours, we collected the NaA zeolite particles at depth of 0 cm (top portion), 20 cm, 40 cm, 60 cm, 80 cm, and 100 cm (bottom portion) from an upper portion of the particle filled layer of the pretreatment device. The collected zeolite particles and unused NaA zeolite particles were dried at 70°C for 24 hours and then pulverized to be subjected to elemental analysis using an X-ray fluorescence elemental analysis device (EDX-720 manufactured by Shimadzu Corporation). Results of this measurement are illustrated in Table 4. Values in the table indicate % by weight of the components.

[0044]

[Table 4]

Component composition % by weight	Position where zeolite particles were collected						
	Unused	Top portion	20 cm	40 cm	60 cm	80 cm	Bottom portion
Na ₂ O	16.9	12.8	12.9	12.7	11.6	11.3	10.6
Al ₂ O ₃	37.3	44.7	44.7	44.7	45.4	45.4	45.7
SiO ₂	44.5	41.6	41.5	41.6	42.0	42.3	42.7
Others	1.3	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[0045]

The amount of Na (in terms of Na₂O oxide) in the unused NaA zeolite particles was about 17% by weight while the amount of Na (in terms of Na₂O oxide) in the NaA zeolite particles used in the pretreatment was about 11 to 13% by weight. The amount of Na decreased by about 35% at maximum and it is assumed that Na flowed out by destruction of the zeolite particles. Moreover, in the unused NaA zeolite particles, the Al₂O₃ component was about 37% by weight, the SiO₂ component was about 45% by weight,

and the $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3/\text{SiO}_2$ ratio was 0.84. Meanwhile, in the NaA zeolite particles used in the pretreatment, the Al_2O_3 component was about 45 to 46% by weight, the SiO_2 component was about 42 to 43% by weight, and the $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3/\text{SiO}_2$ ratio was 1.07 to 1.08. Since the $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3/\text{SiO}_2$ ratio changed as described above, it can be said that the structure of the zeolite particles changed due to contact with the fluid to be treated. Specifically, it is assumed that electrical charge balance in the zeolite structure was altered due to removable of Na ions from the zeolite structure and at least part of zeolite was destroyed.

EXPLANATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS

[0046]

- 1 membrane module
- 2 separation membrane
- 3 particle filled layer
- 4 pretreatment device
- 5 particle filled layer
- 10 fluid to be treated
- 11 permeating fluid
- 12 concentrated fluid
- 13 pretreated fluid

CLAIMS

[Claim 1] A treatment method of a fluid to be treated by a zeolite membrane, characterized in that

the treatment method treats the fluid to be treated formed of a liquid mixture or a gas mixture and containing a compound that destroys the zeolite membrane, and

the treatment method comprises:

filling a pretreatment device installed upstream of a membrane module including the zeolite membrane or a portion upstream of the zeolite membrane in the membrane module with particles made of the same type of zeolite as the zeolite membrane; and

bringing the fluid to be treated into contact with the particles to destroy the zeolite forming the particles and causing the fluid to be treated to contain a component generated by the destruction.

[Claim 2] The treatment method according to claim 1, characterized in that

the compound that destroys the zeolite membrane is at least one of an organic acid and an inorganic acid, and

the fluid to be treated contains 2000 ppm or less of the compound.

[Claim 3] The treatment method according to claim 1, characterized in that

the compound that destroys the zeolite membrane is at least one of 3-methyl-1-butanol and acetal, and

the fluid to be treated contains 2000 ppm or less of the compound.

[Claim 4] The treatment method according to claim 1, characterized in that

the compound that destroys the zeolite membrane is at least one of dimethyl sulfide and dimethyl sulfoxide, and

the fluid to be treated contains 2000 ppm or less of the compound.

[Claim 5] The treatment method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that

the fluid to be treated is a liquid mixture, and contact time with the particles is 60 to 600 seconds.

[Claim 6] The treatment method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that

the fluid to be treated is a gas mixture, and contact time with the particles is 1 to 60 seconds.