

EXTERNALLY HEATED MICROWAVE PLASMA GASIFIER AND SYNTHESIS GAS PRODUCTION METHOD

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to the gasification of biomass and solid wastes, and more particularly to a gasifier and method for gasifying biomass and solid wastes to synthesize high quality syngas in the presence of external thermal energy and microwave plasma.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] As conventional primary energy sources such as fossil fuel are decreasing rapidly, human beings pay more and more attention to the low calorific fuels, such as biomass fuels, coal, municipal solid waste, etc., especially biomass fuel, which mainly includes organic matters produced through photosynthesis. Thus, biomass fuel is originated from the solar energy, which is renewable and has a rich and wide source.

[0003] Currently, in many ways for the conversion and application of biomass energy, the use of biomass for synthesizing syngas is one of the most efficient modes. How to efficiently obtain high quality syngas has always been a tough problem in industry.

[0004] Conventional fixed bed gasification of biomass has characteristics of a simple structure, flexible operation, long retention time of solid materials on the fixed bed, and high cracking efficiency. The biomass fuel on the fixed bed only requires primary crushing to have uniform particle sizes. However, the gasification temperature is low and nonuniform, the tar content is high content, the active components in the syngas are few, and the gasification efficiency is low, all of which greatly limit the gasification of biomass.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] In view of the abovedescribed problems, it is one objective of the invention to provide an externally heated microwave plasma gasifier and a method using the same for the gasification of biomass and solid wastes to synthesize high quality syngas.

[0006] To achieve the above objective, the following technical schemes are adopted.

[0007] An externally heated microwave plasma gasifier, comprises a vertically disposed furnace body, a feeder disposed in a middle part of the furnace body and communicating with the furnace body, one or two layers of microwave plasma generators, an external heater configured to supply external thermal energy for the gasifier, and a monitoring unit. The furnace body comprises an upper nozzle for spraying vapor, a lower nozzle for spraying CO₂/vapor, a syngas outlet disposed at a top of the furnace body. The upper nozzle for spraying vapor is disposed in a clearance zone of the furnace body, and the lower nozzle for spraying CO₂/vapor is disposed in a bed zone of the furnace body; the monitoring unit is disposed close to the syngas outlet; the one or two layers of microwave plasma generators are disposed above the upper nozzle in the clearance zone of the gasifier; each layer of the microwave plasma generators comprises three or four working gas inlets, and plasma flow is sprayed into the clearance zone of the gasifier horizontally/tangentially; the external heater is integrated with the furnace body or is separated from the furnace body; and the external heater comprises a slag outlet for discharging slags.

[0008] A circulating material outlet is disposed at a bottom of the furnace body and a circulating material inlet is disposed at a top of the furnace body, or the circulating material outlet and the circulating material inlet are both disposed at a sidewall of the furnace body; the external heater is separated from the furnace body and is disposed between the circulating material outlet and the circulating material inlet so that

circulating materials can flow out from the circulating material outlet, be heated by the external heater, and flow back to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet; a heat source of the external heater is microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, or a combination thereof.

[0009] The external heater is integrated with the furnace body, and a heat source of the external heater is microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, high temperature bed material from a circulating fluidized bed (CFB) boiler, or a combination thereof.

[0010] The microwave plasma generators have large electrode gap, strong plasma activity, and wide volume range; a microwave power source of the microwave plasma generators has a basic frequency of 2.45 GHz, and a power of a single microwave plasma generator is within 200 kW.

[0011] The invention also provides a method of gasification using the externally heated microwave plasma gasifier. The method employs external thermal energy to gasify biomass fuel, and the method comprises the following steps:

[0012] 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body via the feeder, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;

[0013] 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and

10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strength the heat and mass transfer, and collecting a final syngas product from the syngas outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body;

[0014] 3) spraying high temperature CO₂ and vapor form the lower nozzle into the furnace body so that carbon residues in the bed zone are reduced or oxidized;

[0015] 4) transporting unreacted carbon residues and bed materials to the external heater via the circulating material outlet, where the carbon residues are combusted, the bed materials are heated and separated from slags, and discharging the slags from the slag outlet;

[0016] 5) returning the separated bed materials to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet, the bed materials flowing downward, exchanging heat with high temperature syngas flowing reversely, and releasing thermal energy in the bed zone to have a temperature of between 600 and 1000°C; transporting the cooled bed materials to the external heater for heating again, and repeating the circulation for several times as needed; a temperature of the circulating material outlet being between 750 and 1200°C, and the temperature of the heated bed materials being higher than that in the bed zone; and

[0017] 6) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification.

[0018] In step 2), a retention time of the syngas staying at the plasma atmosphere in the clearance zone is between 3 and 6 seconds.

[0019] In step 2), a retention time of the syngas staying at the plasma atmosphere in the clearance zone is between 4 and 6 seconds.

[0020] In steps 3)- 5), a reaction temperature in the bed zone of the gaisifer is controlled

at between 600 and 850°C.

[0021] The invention further provides a method of gasification using the externally heated microwave plasma gasifier.

[0022] The method employs external thermal energy to gasify biomass fuel, and the method comprises the following steps:

[0023] 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body via the feeder, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;

[0024] 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and 10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strength the heat and mass transfer, and collecting a final syngas product from the syngas outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body;

[0025] 3) heating the gasifier by the external heater disposed at the bottom of the gasifier to maintain a temperature in the bed zone to be between 600 and 1000°C, and a temperature in clearance zone to be between 750 and 1600°C; and

[0026] 4) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification, and controlling a temperature of the

syngas outlet to be between 750 and 1200°C.

[0027] Advantages according to embodiments of the invention are summarized as follows.

[0028] 1. The gasifier employs an external heater to supply thermal energy, so the chemical energy of biomass can be more used for the generation of active components, even without the addition of oxidizers, and the volume percentage of the active components ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$) in the syngas can exceed 90%.

[0029] 2. The microwave plasma generator disposed in the clearance zone of the gasifier promotes the non-equilibrium cleavage reaction of tar, little or no tar is produced, thereby producing good economic efficiency.

[0030] 3. The gasifier has no specific requirement on the particle size of biomass fuel, primary crushing can meet the requirement of particle size, and thus the production costs are low, with good economic efficiency.

[0031] 4. The external heat source can be any kind of energy sources, for example, industrial waste heat, which is conducive to the comprehensive utilization of energy sources.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0032] The invention is described hereinbelow with reference to accompanying drawings, in which:

[0033] FIG. 1 shows a schematic diagram of an externally heated microwave plasma gasifier and a flow chart of a gasification method using the same according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0034] FIG. 2 is a sectional view taken from Line A-A of FIG. 1.

[0035] In the drawings, the following reference numbers are used: 1. Feeder; 2. Furnace body; 3. Microwave plasma generator; 4. Lower nozzle; 5. Upper nozzle; 6. Monitoring unit; 7. Circulating material inlet; 8. Clearance zone of gasifier; 9. External heater; 10. Circulating material inlet.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0036] Example 1

[0037] An externally heated microwave plasma gasifier, comprises a vertically disposed furnace body 2, a feeder 1 communicating with the furnace body 2, a microwave plasma generator 3, an external heater 9 configured to supply external thermal energy for the gasifier, and a monitoring unit 6. The furnace body 2 comprises an upper nozzle 5 for spraying vapor, a lower nozzle 4 for spraying CO₂/vapor, a syngas outlet disposed at a top of the furnace body. The upper nozzle 5 for spraying vapor is disposed in a clearance zone of the furnace body, and the lower nozzle 4 for spraying CO₂/vapor is disposed in a bed zone of the furnace body. The monitoring unit 6 is disposed close to the syngas outlet. A circulating material outlet 7 is disposed at a bottom of the furnace body and a circulating material inlet 10 is disposed at a top of the furnace body. The external heater 9 is separated from the furnace body 2 and is disposed between the circulating material outlet 7 and the circulating material inlet 10 so that circulating materials can flow out from the circulating material outlet 7, be heated by the external heater 9, and flow back to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet 10. The external heater comprises a slag outlet for discharging slags.

[0038] Optionally, the circulating material outlet 7 and the circulating material inlet 10 are both disposed at a sidewall of the furnace body 2.

[0039] The feeder 1 is disposed in the middle part of the furnace body 2. One or two

layers of microwave plasma generators 3 are disposed above the upper nozzle in the clearance zone 8 of the gasifier; each layer of the microwave plasma generators comprises three or four working gas inlets, and plasma flow is sprayed into the clearance zone 8 of the gasifier horizontally/tangentially. The microwave plasma generators have large electrode gap, strong plasma activity, and wide volume range; a microwave power source of the microwave plasma generators has a basic frequency of 2.45 GHz, and a power of a single microwave plasma generator is within 200 kW.

[0040] The heat source of the external heater 9 is microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, or industrial waste heat. The external heater 9 heats the bed materials to have high temperature for circulating. In the external heater 9, the fixed carbon materials can be combusted completely, and the bed materials and biomass slags can be separated completely.

[0041] A method of gasification using the externally heated microwave plasma gasifier, comprises the following steps:

[0042] 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body 2 via the feeder 1, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;

[0043] 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone 8 of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle 5, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and 10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strength the heat and mass transfer, and collecting a final syngas product from the syngas

outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body, the syngas product comprising little even no tar;

[0044] 3) spraying high temperature CO₂ and vapor from the lower nozzle 4 into the furnace body when the fixed carbon content is high and the bed zone has plenty of heat (that is, the external thermal energy supplied by the external heater 9 is sufficient), so that carbon residues in the bed zone are reduced or oxidized to yield more CO₂ or H₂ in the syngas; transporting unreacted carbon residues and bed materials to the external heater 9 via the circulating material outlet, where the carbon residues are combusted, the bed materials are heated and separated from slags, and discharging the slags from the slag outlet; returning the separated bed materials to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet, the bed materials flowing downward, exchanging heat with high temperature syngas flowing reversely so that the syngas is heated to have a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, and releasing thermal energy in the bed zone to have a temperature of between 600 and 1000°C; transporting the cooled bed materials to the external heater 9 for heating again, and repeating the circulation for several times as needed; a temperature of the circulating material outlet 7 being between 750 and 1200°C; and

[0045] 4) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification, and controlling a temperature of the syngas outlet to be between 800 and 1200°C.

[0046] In step 2), the retention time of the syngas staying at the plasma atmosphere in the clearance zone is between 3 and 6 seconds, particularly between 4 and 6 seconds.

[0047] In step 3), the reaction temperature in the bed zone of the gasifier is controlled at between 600 and 850°C.

[0048] In step 3), the sprayed working gas is high temperature CO₂ or high temperature

vapor, which is determined by the requirement for the components of the syngas.

[0049] The bed materials of the gasifier are composed of high-temperature resistant materials having strong thermal storage capacity. The biomass fuel heated by the external heater enters the gasifier and exchanges heat with high temperature syngas flowing reversely, and then flows downward to the high temperature bed zone where the biomass fuel is heated quickly. The biomass fuel has high oxygen content, and low fixed carbon content. Thus, in the bed zone, the biomass fuel is pyrolyzed to yield volatile matters and semi-coke. To maintain the high temperature in the pyrolysis zone, appropriate high temperature vapor/ CO_2 is sprayed into the gasifier, so that the volatile matters are cracked under the high temperature to yield a large amount of active components ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$) and a small amount of tar vapor which flows upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier. The unreacted carbon residues and bed materials are transported to the external heater, where the carbon residues and bed materials are heated, and oxidizers are introduced to facilitate the complete combustion of the carbon residues in the mixture. The bed materials are separated from slags. The heated bed materials is transported to the furnace body from the top or the side thereof, flows downward to exchange heat with high temperature syngas flowing reversely to reduce the temperature of the syngas and increase the temperature of the bed materials. The high temperature bed materials fall to the bed zone to supply thermal energy for the newly-introduced biomass fuel and maintain the temperature for the cracking reaction. After heat exchange, the cooled bed materials are transported to the external heater for next heating and separating. The above steps are repeated for several times as needed. The circulation factor of the bed materials is determined by the characteristics of the fuel.

[0050] The syngas comprising a small amount of tar vapor and fly ash flows upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier where the microwave plasma generator is disposed. In the presence of plasma oxidizer having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, the tar vapor in the high temperature syngas is cracked quickly for

the complete removal of the tar. The syngas in the syngas outlet is cooled and purified to achieve the level of direct usage.

[0051] Example 2

[0052] The gasifier in this example is basically the same as that in Example 1 except that (A) the external heater 9 is not separated from the furnace body 2 but is integrated with the furnace body 2, and the circulating material outlet disposed at the bottom of the furnace body and the circulating material inlet disposed at a top of the furnace body are removed. Thus, the external heat source can be introduced into the gasifier, the material circulating process is omitted, thereby resulting a simple system, high operability and high efficiency.

[0053] (B) A heat source of the external heater is microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, high temperature bed material from a circulating fluidized bed (CFB) boiler, or a combination thereof.

[0054] A method of gasification using the externally heated microwave plasma gasifier comprises the following steps:

[0055] 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body via the feeder, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;

[0056] 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to

stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and 10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strength the heat and mass transfer, and collecting a final syngas product from the syngas outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body;

[0057] 3) heating the gaisifer by the external heater disposed at the bottom of the gasifier to maintain a temperature in the bed zone to be between 600 and 1000°C, and a temperature in clearance zone to be between 750 and 1600°C; and

[0058] 4) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification, and controlling a temperature of the syngas outlet to be between 750 and 1200°C.

[0059] To achieve the optimalworking conditions and satisfy the overall performance requirement of the gasification, the key is to control the temperature of the bed zone, to control the bed material supply, and to regulate the CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power. The monitoring unit disposed close to the syngas outlet can monitor the above parameters in real time, thereby controlling the gasification process bychain and by full automation and maintaining the operation stability of the gasifier.

[0060] While particular embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made without departing from the invention in its broader aspects, and therefore, the aim in the appended claims is to cover all such changes and modifications as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. An externally heated microwave plasma gasifier, comprising a vertically disposed furnace body, a feeder disposed in a middle part of the furnace body and communicating with the furnace body, one or two layers of microwave plasma generators, an external heater configured to supply external thermal energy for the gasifier, and a monitoring unit, the furnace body comprising an upper nozzle for spraying vapor, a lower nozzle for spraying CO₂/vapor, a syngas outlet disposed at a top of the furnace body; wherein the upper nozzle for spraying vapor is disposed in a clearance zone of the furnace body, and the lower nozzle for spraying CO₂/vapor is disposed in a bed zone of the furnace body; the monitoring unit is disposed close to the syngas outlet; the one or two layers of microwave plasma generators are disposed above the upper nozzle in the clearance zone of the gasifier; each layer of the microwave plasma generators comprises three or four working gas inlets, and plasma flow is sprayed into the clearance zone of the gasifier horizontally/tangentially; the external heater is integrated with the furnace body or is separated from the furnace body; and the external heater comprises a slag outlet for discharging slags.
2. The gasifier of claim 1, **characterized in that** a circulating material outlet is disposed at a bottom of the furnace body and a circulating material inlet is disposed at a top of the furnace body, or the circulating material outlet and the circulating material inlet are both disposed at a sidewall of the furnace body; the external heater is separated from the furnace body and is disposed between the circulating material outlet and the circulating material inlet so that circulating materials can flow out from the circulating material outlet, be heated by the external heater, and flow back to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet; a heat source of the external heater is

microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, or a combination thereof.

3. The gasifier of claim 1, **characterized in that** the external heater is integrated with the furnace body, and a heat source of the external heater is microwave, high temperature microwave plasma, laser, plasma arc, solar energy, high temperature bed material from a circulating fluidized bed (CFB) boiler, or a combination thereof.
4. The gasifier of any one of claims 1-3, **characterized in that** the microwave plasma generators have large electrode gap, strong plasma activity, and wide volume range; a microwave power source of the microwave plasma generators has a basic frequency of 2.45 GHz, and a power of a single microwave plasma generator is within 200 kW.
5. A method of gasification using an externally heated microwave plasma gasifier of any one of claims 1, 2, and 4, the method employing external thermal energy to gasify biomass fuel, and the method comprising the following steps:
 - 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body via the feeder, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;
 - 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and 10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strength the heat and mass transfer, and

collecting a final syngas product from the syngas outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body;

- 3) spraying high temperature CO₂ and vapor from the lower nozzle into the furnace body so that carbon residues in the bed zone are reduced or oxidized;
 - 4) transporting unreacted carbon residues and bed materials to the external heater via the circulating material outlet, where the carbon residues are combusted, the bed materials are heated and separated from slags, and discharging the slags from the slag outlet;
 - 5) returning the separated bed materials to the furnace body from the circulating material inlet, the bed materials flowing downward, exchanging heat with high temperature syngas flowing reversely, and releasing thermal energy in the bed zone to have a temperature of between 600 and 1000°C; transporting the cooled bed materials to the external heater for heating again, and repeating the circulation for several times as needed; a temperature of the circulating material outlet being between 750 and 1200°C, and the temperature of the heated bed materials being higher than that in the bed zone; and
 - 6) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification.
6. The method of claim 5, **characterized in that** in step 2), a retention time of the syngas staying at the plasma atmosphere in the clearance zone is between 3 and 6 seconds.
7. The method of claim 6, **characterized in that** in step 2), a retention time of the syngas staying at the plasma atmosphere in the clearance zone is between 4 and 6 seconds.

8. The method of any one of claims 5-7, **characterized in that** a reaction temperature in the bed zone of the gasifier is controlled at between 600 and 850°C.
9. A method of gasification using an externally heated microwave plasma gasifier of any one of claims 1, 3, and 4, the method employing external thermal energy to gasify biomass fuel, and the method comprising the following steps:
 - 1) introducing feedstock comprising biomass fuel and solid waste into the furnace body via the feeder, gasifying and pyrolyzing the feedstock in the high temperature bed zone to yield syngas comprising a large amount of CO, H₂, CO₂ and a small amount of CH₄ and tar;
 - 2) allowing the syngas to flow upward to the clearance zone of the gasifier, starting up the microwave plasma generators to generate high temperature plasma oxidizers having high activity, high degree of ionization in nonequilibrium state, so that the syngas mixes with the plasma oxidizers and cracks, spraying vapor into the furnace body from the upper nozzle, controlling the clearance zone at a temperature of between 1000 and 1200°C, regulating a flow rate of the plasma oxidizers to ensure the syngas to stay at a plasma atmosphere for between 3 and 10 seconds, agitating the plasma flow to strengthen the heat and mass transfer, and collecting a final syngas product from the syngas outlet disposed at the top of the furnace body;
 - 3) heating the gasifier by the external heater disposed at the bottom of the gasifier to maintain a temperature in the bed zone to be between 600 and 1000°C, and a temperature in clearance zone to be between 750 and 1600°C; and
 - 4) monitoring by the monitoring unit the temperature and components of the syngas, regulating CO₂ flow rate, vapor flow rate, and microwave power to ensure the operation of the gasification, and controlling a temperature of the syngas outlet to be between 750 and 1200°C.