

Thermodynamic Optimization of Water-Cooled Infrastructure for Vehicle Lithium-Ion Battery Based on Exergy

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Electric vehicle technology is developing rapidly with the attention of energy and environmental issues, lithium-ion batteries as the important component are widely used for their superior performance. However, batteries generate a lot of heat during operation. If not cooled in time, heat will accumulate in the battery package, causing a rapid temperature rise and an increasing temperature nonuniformity. Thermodynamic analysis based on the least exergy dissipation principle is to optimize both the configuration and operating strategy of a water-cooled system for the vehicle lithium-ion battery packages. Four typical structures and 24 packages of 96 lithium-ion single batteries from an e-powered SUV were designed and tested to verify the exergy-based optimization. The test results showed a good agreement with the theoretical analysis and prediction. Under various battery discharging conditions, the best thermal performance was observed when the cooling water was inlet to the middle-positioned battery packages, at which the measured maximum temperature gradient among the 24 battery packages can be controlled within 3.1 K, much lower than the other three configurations, and the measured peak temperature was 1.1–5.9 K lower than the other three configurations.

Nomenclature

A	=	effective area for heat dissipation of each battery package
c_p	=	specific heat of water
D	=	equivalent hydraulic diameter of water channel inside the cooling panel
f	=	frictional coefficient of water flow inside the cooling panel
h	=	convective heat transfer coefficient
L	=	length of the cooling panel
m	=	water mass flow rate
Q	=	heat dissipated by each battery package
S_i	=	Stanton number
T	=	mean temperature of the lithium-ion battery package
\bar{T}_a	=	mean water temperature along the cooling panel
T_a	=	temperature of the inlet cooling water
T_o	=	temperature of the outlet water
V	=	mean water velocity across the cooling panel
ρ	=	water density
Ψ_{flow}	=	exergy loss of flow resistance
Ψ_{heat}	=	exergy loss of thermal resistance
Ψ_{total}	=	total exergy loss

I. Introduction

THE structures of several typical lithium-ion batteries and packaging configurations are illustrated in Figs. 1a–1d [1,2]. The pack level (Fig. 1d) is the most widely used battery packaging in lithium-powered vehicles. Most cooling designs are based on this pack model (e.g., dozens of sensors and cooling ducts integrated into the battery pack network).

Lithium-ion batteries generate a lot of heat during charging and discharging; different thermal environments also affect the performance of lithium-ion batteries [3–5]. Therefore, it is important to dissipate heat from batteries. For the state of the art, air cooling, liquid cooling, and phase-change cooling take predominating current battery thermal management (BTM) research [6,7]. Many research efforts have been made on the optimization of cooling configuration (e.g., flow model, fluid parameters, cooling channel layout, and integrated design [8–39]) to enhance heat transfer and to improve temperature uniformity among the integrated battery packages (e.g., airflow path comparison, as demonstrated in Fig. 2) [8]. Others attempted to combine a special phase-change material (PCM) into a battery pack network to get a better thermal shock response, a lower peak temperature, and less cooling cost, at various battery charging/discharging rates and package currents [40–54]. Another important work is to develop an appropriate theoretical model (e.g., heat generation model, electrochemical model, and equivalent circuit model [55–72]) to perform a more precise quantitative analysis on battery chemical-thermal characteristics and to better assist BTM design.

Thermodynamic method (e.g., exergy model) is another appropriate approach to perform a quantitative analysis and an effective optimization on heat transfer and thermal flow network [73–77]. The overwhelming advantage of using an exergy analysis (e.g., the unique ability to get an analytical solution of optimum flow parameter and optimal operating strategy, other than the large-scale simulation by computational fluid dynamics or finite element method software, quite time efficient) fits the BTM research.

To obtain better temperature distribution, uniformity, and lower cooling energy consumption, the theory of exergy loss based on the second law of thermodynamics is used to quantitatively calculate and evaluate the quality loss of energy during lithium-ion battery charging and discharging, and quantitative analysis and comparison of thermodynamic properties. In addition, we also obtain the optimal lithium-ion BTM strategy through optimization.

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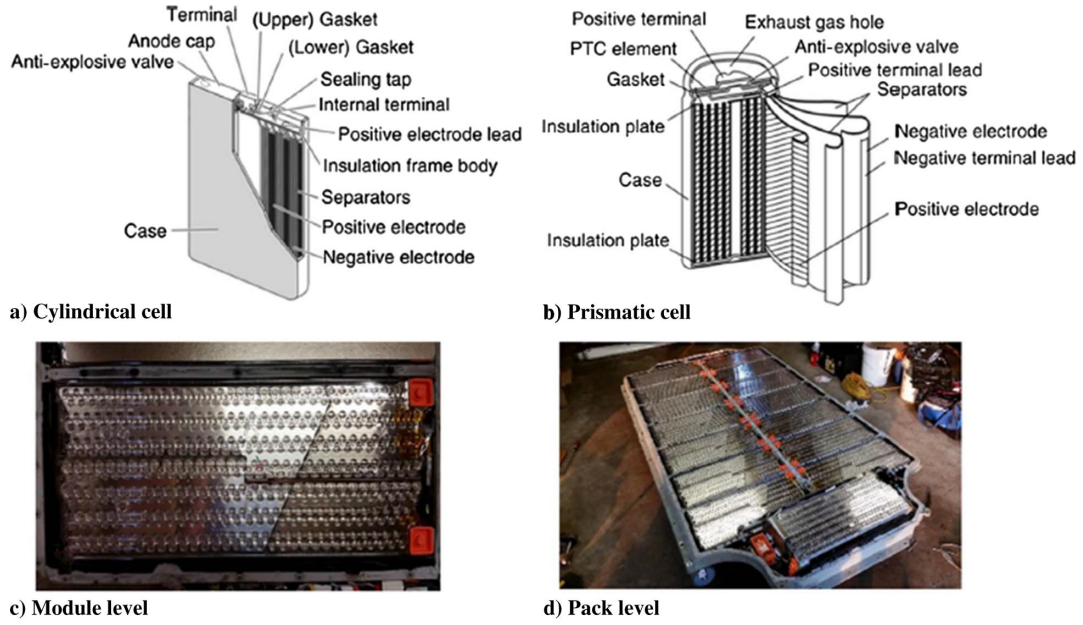


Fig. 1 Schematics and pictures of different battery configurations: a) cylindrical cell, b) prismatic cell, c) module level, and d) pack level [1,2] (PTC, positive temperature coefficient).

II. Exergy Analysis Model

Shah [73] analyzed the exergy loss during water flow and heat transfer, and found that, as water flows across the motherboard, exergy is consumed by both thermal and flow resistance between water and the motherboard surface. The total exergy loss can be calculated as follows [72]:

$$\Psi_{\text{total}} = \Psi_{\text{heat}} + \Psi_{\text{flow}} = \frac{Q^2}{Lmc_p S_t \bar{T}_a} + \frac{8m^3 L}{\rho^2} \frac{f}{DA^2} \frac{T_a}{\bar{T}_a} \quad (1)$$

Q is the heat dissipated by each battery package (in W); T_a is the temperature of the inlet cooling water (in K); \bar{T}_a is the mean water temperature along the cooling panel, which is commonly calculated using Eq. (2) (in K); m is the water mass flow rate (in kg/s); c_p is the specific heat of water [in J/(kg · K)]; ρ is the water density (kg/m³); L is the length of the cooling panel (in m); D is the equivalent hydraulic diameter of the water channel inside the cooling panel (in m); A is the effective area for heat dissipation of each battery package (in m²); f is the mean frictional coefficient of water flow inside the cooling panel; and S_t is the Stanton number, as calculated by Eq. (3):

$$\bar{T}_a = T_a + \frac{(T - T_a) - (T - T_o)}{\ln(T - T_a / T - T_o)} \quad (2)$$

T is the mean temperature of the lithium-ion battery packages (in K); T_o is the temperature of the outlet water (in K):

$$S_t = \frac{h}{\rho V c_p} \quad (3)$$

in which h is the convective heat transfer coefficient [in W/(m² · K)]; V is the mean water velocity across the cooling panel (in m/s); and Q , h , and $T - \bar{T}_a$ are governed by Newton's law of cooling, expressed by Eq. (4):

$$Q = hA(T - \bar{T}_a) \quad (4)$$

Bring Eqs. (3) and (4) and $m = (\pi/4)(\rho V D^2)$ into Eq. (1) to get

$$\Psi_{\text{total}} = \Psi_{\text{heat}} + \Psi_{\text{flow}} = \frac{4A}{\pi DL} \frac{(T - \bar{T}_a)T_a}{\bar{T}_a^2} Q + \frac{8m^3 L}{\rho^2} \frac{f}{DA^2} \frac{T_a}{\bar{T}_a} \quad (5)$$

Equation (5) is the final expression for the calculation of total exergy loss Ψ_{total} during heat transfer between each battery package and the corresponding cooling panel [7]. When the dissipated heat Q and panel length L can be assumed constant, the total exergy loss of the battery cooling process can be calculated using Eq. (5). Figure 3 shows a comparison of the normalized exergy dissipation ($\Delta E_x / \Delta E_{x,\text{max}}$) with the normalized temperature ($T_{\text{battery}} / T_{\text{battery,max}}$) of the battery package for a single cooling panel (package heat $Q = 30$ W; panel area $A = 0.12$ m²) with inlet water temperatures T_{in} of 278, 283, 293, and 300 K, and water velocity of 0.1–1.0 m/s.

It can be seen from Fig. 3 that, for a given heat Q and panel area A , the optimal water velocity (or optimum flow rate), which corresponds to the minimum exergy loss, changes with water inlet temperature (also designated as the reference temperature for zero-exergy state). In other words, the point with minimum exergy loss, which is the lowest point in the exergy dissipation curve in Fig. 3, corresponds to the optimal thermodynamic performance based on the exergy analysis. In addition, for a given water velocity, both values of normalized

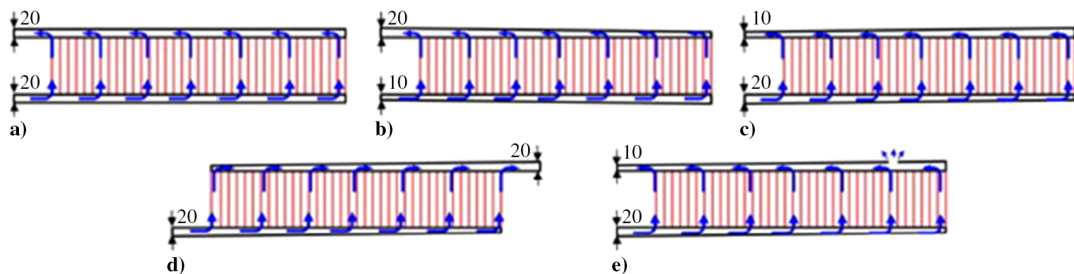


Fig. 2 Comparison of different designs of inlet and outlet ducts [8].

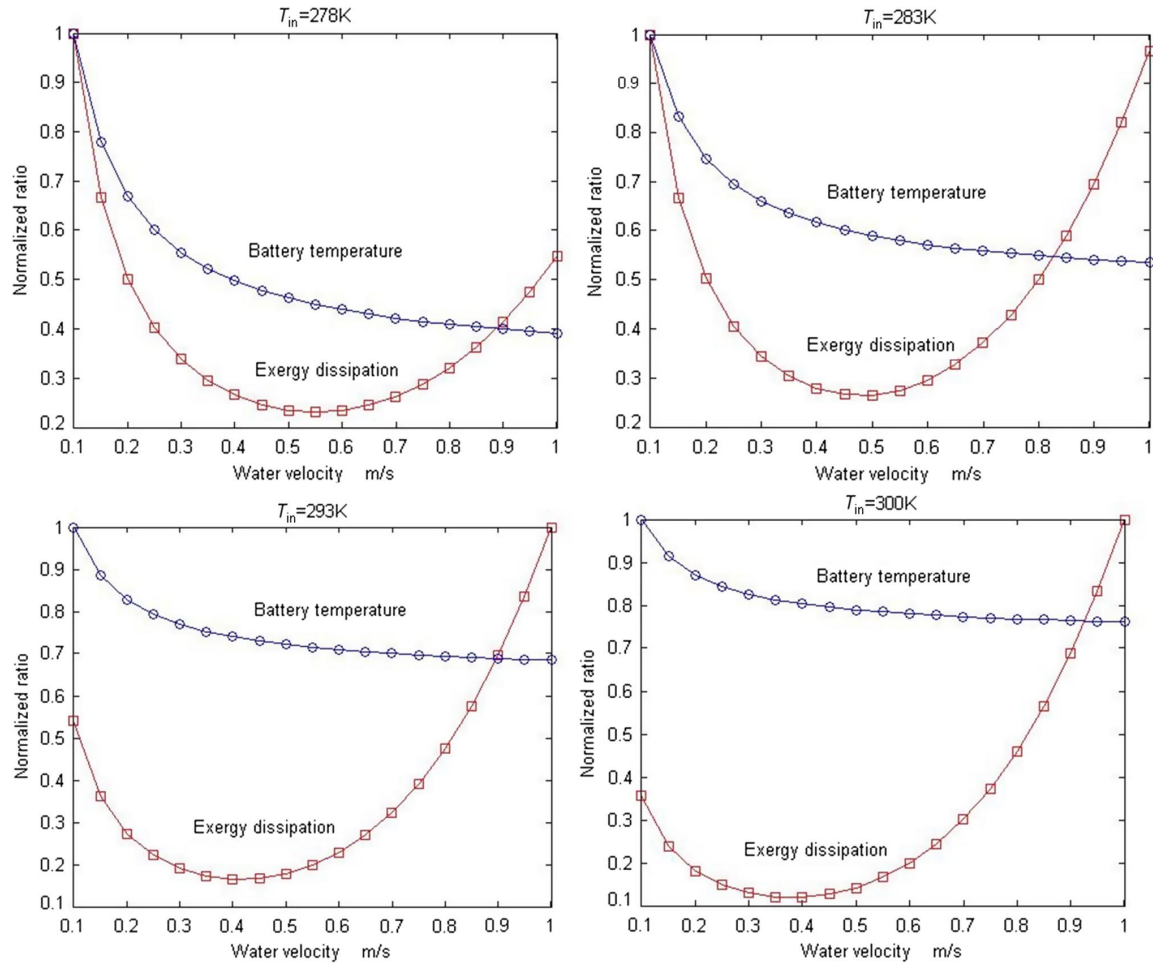


Fig. 3 Normalized exergy performance compared with cooling performance.

exergy loss and battery surface temperature vary with inlet water temperature (zero-exergy state temperature). This indicates a strong possibility to get an optimal cooling design for each given condition, through the optimization based on the least exergy dissipation analysis.

Figure 4 shows the calculation of the performance of the battery package and the pump, with the optimum velocity range (0.35–0.55 m/s) suggested by the least exergy dissipation analysis, which is shown in the figure as the red region. For each optimum water velocity, the corresponding battery temperature ranges from 280 to 305 K, which is only 0.8–2.5 K higher than the lowest temperature in each cooling condition (T_{in}). This indicates a quite acceptable thermal performance of the battery package.

Similarly, for each exergy optimum velocity, the pump efficiency correspondingly ranges from 0.72 to 0.88 (maximum of 0.92), with the normalized power that ranges from 0.45 to 0.63 (maximum of 0.90); both indicate a satisfactory power performance of the pump.

The preceding analysis on a single-panel-package case proves the least exergy dissipation principle for optimization and optimal design of battery cooling infrastructure. For a large-scale network containing multicooling panels and battery packages, it has been proved that [11], with the same boundary conditions, both the optimal thermal performance and optimum energy performance occur with the least exergy dissipation state of the whole network. Therefore, the basic

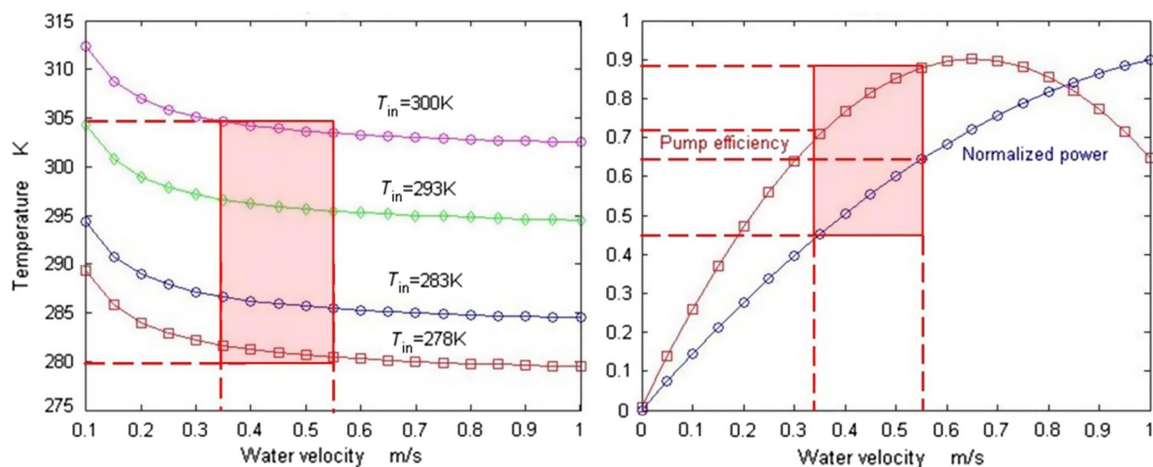


Fig. 4 Performance of battery and pump at the optimum velocity suggested by the exergy analysis.

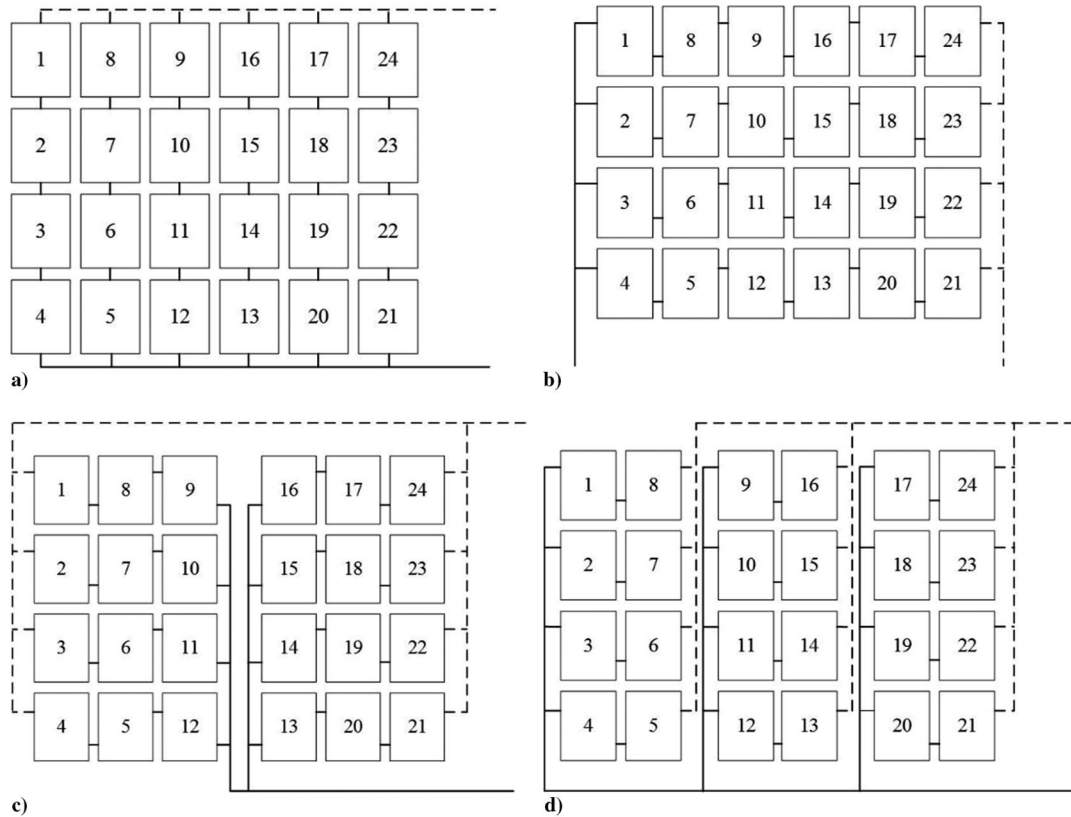


Fig. 5 Four typical water-cooled configurations for the lithium battery package.

theoretical tool for the optimal cooling design of multibattery packages is the exergy analysis model.

III. Design of Water Cooling Infrastructure

Four typical structures of water-cooled panels were designed and are illustrated in Figs. 5a–5d, in which the bold solid line represents the main pipe for the water inlet, whereas the dashed line represents the main pipe for the water outlet. All 24 cooling panels were numbered in sequence.

For the state of the art, the cooling configurations (Figs. 5a and 5b) are commonly used in a vehicle BTM system. The third and fourth layouts (Figs. 5c and 5d) are designed to improve the temperature uniformity and cooling efficiency around the middle-positioned

Table 1 Information of lithium-ion power battery packages

Items	Parameters
Type of lithium-ion power battery package	Lithium-ion cylindrical battery of 18650
Product compliant	Restriction of Hazardous Substances
Model of battery packages	INR18650 7S16P (25.2 V; 51.2 A)
Battery cell	INR18650 (3200 mAh DLG)
Assembly style	7S16P + PCM + socket
Assembly drawing	See Fig. 6

Table 2 Testing conditions of water cooling

Items	Parameters
Number of battery packages and panels	24 (6 × 4; see Fig. 7)
Inlet water temperature, K	283, 293, and 300
Battery discharge temperature, K	273, 300, and 313
Battery discharge ratio	1C and 3C
Water velocity, m/s	0.1–1.0
Package configuration	See Fig. 5

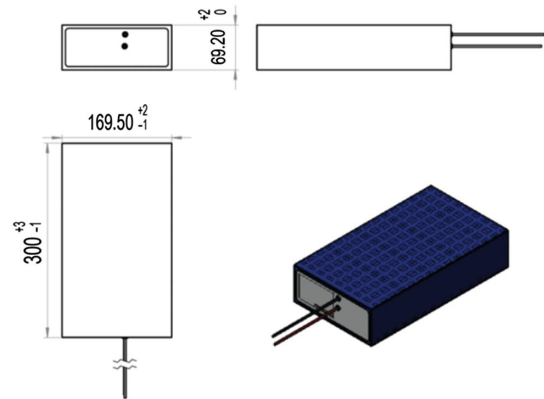


Fig. 6 Assembly drawing of a package unit of 18650-type lithium-ion battery.

battery packages (numbered 10, 11, 14, and 15), which have been measured and observed as the most likely overheated regions [12].

IV. Case Study

For each cooling configuration in Fig. 5, the corresponding optimal operating mode and the optimum performance were analyzed, tested, and compared using the least exergy dissipation model.

A. Testing Condition

To perform a fair comparison, a uniform reference temperature of zero-exergy state was set to be the lowest temperature of the entire heat transfer network, which was the inlet temperature of cooling water. To demonstrate the least exergy dissipation model, three typical temperature conditions ($T_{in} = 283, 293,$ and 300 K) combined with several commonly used battery discharge conditions have been measured and compared.

The testing condition in detail is listed in Tables 1 and 2, and shown in Fig. 6.

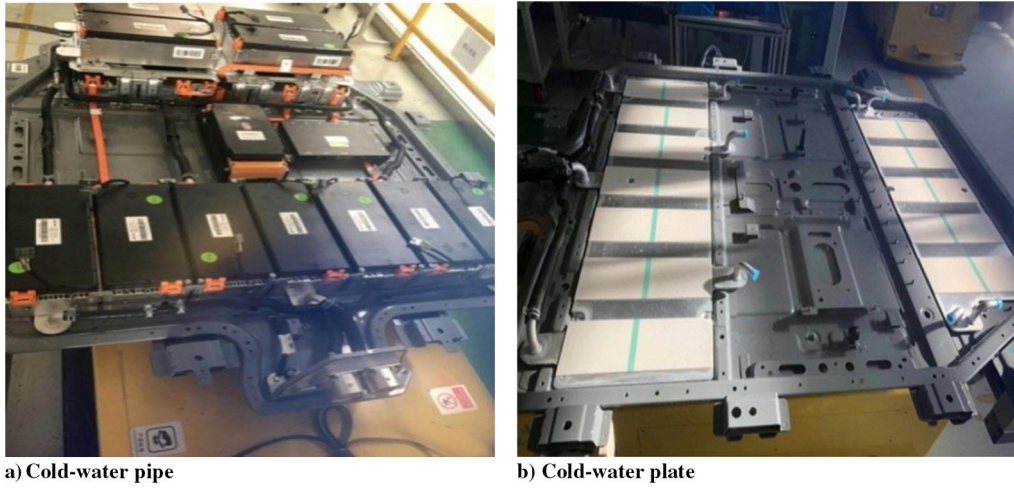


Fig. 7 Assembled lithium-ion power battery packages and water-cooled panels.

Figures 7 and 8 show the photographs of 24 battery packages and 24 cooling panels assembled in an integrated testing platform. The equipment named e-Storage System in Figs. 8a and 8b was used to test the current, voltage, and power of the battery under different operating conditions, such as different discharge rates and different ambient temperatures. The device from TOPRIE, shown in Figs. 8c and 8d, was used to measure and monitor the battery packages.

B. Result Analysis

Figure 9 shows the fitted discharge curve of a single 18650-type lithium-ion battery under 1C (3 A for 3600 s at 300 K) and 3C (9 A for 1200 s at 300 K) conditions, based on measured voltage data in each testing condition.

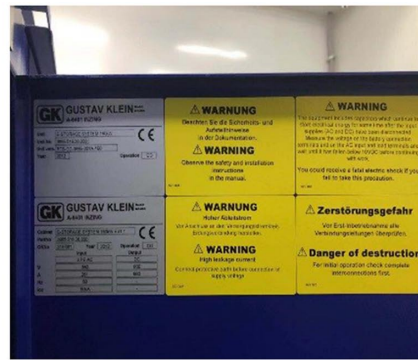
Using the fitted curve, cases in Fig. 3 have been recalculated, with varied discharged heat (not a fixed value Q) and varied discharged rate (1C and 3C). The result of the normalized exergy dissipation is illustrated in Fig. 10.

Compared with the exergy loss curve in Fig. 3, Fig. 10 shows a similar trend of exergy dissipation, optimum velocity occurs at 0.3–0.5 m/s at which least exergy is dissipated. This proves the feasibility of using a least exergy dissipation model to analyze and optimize the actual discharge characteristics of lithium-ion battery packages.

Based on the optimum water velocity suggested by the least exergy dissipation model, under 1C and 3C discharge conditions, Figs. 11 and 12 give the theoretically optimal temperature distribution of the 24 battery packages for each configuration in Fig. 4 (solid lines), and compare them with the actual measured values (marked by circles and squares). During the test, two temperature sensors were placed both on the positive and negative electrodes of each single battery, and so there were 192 ($24 \times 4 \times 2$) sensors for measuring the temperature of the battery packages in the system. The circles and squares in the figure represent the maximum and minimum temperature values returned by 192 temperature sensors at the same moment. The inlet temperature of cooling water remained constant for each configuration.



a) E-storage device



b) E-storage device



c) Device from TOPRIE



d) Display screen

Fig. 8 Photographs of integrated testing platform for the lithium-ion battery packages.

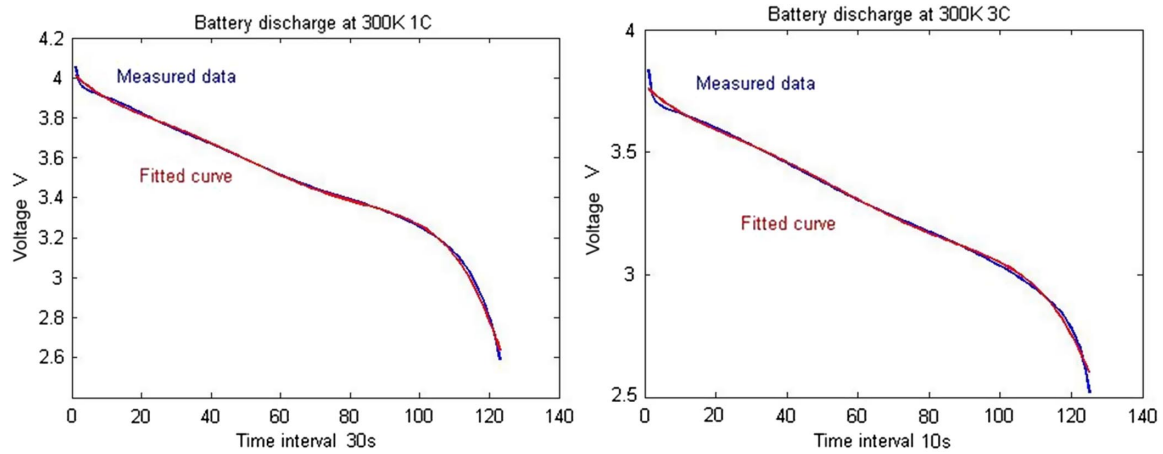


Fig. 9 Fitted battery discharge curve based on measured voltage data.

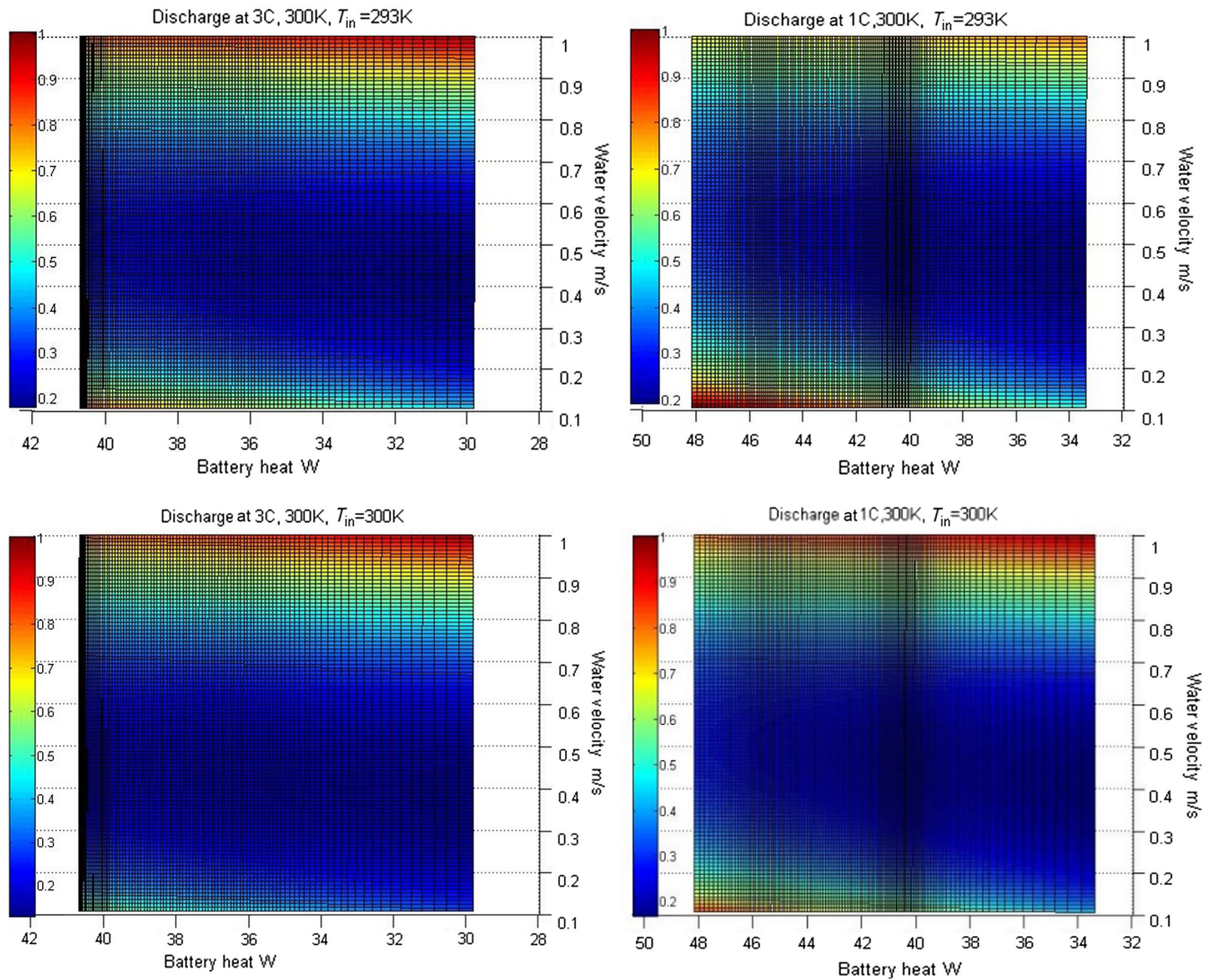


Fig. 10 Normalized exergy dissipation at different battery discharge rates and water flow rates.

Figures 11 (3C; $T_{in} = 285$ K) and 12 (1C; $T_{in} = 290$ K) show a good agreement of battery temperature between the optimized values given by the exergy analysis and the measured values for each configuration suggested in Fig. 5, with the maximum error, which is the maximum difference between the theoretically predicted value and the experimental value, of 0.3 K. The least exergy dissipation method for battery cooling optimization has been verified.

The thermodynamic parameters of the four structures were calculated and are listed in Tables 3 and 4.

It can be seen that, under the same discharging and cooling conditions, the third configuration, illustrated in Fig. 5c, shows the best thermal performance. For discharge at 1C rate, the maximum battery temperature of the third configuration (Fig. 5c) is 1.1 K lower than the other three configurations. The largest temperature gradient,

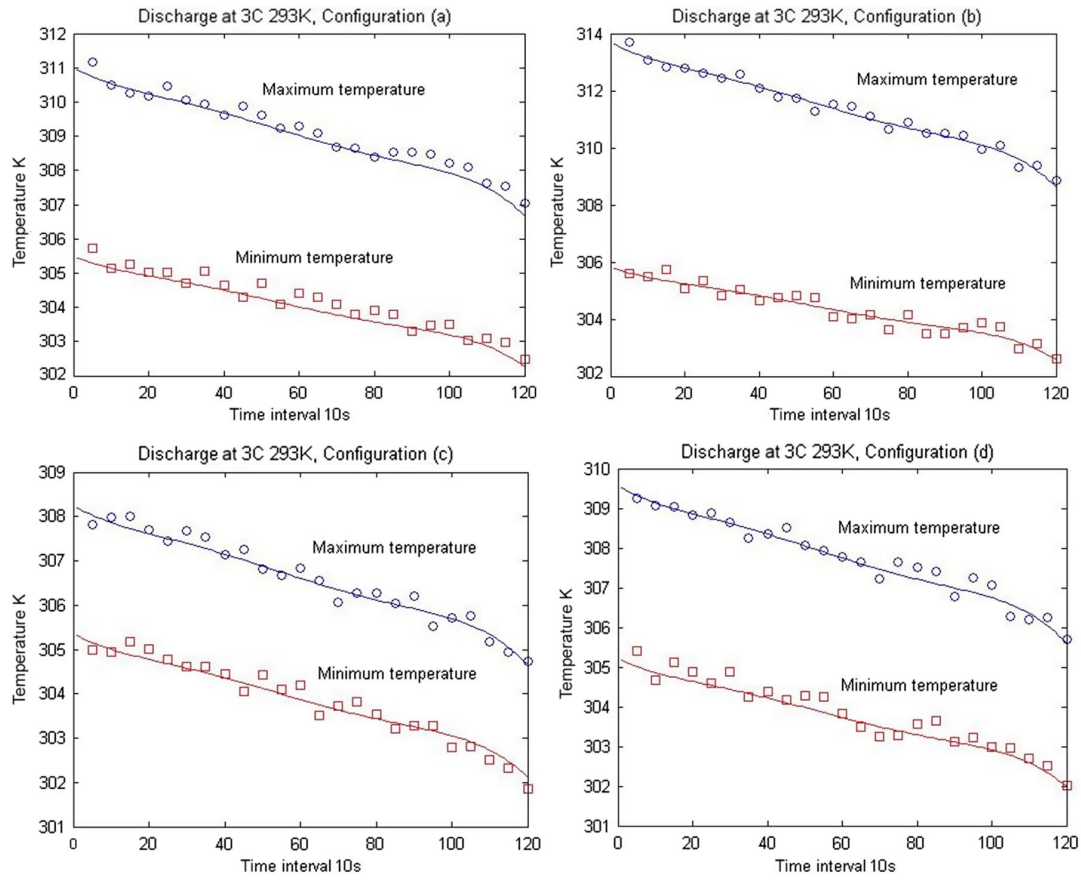


Fig. 11 Optimal battery temperature curve at corresponding optimum water velocity.

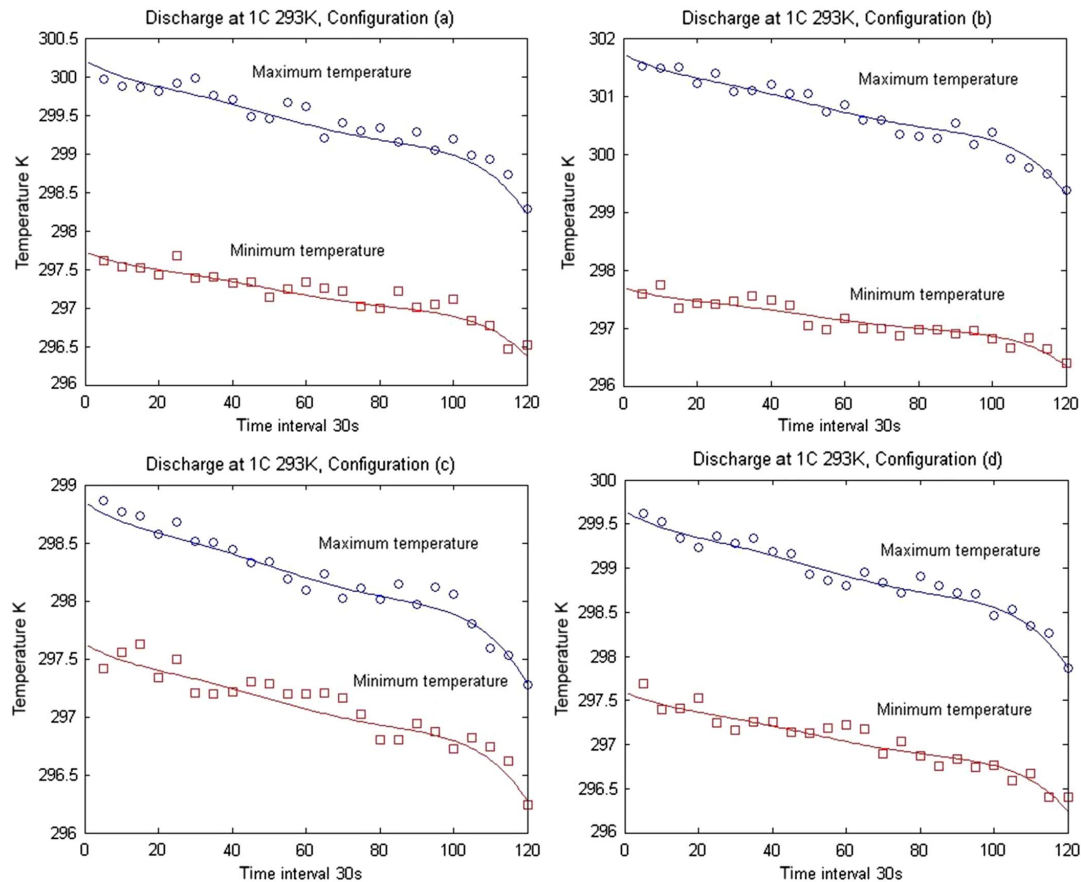


Fig. 12 Optimal battery temperature curve at corresponding optimum water velocity.

Table 3 Thermodynamic parameters of four structures under 3C and 285 K

Structure	Maximum temperature, K	Maximum temperature gradient, K	Exergy loss, W
a	311.2	5.5	50.53
b	313.7	8.1	52.76
c	307.8	3.1	47.22
d	309.3	4.4	48.43

Table 4 Thermodynamic parameters of four structures under 1C and 290 K

Structure	Maximum temperature, K	Maximum temperature gradient, K	Exergy loss, W
a	300	2.6	7.06
b	301.5	4.2	7.52
c	298.9	1.5	6.51
d	299.6	2.2	6.78

which is defined as the largest difference between the battery location with the maximum measured temperature and the location with the minimum measured temperature at the same moment, is 1.5 K, much smaller than the other three 8.1 K. The exergy loss, 47.22 W, is also the smallest. The situation is the same for discharge at 3C rate. The inlet water to the middle eight packages (numbered 9–16 in Fig. 5) not only led to the best temperature uniformity, but it also made the lowest peak temperature among the 24 packages. Such configuration is recommended for future lithium-ion battery cooling design.

V. Conclusions

As stated previously, the water cooling process of lithium-ion battery packages can be analyzed and optimized using the exergy theory (e.g., the least exergy dissipation principle). Some major conclusions are summarized as follows:

- 1) For a given heat and panel area, the optimal water velocity (or flow rate) corresponds to both the minimum exergy loss and the high pump efficiency range during the heat transfer process from the battery package to the cooling water.
- 2) Thermal performance (e.g., exergy dissipation) changes with water inlet temperature and battery discharge condition (e.g., discharging rate and temperature).
- 3) The inlet water to the middle-positioned packages generates better temperature uniformity (e.g., largest temperature gradient less than 3.1 K and lower peak temperature (1.1–5.6 K lower than other cooling configurations)).
- 4) The maximum error between the exergy calculated temperature and the measured values is smaller than ± 0.3 K, under each testing condition.

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