



Development of a Metallic Bipolar Plate using Nano Material Coating for PEM Fuel cell Application

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Development of a Metallic Bipolar Plate using nano material coating for PEM Fuel cell Application

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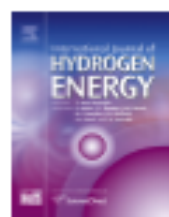
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Ni–P and Ni–Co–P coated aluminum alloy 5251 substrates as metallic bipolar plates for PEM fuel cell applications

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to replace graphite bipolar plates in PEM fuel cells with surface modified aluminum alloy. To improve the surface characteristics of aluminum alloy 5251 (AA5251) substrate, Ni–P and Ni–Co–P coatings were deposited using electroless and electroplating deposition techniques [power supply and chronoamperometry]. Surface morphology and chemical composition of prepared coatings have been investigated using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and energy dispersive X-ray (EDX) techniques. The corrosion behaviour of Ni–P and Ni–Co–P coated AA5251 was studied in (0.5 M H₂SO₄ + 2 ppm H₂O₂) solution by potentiodynamic polarization technique. Lower corrosion current densities and more positive corrosion potentials were gained after coating AA5251 with Ni–P and Ni–Co–P deposits. Much better corrosion resistance was shown by coatings containing cobalt. Potentiostatic tests were carried out at +160 mV (MMSE) in air-saturated solution to simulate cathode environment in PEM fuel cells. The current density of Ni–Co–P (1:1)/AA5251 was stabilized at a value lowered by 4 times relative to that at bare AA5251 substrate. Interfacial contact resistance values between coated substrates and carbon paper were measured. Ni–P and Ni–Co–P coatings prepared by electroless method showed ICR values, twice that at ones prepared by electroplating power supply technique.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, renewable energy has become an increasingly important issue in terms of mitigating global warming and preventing the depletion of fossil fuels. There is a great potential to apply fuel cells for the generation of electricity. As an electrochemical device that converts chemical energy into electric power by means of catalytic electrochemical reaction, the main advantages of fuel cells are relatively simple mechanisms, silent operation, high efficiency and flexible scaling

between power and capacity [1]. Out of various fuel cells currently under development, direct methanol fuel cell (DMFC) is one of the most promising candidates for use as a substitute power source in portable applications, such as cellular phones and laptops [2].

In a typical PEMFC, the key components include a proton exchange membrane, catalyst, gas diffusion layer and bipolar plate. Bipolar plates constitute the backbone of a hydrogen fuel cell power stack. They conduct current between cells, facilitate water and thermal management,

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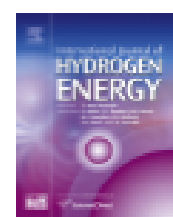
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Study of different aluminum alloy substrates coated with Ni–Co–P as metallic bipolar plates for PEM fuel cell applications

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ABSTRACT

Pure Al and some of its alloys [Al alloy 6061 (AA6061), Al alloy 3004 (AA3004) and Al alloy 1050 (AA1050)] were coated with Ni–Co–P using electroplating power supply technique. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and energy dispersive X-ray (EDX) techniques were applied to study the surface morphology and chemical composition of coated aluminum substrates. Their performance against corrosion was examined using potentiodynamic polarization technique in (0.5 M H₂SO₄ + 2 ppm HF) solution. Corrosion potential values were shifted in the positive direction at all aluminum substrates after their coating with Ni–Co–P. Corrosion current density values at coated pure Al and AA1050 were decreased by ~18.6 times, compared to those at bare substrates. The stability of coated aluminum alloys was investigated during long-time operation under cathodic environment in PEMFCs using potentiostatic polarization test at +180 mV (RMS) in air-saturated solution. Ni–Co–P/AA3004 substrate showed a high corrosion rate after short time, while coated AA6061 one slowly corroded. Interfacial contact resistance (ICR) values between metallic bipolar plates and gas diffusion layer were measured. Coating AA1050 with Ni–Co–P reduces its ICR value by 13 times. Accordingly, electroplated Ni–Co–P/AA1050 substrate can be chosen as an efficient bipolar plate material in PEMFCs.

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1. Introduction

Increased demand to oil fuel for transportation applications with its continuous decreased supply and increased environment pollution had paid attention to develop fuel cells [1–4]. In relation to the internal combustion engines, polymer electrolyte membrane fuel cells (PEMFCs) offered high power density, low emissions and can operate at low temperatures [5–8]. However, the high cost of their constituents, mainly

bipolar plates, impedes the commercial application of PEMFCs. Bipolar plates represent the backbone of the cell. They transfer the electric current from the electrodes to the load circuit and distribute reactant and product gas flow streams.

Bipolar plates can be mainly made of two types of materials; namely graphite and metals. Graphite is the most used one as a result of its low bulk resistance, excellent chemical stability and corrosion resistance [9]. However, graphite is

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TO

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	ix
Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Theoretical Aspects & Literature Review.....	6
2.1. Theoretical Aspects	6
2.1.1. Historical Background	6
2.1.2. Fuel Cells as Energy Converter	7
2.1.3. Classification of Fuel Cell Systems	8
2.1.3.1. Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel Cell (PEMFC)	9
2.1.3.2. Phosphoric Acid Fuel Cell (PAFC)	10
2.1.3.3. Direct Methanol Fuel Cell (DMFC)	12
2.1.3.4. Alkaline Fuel Cell (AFC)	12
2.1.3.5. Molten Carbonate Fuel Cells (MCFC)	14
2.1.3.6. Solid Oxide Fuel Cells (SOFC)	15
2.1.4. Fuel cells advantages and disadvantages	18
2.1.5. Fuel Cells Applications.....	20
2.1.5.1. Portable.....	20
2.1.5.2. Stationary.....	21
2.1.5.3. Transportation	22
2.2. Literature Survey.....	23
2.2.1. Non Metals (Graphite)	24
2.2.2. Composites.....	25
2.2.3. Metals.....	27
2.2.3.1. Stainless Steel.....	27
2.2.3.2. Aluminum.....	38
2.2.4. Others	43
3. Experimental Work	48
3.1. Electrode preparation	48
3.2. Zincating Process	48
3.3. Coating Process	48
3.4. Physical Characterization of the Prepared Coatings	51
3.5. Corrosion Measurements.....	51
3.5.1. Corrosion Behavior of Uncoated and Coated Aluminum Substrates	51
3.5.2. Potentiostatic Polarization Tests of Uncoated and Coated Aluminum Substrates in Simulated Cathode Condition	51
3.6. Interfacial Contact Resistance Measurements.....	52
4. Results and Discussion	54
4.1. Uncoated aluminum substrates:	55
4.1.1. SEM analysis of uncoated aluminum substrates.....	55

4.1.2. Corrosion Behaviour of Uncoated Aluminum Substrates	57
4.1.3. Potentiostatic Polarization Tests of Uncoated Aluminum Substrates in Simulated Cathode Condition	62
4.1.4. Interfacial Contact Resistance Measurements of Uncoated Aluminum Substrates	65
4.2. Coated Aluminum Substrates.....	66
4.2.1. Ni-P Coating	66
4.2.1.1. SEM and EDX Analyses of Electroless Ni-P Coated Aluminum Substrates	67
4.2.1.2. Corrosion Behavior of Ni-P Coated Aluminum Substrates	72
4.2.1.2.1. Activation Energy Calculations	78
4.2.1.3. Potentiostatic Polarization Tests of Electroless Ni-P Coated Aluminum Substrates in Simulated Cathode Condition	79
4.2.1.4. Interfacial Contact Resistance of Ni-P Coated Aluminum Substrates	83
4.2.2. Ni-Co-P	85
4.2.2.1. SEM and EDX Analyses of Electroplating Power Supply Ni-Co- P (Ni: Co 1:1) Coated Aluminum Substrates.....	85
4.2.2.2. Corrosion Behaviour of Ni-Co-P (Ni: Co 1:1) Coated Aluminum Substrates	91
4.2.2.3. Activation Energy Calculations.....	98
4.2.2.4. Potentiostatic Polarization Tests of Electroplating Power Supply Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) Coated Aluminum Substrates in Simulated Cathode Condition	100
4.2.2.5. Interfacial Contact Resistance Measurements of Electroplating Power Supply Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) Coated Aluminum Substrates.....	104
4.2.2.6. Chronoamperometry of Ni-P and Ni-Co-P/AA5251:	107
4.2.2.7. Ni-Co-P (Ni: Co 1:1)/AA5251with different formation techniques:	114
4.2.3. Ni-Mo-P	118
4.2.3.1. SEM and EDX analyses of electroplating chronoamperometry Ni- Mo-P coated aluminum substrates	118
4.2.3.2. Corrosion Behaviour of Ni-Mo-P Coated Aluminum Substrates.....	123
4.2.3.3. Potentiostatic Polarization Tests of Electroplating Chronoamperometry Ni-Mo-P Coated Aluminum Substrates in Simulated Cathode Condition	131
4.2.3.4. Interfacial Contact Resistance Measurements of Ni-Mo-P Coated Aluminum Substrates.....	135
4.2.3.5. Power Supply Ni-P and Ni-Mo-P/AA6061:.....	136
4.2.3.6. Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33)/AA6061with Different Formation Techniques	142
4.2.4. Co-Mo-P	146
4.2.4.1 Corrosion Behaviour of Co-Mo-P Coated Aluminum Substrates	146

5. Summary and Conclusion	151
6. Recommendation.....	153
7. References	154

List of Figures

Figure 1: Types of fuel cells.....	9
Figure 2: Schematic view of a PEM fuel cell structure.	10
Figure 3: Schematic view of a PAFC structure.	11
Figure 4: Schematic view of a DMFC structure.	12
Figure 5: Schematic view of a AFC structure.....	13
Figure 6: Schematic view of a MCFC structure.	14
Figure 7: Schematic view of a SOFC structure.	16
Figure 8: Schematic view of a PEM fuel cell and PEMFC stack.....	17
Figure 9: Different designs of bipolar plates.....	18
Figure 10: Portable fuel cell applications.....	21
Figure 11: Stationary fuel cell applications.....	22
Figure 12: Transportation fuel cell applications.	23
Figure 13: Scheme of the different steps of aluminum substrates modification with different coatings.	50
Figure 14: Voltalab6 Potentiostat was operated with connection to PC for data processing; a conventional three-electrodes cell was used.....	52
Figure 15: Interfacial contact resistance (ICR) measurement setup (a), test fixture schematic with one GDL (b) and test fixture schematic with combined sample and GDLs(c).....	53
Figure 16: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA 3004 (d) AA5251 and (d) AA6061substrates. Figures [(a'), (b'), (c'), (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.	57
Figure 17: Potentiodynamic polarization curves of uncoated pure Al and its alloys in (0.5 M H ₂ SO ₄ + 2 ppm HF) solution at 25°C.....	61
Figure 18: Potentiodynamic polarization curves of uncoated pure Al and its alloys 70°C.	61
Figure 19: Potentiostatic polarization curves of pure Al and its alloys at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. The inset figure is a magnification of curves at aluminum substrates except for pure Al.	62
Figure 20: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061 substrates after potentiostatic polarization test under cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. Figures (a') - (e') correspond to (a) and (e) ones, respectively under higher magnification.....	64
Figure 21: Variation of interfacial contact resistance of uncoated different Al substrates with compaction force.....	66
Figure 22: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061substrates coated with electroless Ni-P. Figures [(a'), (b'), (c'), (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.....	69
Figure 23: Cross-sectional scanning electron micrographs of electroless Ni-P on (1) AA1050 and (2) AA 6061 substrates.....	69

Figure 24: EDX spectra of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061 substrates coated with electroless Ni-P.....	71
Figure 25: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-P coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.	75
Figure 26: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-P coated aluminum substrates with Electroless coating technique at 70°C.....	78
Figure 27: Arrhenius plots for AA6061 and AA1050, coated with electroless Ni-P at the temperature range from 30°to 80°C.....	79
Figure 28: Potentiostatic polarization curves of pure Al and its alloys, coated with electroless Ni-P, at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h.....	80
Figure 29: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (d) AA6061 substrates, coated with electroless Ni-P, after potentiostatic polarization test under cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. Figures [(a'), (b'), (c') (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.....	82
Figure 30: (a) Variation of interfacial contact resistance of different coated Al substrates with electroless Ni-P with compaction force. (b) Variation of interfacial contact resistance of different coated Al substrates with electroplating (power supply) Ni-P with compaction force. (c) The corresponding interfacial contact resistance values of uncoated and coated substrates at compaction force of 140 N cm ⁻²	85
Figure 31: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061substrates coated with electroplating power supply Ni-Co-P with (Ni:Co 1:1). Figures [(a'), (b'), (c'), (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.	88
Figure 32: EDX spectra of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061 substrates coated with electroplating power supply Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1).....	90
Figure 33: Ptentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Co-P (Ni: Co 1:0.2) coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.....	94
Figure 34: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.....	95
Figure 35: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) coated aluminum substrates with electroplating power supply coating technique at 70°C.....	98
Figure 36: Arrhenius relation for Ni-Co-P Coated (a) AA1050 and (b) AA5251 with (Ni-Co 1:1) using different coating techniques at the temperature range from 30°to 80°C.	99
Figure 37: Potentiostatic polarization curves of pure Al and its alloys, coated with electroplating Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1), at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. The	

inset figure is a magnification of curves of AA1050 and pure Al substrates.....	101
Figure 38: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (d) AA6061 substrates, coated with electroplating power supply Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co1:1), after potentiostatic polarization test under cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. Figures [(a'), (b'), (c') (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.	104
Figure 39: (a) Variation of interfacial contact resistance of different coated Al substrates with electroplating power supply Ni-Co-P with compaction force. (b) The corresponding interfacial contact resistance values of uncoated and coated substrates at compaction force of 140 N cm ⁻²	106
Figure 40: Scanning electron micrographs of AA5251 substrates coated with electroplating chronoamperometry (a) Ni-P, (b)Ni-Co-P (Ni: Co 1:0.2) and (c) Ni-Co-P (Ni: Co 1:1).....	107
Figure 41: Cross-sectional scanning electron micrographs of (a) Ni-P and (b) Ni-Co-P (1:1) coatings formed on AA5251 substrate by electroplating chronoamperometry technique.....	108
Figure 42: EDX spectra of AA5251substrates coated with electroplating chronoamperometry (a) Ni-P, (b)Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:0.2) and (c) Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1).	110
Figure 43: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for AA5251 after coating with Ni-P and Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:0.2 & 1:1) using electroplating chronoamperometry at 25°.	111
Figure 44: Potentiostatic polarization curves of uncoated and coated AA5251 with Ni-P and Ni-Co-P (1:1) deposits at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. The coatings were formed by electroplating chronoamperometry technique....	113
Figure 45: Scanning electron micrographs of uncoated (a) and coated AA5251 with Ni-P (b) and Ni-Co-P (1:1) (c), formed by electroplating chronoamperometry technique. [(a'),(b') and (c')] are those after potentiostatic polarization test for cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h.	114
Figure 46: Scanning electron micrographs of AA5251 substrates coated with Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) (a) electroless, electroplating (b)power supply and (c) chronoamperometry.....	115
Figure 47: EDX spectra of AA5251substrates coated with Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) (a) electroless, electroplating (b) power supply and (c) chronoamperometry.....	116
Figure 48: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) coated AA5251 with different coating techniques.....	118
Figure 49: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061substrates coated with electroplating chronoamperometry Ni–Mo–P with (Ni:Mo 1:0.33). Figures [(a'), (b'), (c'), (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.	121

Figure 50: EDX spectra of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (e) AA6061 substrates coated with electroplating chronoamperometry Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33).	122
Figure 51: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.	126
Figure 52: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Mo-P (Ni: Mo 1:0.5) coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.	127
Figure 53: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) coated aluminum substrates with electroplating chronoamperometry coating technique at 70°C.	130
Figure 54: Potentiostatic polarization curves of pure Al and its alloys, coated with electroplating chronoamperometry Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33), at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h	132
Figure 55: Scanning electron micrographs of (a) pure Al (b) AA1050 (c) AA3004 (d) AA5251 and (d) AA6061 substrates, coated with electroplating chronoamperometry Ni-Mo-P, after potentiostatic polarization test under cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. Figures [(a'), (b'), (c') (d') and (e')] are under higher magnification.	134
Figure 56: Variation of interfacial contact resistance of uncoated and coated (a) AA5251 (b) AA6061 with electroplating power supply Ni-P and Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) with compaction force.	135
Figure 57: Scanning electron micrographs of AA6061 substrates coated with electroplating power supply (a) Ni-P, (b) Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) and (c) Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.5).	136
Figure 58: EDX spectra of AA6061 substrates coated with electroplating power supply (a) Ni-P, (b) Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) and (c) Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.5).	138
Figure 59: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for AA6061 after coating with Ni-P and Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33 & 1:0.5) using electroplating power supply at 25°.	139
Figure 60: Potentiostatic polarization curves of uncoated and coated AA6061 with Ni-P and Ni-Mo-P (1:0.33) deposits at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h. The coatings were formed by electroplating power supply technique.	140
Figure 61: Scanning electron micrographs of uncoated (a) and coated AA6061 with Ni-P (b) and Ni-Mo-P (1:0.33) (c), formed by electroplating power supply technique. [(a'),(b') and (c')] are those after potentiostatic polarization test for cathode condition at +160 mV (MMS) for 5 h.	141
Figure 62: Scanning electron micrographs of AA6061 substrates coated with Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) (a) electroless, electroplating (b) power supply and (c) chronoamperometry.	142

Figure 63: EDX spectra of AA6061 substrates coated with Ni–Mo–P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) (a) electroless, electroplating (b) power supply and (c) chronoamperometry.....	144
Figure 64: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Ni-Mo-P (Ni:Mo 1:0.33) coated AA6061 with different coating techniques.....	145
Figure 65: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for Co:Mo:P (1: 0.33: 0.67) coated aluminum substrates with different deposition techniques (a) Electroless (b) Power Supply (c) Chronoamperometry.....	148
Figure 66: Potentiodynamic Polarization Curves for uncoated and Co:Mo:P (1: 0.33: 0.67) coated AA 1050 with different coating techniques at 70°C....	150

List of Tables

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of Poco graphite, graphite composite and metallic bipolar plates.	23
Table 2 : Composition of aluminum substrate and its alloys.	48
Table 3: Composition of plating baths of Ni-P, Ni-Co-P, Ni-Mo-P and Co-Mo-P coatings on different aluminum substrates.	49
Table 4: Corrosion parameters of pure Al and its alloys [AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061] at 25°C	60
Table 5: The related current density of aluminum substrates at the potential of anode condition [-540 mV (MMS)] and that of cathode condition [+160 mV (MMS)] as derived from potentiodynamic polarization curves.....	60
Table 6: Corrosion parameters of pure Al and its alloys [AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061] at 70°C.	60
Table 7: Chemical composition of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 substrates coated with electroless Ni-P (according to EDX analysis).	71
Table 8: Corrosion parameters of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 after coating with Ni-P at 25°C (a) electroless (b) power supply (c) chronoamperometry. The related current density values of electroless Ni-P coating on different aluminum substrates at the potential of anode condition [-540 mV (MMS)] and that of cathode condition [+160 mV (MMS)] as derived from potentiodynamic polarization curves (d).	75
Table 9: Corrosion parameters of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 after electroless coating with Ni-P at 70°C.....	77
Table 10: Corrosion current values in μA for AA1050 and AA6061 coated with electroless Ni-P at the temperature range from 30° to 80°.	79
Table 11: Chemical composition of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 substrates coated with electroplating power supply Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) (according to EDX analysis).	90
Table 12: Corrosion parameters of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 after coating with Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:0.2) at 25°C (a) electroless (b) power supply (c) chronoamperometry.	96
Table 13: Corrosion parameters of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 after coating with Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) at 25°C (a) electroless (b) power supply (c) chronoamperometry. The related current density values of electroplating Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co 1:1) coating on different aluminum substrates at the potential of anode condition [-540 mV (MMS)] and that of cathode condition [+160 mV (MMS)] as derived from potentiodynamic polarization curves (d).	96
Table 14: Corrosion parameters of pure Al, AA1050, AA3004, AA5251 and AA6061 after electroplating power supply coating with Ni-Co-P (Ni:Co1:1) at 70°C.	98