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Simple and Highly Efficient Droplet Merging Method Using a Microfluidic Device

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Key Words : Microfluidic Device(), Droplet Merging(), Straight Channel (), Diverging Channel(), Suddenly Expanded Channel()

Abstract

Simple and highly efficient droplet merging method is proposed, which enables two nanoliter or picoliter droplets to merge regularly in a straight microchannel. Using a cross channel with inflows of one oil phase through the main channel and two water phases through the side channels, two droplets of different sizes can be generated alternately in accordance with flow rate difference of the water phases. It is shown that for a fixed oil phase flow rate, the flow rate of one water phase required for alternating droplet generation increases linearly with the flow rate of another water phase. By this method, the droplets are merged with 100 % efficiency without any additional driving forces.

<p>Ca : Capillary number</p> <p>H : (μm)</p> <p>W : (μm)</p> <p>Q_o : oil phase (μl/h)</p> <p>Q_{w1} : water phase I (μl/h)</p> <p>Q_{w2} : water phase II (μl/h)</p>	<p>(advection) 가</p> <p>가⁽¹⁾</p> <p>가 (encapsulation) 가</p> <p>가</p> <p>가⁽²⁾ PEG-DA(Poly(ethylene glycol) diacrylate)</p>
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1. 가

(nanoliter) (picoliter) 가 (high-throughput screening)

가 (protein crystallization) (particle synthesis) 가

가 가⁽²⁾

†

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가 (hydrogel-bead)

oil phase 가 50
 μm 36, 42, 118 μm
 3 가
 oil phase
 PEG-DA(Poly(ethylene glycol) diacrylate M_n 258,
 Sigma-Aldrich) , water phase
 (Deionized water)
 Du Nouy ring method(Autotensiometer, Fisher)
 25 n-
 hexane(17.89 mN/m) n-hexadecane(27.6 mN/m)
 72.1 mN/m, PEG-DA 41.7
 mN/m
 (Syringe pump,
 Model 100, 210 Series, kdScientific) (Syringe,
 100F-LL-GT, SGE)
 (= 254 μm , =
 1587 μm)

Cooled CCD camera (SensiCam^{OE},
 Cooke)
 가

가
 water phase II 100 nm
 (Polystyrene Red Fluorescent Microsphere, Duke
 Scientific) 0.3 %

3.
 3.1
 T
 T
 Garstecki ⁽¹³⁾
 water phase 가
 (main channel) (blocking)
 가 (squeezeing) (break-up)
 (Fig. 2(a)).
 가
 (Fig. 2(b)).

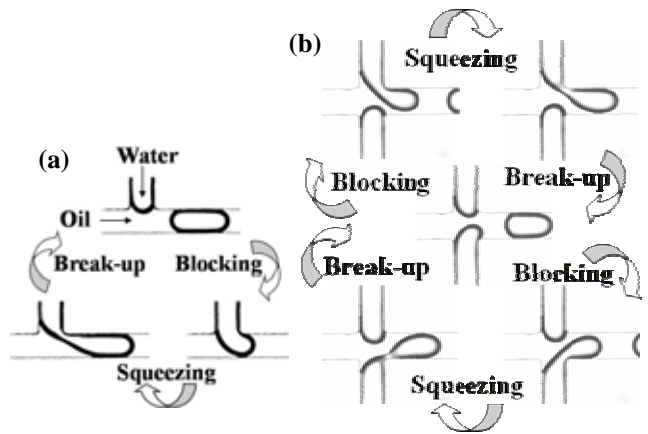


Fig. 2 A schematic of droplet generation mechanism: (a) in T-shaped microfluidic channel, (b) in cross microfluidic channel

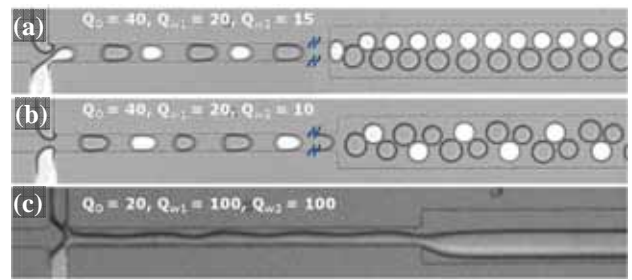


Fig. 3 Droplet generation patterns: (a) regularly alternating uniform droplet generation mode, (b) irregularly alternating non-uniform droplet generation mode, (c) coalescence mode

water phase
 oil phase
 가
 water phase II 100 nm
 Fig. 3
 (s) ~
 가
 Fig.
 3(a)
 가
 Fig.
 3(a)
 가
 Fig. 3(b)
 가 , oil phase

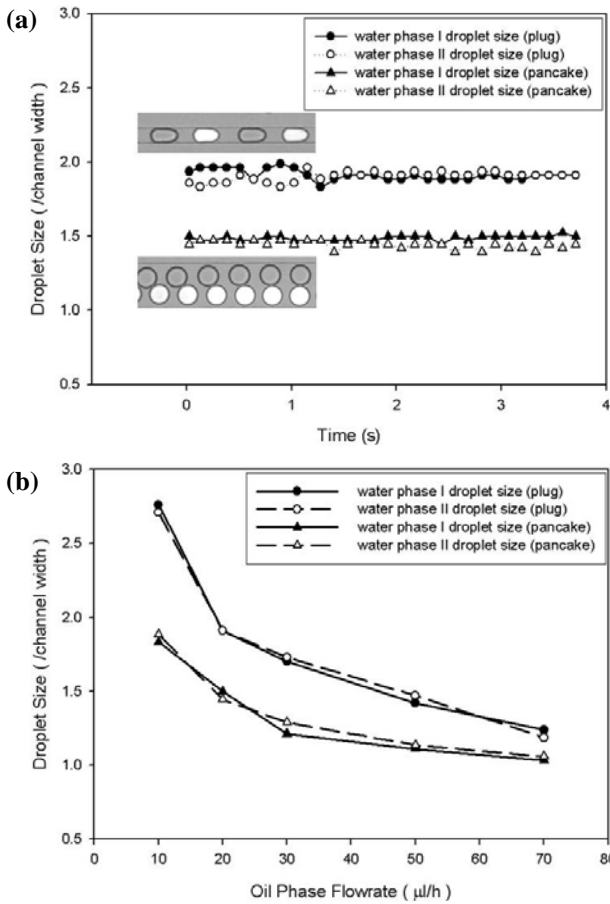


Fig. 4 Droplet size variation: (a) Droplet size variation with time, (b) The droplet size decreases as the oil phase flow rate increases

water phase
 water phase I, II 가
 Fig. 3(a)

Fig. 4(a)
 (plug)
 (pancake)

가 5 %
 water phase oil phase
 가

Fig. 4(b) Oil phase 가
 water phase I, II

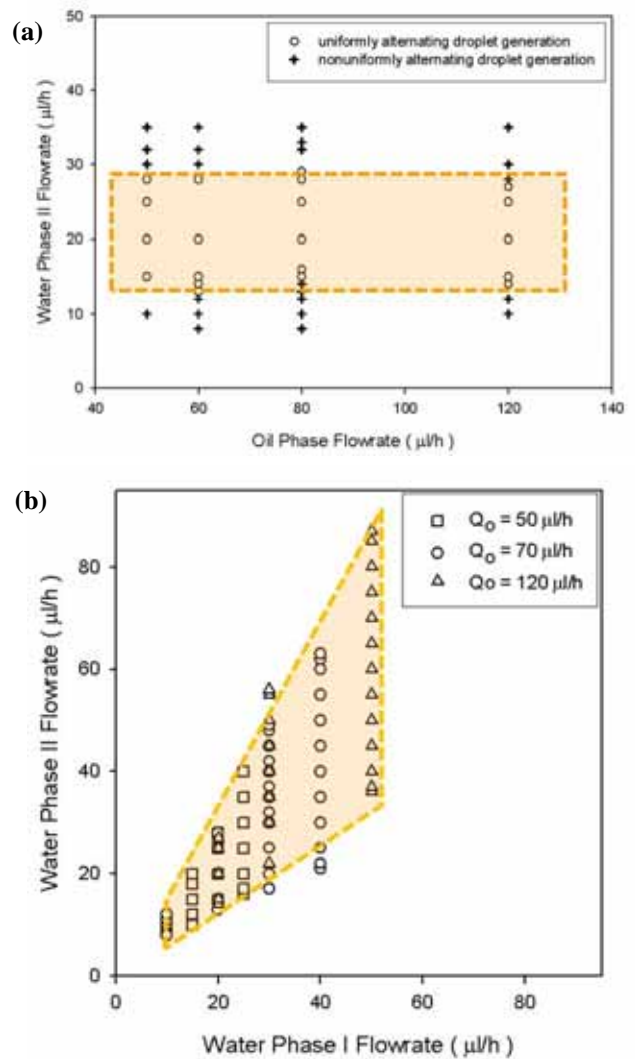


Fig. 5 The flow rate region for alternating generation of droplets of different sizes (channel height is $36 \mu\text{m}$): (a) The flow rate of water phase I is constant ($10 \mu\text{l/h}$, $20 \mu\text{l/h}$), and oil phase flow rate changes from $50 \mu\text{l/h}$ to $120 \mu\text{l/h}$ (shaded region indicates regularly alternating uniform droplet generation mode region), (b) The flow rate of oil phase is constant ($70 \mu\text{l/h}$), while those of water phases I, II vary

Fig. 5
 Fig. 5(a) water phase I (20 $\mu\text{l/h}$),
 oil phase water phase II
 Water phase I

10 $\mu\text{l/h}$, 30 $\mu\text{l/h}$
 Fig. 5(b) oil phase
 (70 $\mu\text{l/h}$), water phase I
 가 water phase II 가
 가

Oil phase 50, 120
 $\mu\text{/h}$ 가
 water phase I oil phase
 (1)
 $\alpha Q_{w1} \pm c_1 < Q_{w2} < \beta Q_{w1} \pm c_2$
 $\alpha = 0.658, \beta = 1.620$
 $c_1 = 0.899, c_2 = 0.959$
 (1)

3.2

Hung (11)

가

6(a).

2

(Fig. 6(e)),

(Fig.

가

Ahn (8)

(bubble)

(14-16)

capillary number

(15)

capillary number

()

(16)

4

가

Ahn

(8)

(pan-cake)

(plug)

가

가

Fig. 7

가

가

가

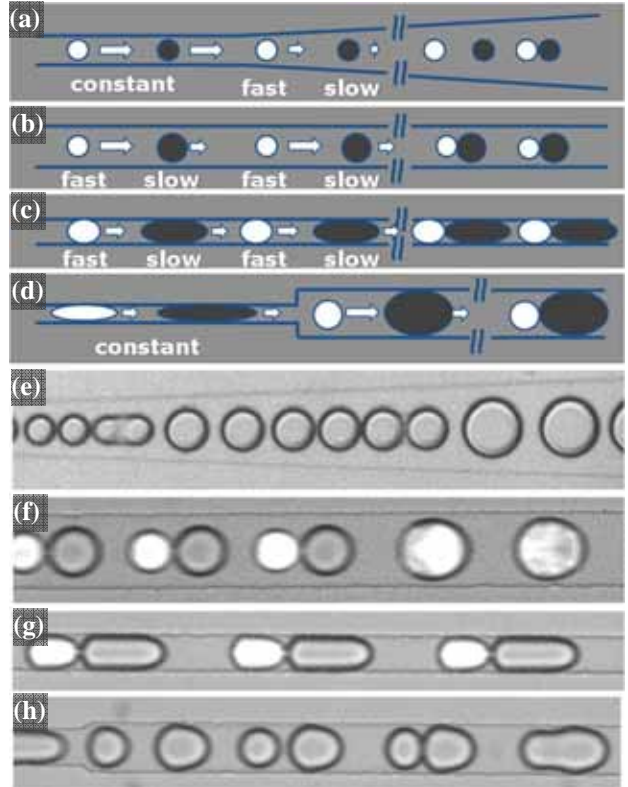


Fig. 6 Merging of droplets in the diverging and the straight channel: (a) Diverging channel, (b) Straight channel (in the case when the droplet size is smaller than the channel width), (c) Straight channel (in the case when the droplet size is larger than the channel width), (d) Suddenly expanded channel, (e) ~ (h) Present experimental results of droplet merging in the four different kinds of channels corresponding respectively to (a) ~ (d)

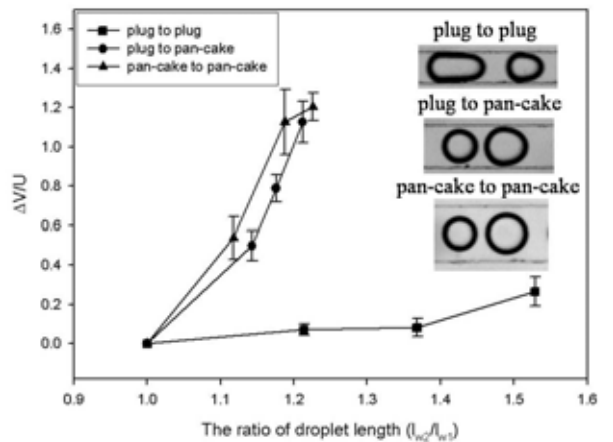


Fig. 7 Droplet velocity difference with respect to the ratio of droplet length. U means averaged velocity of total flow rate divided by cross sectional area

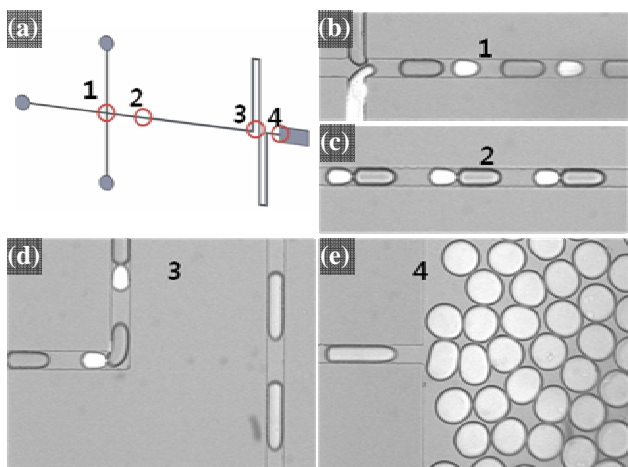


Fig. 8 Droplets are merged in the straight channel due to velocity difference caused by size difference (channel height is $42\ \mu\text{m}$, $Q_o = 30\ \mu\text{l/h}$, $Q_{w1} = 25\ \mu\text{l/h}$, $Q_{w2} = 15\ \mu\text{l/h}$): (a) The schematic diagram of channel device (droplet images at four different locations 1, 2, 3, 4 are shown), (b) Alternating droplet generation in the cross channel (droplets of different sizes are generated), (c) Droplets of different sizes are attached due to velocity difference, (d) Droplet images in the curved channel (curved channel helps droplet merging), (e) Image of merged droplets in the exit region

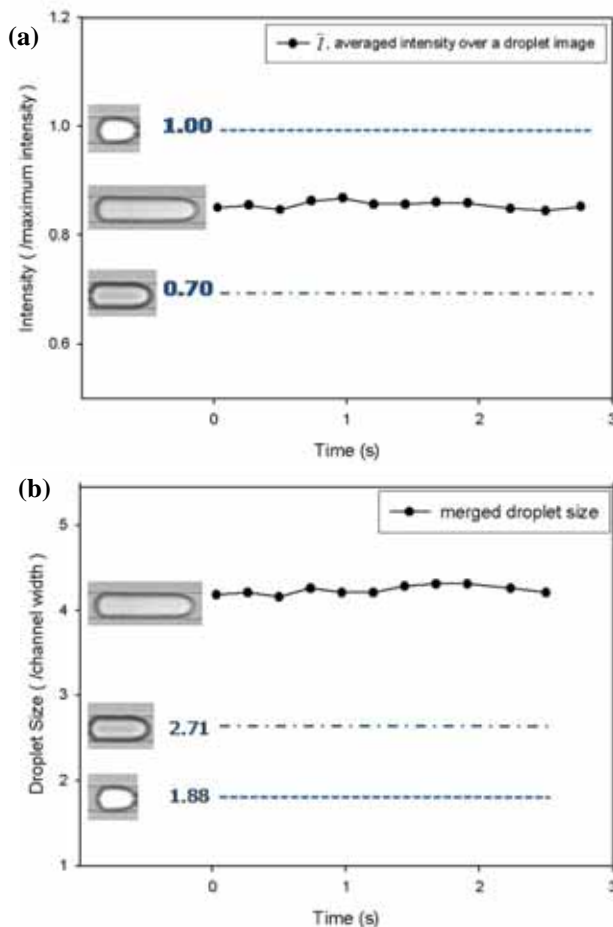


Fig. 9 Droplets are merged with 100 % efficiency (channel height is $42\ \mu\text{m}$) (a) Variation of an averaged intensity in a droplet with time (intensity is nondimensionalized by the intensity of the droplet containing fluorescent particles), (b) Merged droplet size variation with time (droplet size is nondimensionalized by the channel width)

가
 .
 ,
 ,
 가
 .
 Fig. 8(b)
 가
 가
 (Fig. 6(b),
 Fig. 6(c), 6(g)
 가
 가
 가
 (Fig. 6(d) and 6(h)).
 Fig. 8

Fig. 8(b)
 가
 가
 , Fig. 8(d)
 Fig. 8(e)
 (intensity)
 Fig. 9
 가
 가
 , 100 %

Liu (17,18) (mixing index)

가

0.05

$$MI(\text{mixing index}) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left[\frac{I_i - \bar{I}}{\bar{I}} \right]^2}$$

I_i

\bar{I}

, N

4.

가

가

100 %

가

가

가

가

가

가

20070190)

가

(2)

T

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