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1 **Parameters necessary to define an immobilized enzyme preparation.**

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13 **Abstract**

14 Biocatalytic processes continue to find increasing application in industry. Therefore
15 enzyme immobilization has also become of increasing importance as a means of allowing
16 enzyme containment within reactors operating in continuous mode or else separation of
17 enzyme after use in (fed-)batch reactors, as well as potential recycle. Whilst much has been
18 reported in the scientific literature about enzyme immobilization methods, in many cases
19 the protocol leads to losses in enzyme activity. In this review we outline the reasons for loss
20 of activity during immobilization and highlight suitable diagnostic tests to elucidate the
21 precise cause and thereby methods to restore activity. The need for standardized reporting
22 of immobilization methods is also emphasized as a means of benchmarking alternative
23 approaches.

24

25 **Key words:** enzyme immobilization, facts and artifacts, yield determination, enzyme
26 inactivation, enzyme stabilization

27

28 1. INTRODUCTION

29 The demands on the modern chemical industry to fulfil the rules of the green
30 chemistry agenda today promote intense research in the field of biocatalysis (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
31 Catalysis under mild conditions and high selectivity are amongst the most important
32 reasons for their potential application as sustainable industrial biocatalysts (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
33 For this reason, the number of biocatalytic applications is increasing in many industrial
34 sectors, from fine and pharmaceutical chemistry to food and chemical production.(6, 7, 8,
35 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

36 However, the cost of enzymes means that in many cases they must be reused
37 multiple times to make the process economically viable, and since they are water soluble
38 molecules, they are often difficult to recover (15). This problem has been solved by the
39 immobilization of enzymes on solid supports, making a heterogeneous catalyst (sometimes
40 using pre-existing supports, (15) sometimes generating an *ex novo* solid during the
41 immobilization (15). Because enzymes are not soluble in organic media, it may be
42 considered that immobilization for use in non-aqueous media may not always be necessary,
43 since enzyme will aggregate (16, 17, 18). However, it should be considered that enzyme
44 aggregates may be not reproducible (they depend on the particular protein, the protein
45 concentration, as well as enzyme purity, etc.), that the size and physical resistance are
46 dependent on the enzyme extract, and that the aggregates could result in substrate
47 diffusional limitations, greatly reducing enzyme activity. In fact, much research has been
48 directed to prepare enzymes soluble in organic media in order to improve enzyme activity
49 (19, 20).

50 Today, however, in order to establish a suitable immobilization protocol, the
51 researcher must solve several other enzyme limitations, such as stability and activity under
52 conditions far from the physiological ones, enzyme selectivity and specificity (using
53 substrates far from the physiological ones), enzyme purity and sensitivity to inhibition, as
54 well as resistance to chemicals (21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35). In
55 this way, enzyme immobilization has become a powerful tool in biocatalyst design,
56 complementing other strategies routinely used to improve protein properties, like genetic,
57 microbiological or chemical modification tools (36, 37, 38). In some instances, the genetic
58 or chemical modification may even be directly designed in order to improve the way the
59 enzyme is immobilized, rather than to improve soluble enzyme features.

60 Any immobilization protocol must consider several aspects: the support properties,
61 the active group of the support used to immobilize the enzyme and that of the enzyme
62 molecule, as well as the immobilization protocol itself (45, 46). Only a proper selection of
63 these three aspects allows one to take full advantage of the immobilization process. This
64 has been reviewed in many recent papers, and is therefore not the focus of this manuscript.
65 (47, 48)

66 Consequently, there is a huge amount of literature on enzyme immobilization (49).
67 In the experiments where most of the enzyme activity is immobilized and where the
68 enzyme is maintained almost intact, it is relatively simple to follow the procedure.
69 Unfortunately, however, in many of the publications the obtained (observed) activity is far
70 from the initial activity. Likewise many times critical information is missing in order to
71 properly understand the reason for this. Indeed, it may be caused by a failure in the enzyme

72 immobilization itself, or by an inactivation of the enzyme due to the immobilization
73 conditions, or even by an enzyme inactivation due to enzyme-support interactions. Still
74 other reasons will be discussed later in this paper. In fact, each of these causes may have
75 different responses in order to restore the activity of the biocatalyst.

76 The situation is similar (although not identical) to heterogeneous catalysis using
77 non-proteinaceous material. In heterogeneous catalysis there has also been discussion and
78 debate about how to standardize the reporting of data, what data should be reported and
79 how these data can best be used for process design, optimization and improvement (e.g.
80 50). More widely the need for benchmarking both catalysis (51) and biocatalysis (52) has
81 been discussed in the scientific literature, where the reporting of measurement protocols has
82 been particularly emphasized.

83 This discussion is particularly important in the complex field of enzyme
84 immobilization and in this review we will give some indications on the minimum data that
85 are needed to clearly define an enzyme immobilization process and thereby to understand
86 the properties of an immobilized enzyme. Here we will indicate the minimum data that are
87 required to characterize the phenomena occurring during immobilization, and some simple
88 ways to establish what may be occurring. Moreover, this review proposes some terms that
89 can be used to define each of these parameters since currently there is a mixture of
90 terminology that sometimes makes it difficult to understand published data.

91

92 **2. MINIMUM REQUIRED DATA TO DEFINE AN IMMOBILIZATION PROCESS**

93 When performing an immobilization process, in order to fully understand the effects
94 of the immobilization on enzyme activity, some experimental data should be provided.
95 They can be presented in different ways dependent upon the type of immobilization, but
96 should include the enzyme activity development (or evolution) through the whole
97 immobilization period.

98 First, it is necessary to know what happens to the activity of the free enzyme under
99 the immobilization conditions. For this, an enzyme solution under identical conditions to
100 those of the immobilization conditions must also be prepared, but preferably without
101 adding support or else by replacing the activated support by a well-identified inert support
102 (this is relatively simple using agarose derivatives, because non-modified agarose will be
103 completely inert) (53). This is always important, but in some cases becomes critical when
104 the enzyme stability is less than satisfactory. In some instances the employed
105 immobilization technique requires the use of alkaline pH values (e.g., immobilization in
106 glyoxyl) (54), or the addition of detergents (e.g., when using lipase to prevent enzyme
107 dimerization) (55, 56, 57, 58, 59). In other examples, the enzyme is in an aggregated form
108 and the only way of having reliable results is by employing a chaotropic agent to break the
109 protein aggregates (60, 61, 62). Ideally, immobilization conditions where the soluble
110 enzyme is fully stable during the whole immobilization process should be selected, adding
111 some stabilizing additives if this is not the case (63). However, in some instances
112 immobilization is so rapid and stabilizing that while the reference solution is inactivated,
113 the decrease in the activity of the immobilized preparation can hardly be measured.

114 The other data needed are the evolution of the activity in the supernatant. If the
115 enzyme is active and stable under immobilization conditions, this measurement will allow
116 determination of the percentage of enzyme immobilized.

117 The last data that should be included are the activity evolution in the immobilization
118 suspension; these data will show the effect of enzyme immobilization on activity.

119 With these three activity curves, the enzyme immobilization course when the
120 enzyme and support are in the immobilization suspension can be fully defined.
121 Nevertheless, some additional data may be necessary to fully understand the
122 immobilization process.

123 Thus, the activity of the final biocatalyst needs to be assayed after end point
124 protocol and washings. In many cases, frequently in covalent immobilization, an end point
125 of the reaction between the enzyme and the support is used. This is convenient, because it
126 avoids uncontrolled enzyme-support reactions. One point to be considered is that, if this
127 enzyme-support reaction end point is not used, after enzyme immobilization, the reaction
128 between the enzyme and support can continue even under other (milder) conditions and at a
129 slower speed. This continuous enzyme-support reaction may alter the enzyme properties
130 even during storage. For example, using aldehydes as an active group in the support, a
131 reduction step is recommended. This is usually done with sodium borohydride (64), which
132 converts labile imino bonds into stable (more stable than peptide bonds) secondary amino
133 bonds. It is well-known that sodium borohydride may also affect the enzyme activity by
134 reducing some metal bound to the enzyme and may ultimately prove critical for enzyme
135 activity or stability (65). If used at a high concentration, sodium borohydride can even

136 break peptide bonds (66). Some alternative reagents have been proposed, but are rarely
137 used (67). The case of glutaraldehyde is special, because it loses chemical reactivity after
138 several days and gives very stable enzyme-support bonds (68). In most other cases, the
139 only way to have a chemically inert support is by blocking the residual active groups in the
140 support with a chemically inert compound (69). Using epoxide, mercaptoethanol was
141 initially recommended (70, 71), but it can also break thiol bridges, and high concentrations
142 of any other compound may also affect enzyme stability/activity (72). In this way, the
143 stability of the enzyme in these blocking solutions must also be investigated to understand
144 if negative effects on the enzyme activity can be expected. A good solution to determine
145 these effects on the immobilization end-step conditions on the enzyme activity is to
146 incubate in these solutions an enzyme immobilized preparation (using the enzyme
147 immobilized by another protocol) and check if the enzyme activity changes during
148 incubation. This way, enzyme precipitation or inactivation by exposure to gas bubbles, that
149 can occur using soluble enzyme solution (73), can be avoided and the situation is closer to
150 the reality with an immobilized enzyme.

151 In case the final observed activity does not fit the balance among all the activity
152 measurements listed above, it is possible that some of the enzyme has been released from
153 the support during washing. This is usually controlled in research which uses physically
154 immobilized enzymes, but it is rarely done when using “covalent” protocols. And it may be
155 a particular problem when using hetero-functional supports (74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79). This is
156 more important considering that in many instances the researcher is not aware if the support
157 used is a hetero-functional one or not. Hetero-functional supports are those bearing the
158 capability of interacting with a protein in several different ways: ion exchange,

159 hydrophobic interaction, and covalent attachment.(74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79). In most cases, the
160 covalent attachment is granted if the support has some chemically reactive groups, but this
161 may not always be the case. In fact only in some instances will a covalent bond be achieved
162 (74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79). The case of aminated supports activated with glutaraldehyde is one
163 such example. Here the enzyme may become immobilized via ion exchange, hydrophobic
164 interaction and covalent reaction (which is the slower one) (80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87).
165 The study of the activity presented in the washing buffers may be complex, the enzyme will
166 be much diluted and the activity may fall beneath the detection limit. In any case, this
167 possibility should be examined only if the discrepancies between the expected results and
168 the observed results are significant.

169

170 **3. HOW TO FOLLOW THE ENZYME EVOLUTION IN THE SUPERNATANT:** 171 **ACTIVITY OR PROTEIN CONTENT?**

172 Many publications present the immobilization course showing the protein in the
173 supernatant. However, this way of presenting an immobilization course may have some
174 problems. If the immobilization yield is 100%, this is not a problem, but if the
175 immobilization yield is less than 100%, this may prove more serious. In fact, in many cases
176 the target enzyme is not fully pure, often accounting for less than 30% of the total protein.
177 In this way, we have an average measurement of the total protein immobilized. It should be
178 also considered that many immobilization protocols can selectively immobilize target
179 proteins. So this will underestimate the actual immobilization yield since other proteins will
180 not be immobilized. For instance, this occurs with immobilization of lipases on

181 hydrophobic supports at low ionic strength (88), the tagged proteins and affinity domains
182 (89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95), but this occurs mostly with covalent or physical immobilization
183 protocols even when it is difficult to predict beforehand. Almost no immobilization
184 protocol can immobilize 100% of the proteins contained in a crude protein extract.
185 Moreover, an additional problem is that some non-protein components in the extract can
186 give signals with the protein detection methods usually employed.

187 In this case, the specific activity of the enzyme increases after immobilization, but it
188 is not because the enzyme conformation is improved. It is because the enzyme becomes
189 purified: expressed activity may be maintained at or beneath 100%.

190 Moreover, there are no clues on the effects of the immobilization conditions on
191 enzyme activity, and that can complicate the calculations and the understanding of the
192 reasons for the observed enzyme activity during biocatalyst characterization.

193 In this way, measuring the activities of the supernatant, reference solution and
194 immobilization solution, a more accurate reality of the immobilization process may be
195 achieved. Indeed, a combination of both activity and protein measurements may be useful
196 in some cases.

197

198 **4. REQUIRED PARAMETERS TO DEFINE THE IMMOBILIZATION PROCESS**

199 With the data above collected, giving some critical parameters that define the
200 immobilization process becomes possible.

201 **4.1 Immobilization yield.**

202 This term is usually employed to define the percentage of enzyme which is
203 immobilized on or in the support.

204 However, in some cases, it is used with other meanings, for example as the
205 percentage of enzyme activity that is maintained in the immobilized biocatalyst compared
206 to the offered enzyme activity (frequently in publications where this is the only supplied
207 information.

208 Whatever the name, this value is important to include in any immobilization report.
209 In order to calculate it, under standard conditions, the residual activity in the supernatant is
210 divided by the activity in the reference suspension at the end of the immobilization period.

211 The use of the term immobilization yield is under some debate because this really
212 does not reflect the activity yield. Nevertheless, it has been used for many years in
213 hundreds of publications, and if termed the “protein immobilization yield”, it could be
214 considered adequate.

215 **4.2 Expressed activity**

216 The expressed activity (also called recovered activity or activity recovery), gives the
217 immobilized enzyme activity calculated from the immobilization yield and the activity in
218 the enzyme reference solution. Again, in some papers it shows the percentage of activity
219 that is maintained in the immobilized enzyme compared to the offered enzyme activity,
220 although that is not the standard meaning.

221 This parameter is calculated using the immobilization yield and the activities in the
222 reference and immobilization suspensions, and reflects the effects of the immobilization on
223 the enzyme activity. As explained beneath, it may be more problematic when the reference
224 activity changes during the immobilization protocol.

225 **4.3. The global enzyme activity yield**

226 The global enzyme activity yield is the really pertinent measurement. It relates the
227 initially offered activity and the final activity observed in the immobilized biocatalyst.
228 Many scientific publications only give this value (under different names) and do not show
229 the immobilization time course with the three measures outlined above. In this way, we can
230 consider many different situations where the information supplied by the global activity
231 yield does not reflect the problems occurring in the immobilization process.

232 Figure 1 shows some cases where this parameter alone does not give the required
233 information to understand the process, all with 50% global enzyme activity yield. Figures
234 1a and b show cases where the 50% global enzyme activity yield is the result of only 50%
235 of enzyme activity being immobilized on the support. However, the explanations for this
236 can be very different. For example, in case *a*, the reason for 50% global yield is that the
237 immobilization is too slow. In this case, using a higher ratio of support to enzyme solution,
238 the immobilization yield may be improved, and also an increase in immobilization time (if
239 the groups in the support are stable enough) may improve the immobilization yield.
240 However, in case *b*, a certain percentage of enzyme activity is rapidly immobilized and then
241 the immobilization stopped. There are various explanations for this, which will be
242 discussed later. The case shown by Figure 1 *c*, having identical global enzyme activity yield

243 to the other cases, exemplifies an immobilization time course where although 100% of the
244 enzyme activity is immobilized, the expressed activity of the immobilized enzyme is only
245 50%. This result, even though it appears identical to cases a and b, has a completely
246 different explanation (and solution). The cause for this drop in activity will not always
247 relate to enzyme distortion, and will be discussed beneath.

248 The parameters here are convenient, but it is also highly instructive to give the
249 immobilization time course in order to fully understand what is going on during the
250 process.

251 In some examples, the expressed activity of the biocatalysts, and therefore global
252 enzyme activity yield may even be higher than the initial activity of the soluble enzyme,
253 that is, the enzyme immobilization starts the process of immobilization with X enzyme
254 activity units and after immobilization 2X, 3X,... (n)X can be obtained. This is
255 exemplified in Figure 2. In some instances this increment may be really significant. Some
256 likely reasons for this have been reviewed recently (96). In short, the reasons may be due to
257 some artefacts (different pH inside and outside the particle, soluble enzyme precipitation
258 while the immobilized enzyme does not precipitate, substrate partition, etc.) (96), higher
259 enzyme stability (using conditions that can affect the enzyme conformation) (97, 98, 99),
260 etc. And in some cases, a real increment in enzyme activity under mild conditions may be
261 found. This is relatively common with redox enzymes, such as when immobilizing an
262 enzyme by the nano-flower formation technique where the metals in the flower may play a
263 role in the electron conductivity (100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106). There are also
264 examples using lipases, where the open form of the lipase is stabilized after immobilization,

265 the activity of the immobilized enzyme increases (88, 107, 108). However, in some
266 instances these increases in enzyme activity are merely random conformational changes:
267 the conformational changes to the enzyme which are deleterious in most cases may even
268 prove positive in some exceptional situations, at least for certain substrates, under certain
269 experimental conditions (109, 110, 111). Thus, it is likely that even without immobilizing
270 all the enzyme activity; the final biocatalyst can present activity values over the activity of
271 the soluble enzyme. Again, only a collection of all the parameters and the immobilization
272 time course will give a deep enough explanation of the results. Observing the way the
273 activity changes, one can also deduce if the process is progressive or directly related to the
274 way the enzyme is immobilized. In the latter case, the activity increment should follow the
275 immobilization yield (cases shown in Figures 2 *a* and *b*), while if it is a progressive change,
276 the increment in enzyme activity will also be, up to a maximum (not directly related to the
277 immobilization yield (Figure 2 *c*)).

278

279 **5. CAUSES FOR REDUCTION OF ACTIVITY DURING AND/OR AFTER** 280 **IMMOBILIZATION**

281 An immobilization protocol that seriously decreases the expressed activity of the
282 immobilized enzyme may not be considered suitable for a specific enzyme. However, we
283 must also consider some important facts. Usually, as the number of measurements is very
284 high, the activity is followed with some colorimetric synthetic substrates, many times using
285 low substrate concentrations (due to substrate solubility limitations, absorbance problems,

286 etc.), and mild conditions to measure the actual effect of the immobilization on the enzyme
287 activity.

288 In case a decrease in activity is related to an actual enzyme distortion during
289 immobilization, it should be considered if the improvement of other features (e.g., stability)
290 may compensate for this decrease (97). For instance this occurs if the enzyme is going to be
291 used under more severe conditions than usual (standard) conditions, where perhaps enzyme
292 stabilization might allow higher activity (in absolute terms) than the soluble enzyme (98,
293 99). That is, it may be that under that real operational conditions the immobilized enzyme
294 displays a “hyper-activation” compared to the activity of the soluble enzyme, even though
295 the enzyme is distorted and less active under milder conditions (98, 99). Figure 3 shows an
296 example where the immobilized enzyme has only 25% of the activity compared to that of
297 the soluble enzyme, at low temperature. However, when increasing the temperature, the
298 activity of the soluble enzyme increases until a particular point (in the example, 40°C), and
299 then starts to decrease, while the activity of the immobilized enzyme increases until 70°C.
300 This means, that at temperatures over 50°C, the activity of the immobilized enzyme
301 becomes higher than that of the soluble enzyme. Hence some biocatalysts that are
302 apparently unsuitable may become very adequate for the target process if it requires using
303 different and potentially more severe conditions (98, 99, 112, 113). The important point is
304 that if the study has been properly undertaken, then it will be known that this improved
305 activity is due to an improvement of the enzyme stability because under milder conditions
306 for the enzyme, the real negative effect of the immobilization on the enzyme activity has
307 already been determined (97, 98, 99, 112, 113, 114).

308 In the cases where the recovered enzyme activity is not adequate under operational
309 conditions, and if this is not caused by the effect of the immobilization conditions or the
310 end step on the enzyme activity, the intensity of the enzyme/support multi-interaction
311 should be reduced, for example by decreasing the number of active groups on the support,
312 the immobilization temperature, etc. (115, 116).

313 However, in some cases this decrease in enzyme activity may not really reflect an
314 enzyme distortion, but rather some other experimental artefact (or other kind of problem).
315 For example, if the substrate is very large (e.g., a protease that hydrolyzes a protein having
316 a size similar to the that of the enzyme itself), the enzyme may be intact with respect to its
317 conformation and the capacity of the active site to catalyze the reaction, but if the active
318 site is oriented towards the support surface due the steric problems, then it will be
319 impossible to catalyze the conversion of such a large substrate (112, 113, 117, 118, 119,
320 120, 121, 122) (Figure 4). Such steric problems may be dependent on the enzyme loading
321 on the support. If the active site is not fully blocked by the support surface, a reasonable
322 activity against large substrates can be found using a low load of protein, such that each
323 enzyme molecule has a large free space around it (26). Using more enzyme, the other
324 protein molecules can block access of the substrate to the active site, revealing an apparent
325 enzyme inactivation, which in the most drastic cases may result in no observed activity
326 (Figure 4) (26). The use of biocatalysts with different enzyme loadings, and the use of
327 substrates with different molecular sizes can help to understand if the problems are really
328 steric hindrances or rather enzyme distortion.

329 One common problem when immobilizing an enzyme is an observed decrease of
330 activity, not because the enzyme is distorted or because the enzyme orientation produced a
331 steric hindrance to the reaction with the substrates, but rather because the substrate is more
332 rapidly consumed by the enzyme than it can diffuse into the support particle pores. In this
333 way the substrate concentration decreases along the pore, and the inner enzyme molecules
334 don't have any available substrate to perform the reaction (Figure 5). (123, 124, 125, 126,
335 127). This is termed substrate diffusion limitation. Conventional stirring of the reaction
336 suspension cannot overcome this because inside the solids only diffusion occurs. An
337 exception to this is found when using ultrasound, which can 'agitate' inside pores, but this
338 is not usually included in a standard enzyme activity determination (128, 129, 130, 131,
339 132, 133, 134). However, it is important to know if substrate diffusion limitation is the
340 cause for enzyme "inactivation" during the immobilization for two reasons.. First, because
341 the actions to be taken will be different if it is found that enzyme distortion or substrate
342 diffusion limitation is the problem. Second, because in many instances the standard
343 conditions of measurement are far from the operating conditions. For example, even using
344 the same substrate, the concentration of substrate may differ between standard and
345 operating conditions, and perhaps in those conditions the problems could be reduced (e.g. if
346 the substrate concentration is much higher). And if the substrate is different, the enzyme
347 activity may be much lower with the target substrate and the concentrations used
348 consequently much higher, reducing or even eliminating the problem.

349 There are some easy tricks that may allow a check as to whether the decrease in
350 activity is due to diffusion problems. The simplest one is to mill the immobilized enzyme,
351 since this will reduce the particle size, it will also reduce the substrate diffusion limitation

352 and consequently the activity will increase (Figure 6). Alternatively, to prevent exposure of
353 enzyme to the milling process, the support can be milled prior to immobilization and it is
354 possible to check if now the effect on the enzyme activity is lower (Figure 6). Other studies
355 that may be interesting are to use immobilized enzyme preparations with different enzyme
356 loadings. Using moderate activity (e.g., under 10 micromols of substrate converted per
357 minute per ml or g of biocatalyst) can negate diffusion problems in most cases. If the
358 activity decreases when increasing the enzyme loading (and if the substrate is small), this
359 can be attributed to an increase in diffusion limitation, and may have a more or less intense
360 effect. Figure 7 shows an example where the diffusional problems are not evident until a
361 significant amount of enzyme per g of support has been immobilized (Figure 7a), while in
362 the Figure 7b, the problem is evident even using a load well beneath the capacity of the
363 support. However, it is not possible to rule out that some protein-protein interactions may
364 also alter the results mainly using the support saturated with enzyme (135, 136). In any
365 case, the use of low loaded biocatalysts may permit visualization of the effect of the
366 immobilization on the individual enzyme molecules.

367 **6. SOME PROBLEMATIC CASES**

368 In some instances, calculation of the different parameters may become a little
369 complicated due to difficulties in giving an actual and accurate measurement. Below, some
370 of these cases are discussed.

371 **6.1. Reference suspension activity decreases during immobilization**

372 If the stability of the enzyme under immobilization conditions is not sufficient to
373 maintain full activity during the entire immobilization time, calculations may become more

374 complex. If the immobilization yield is 100%, the main problem is how to define the
375 expressed activity, since the stability of the immobilized enzyme may be higher than that of
376 the free enzyme. If the immobilization yield is not 100%, calculations may become quite
377 hard to define, in particular if the stability of the free enzyme changes during the
378 immobilization.

379 The immobilization should be described in such a way that the reader can easily
380 understand the cause of the alteration of the enzyme activity during the immobilization.
381 Thus, the main point is to clarify the problems and use all information required to allow
382 easy understanding.

383

384 **6.1.1.** *The immobilization yield is not 100%, the activity of the reference decreases*

385 If there is neither an alteration of the enzyme stability, nor of the specific activity in
386 the supernatant, compared to the reference during the immobilization, the calculations to
387 define the immobilization parameters may be performed as in the general case (of which
388 one is represented in the Figure 8a). However, it should also be mentioned at some point
389 that the activity of the reference enzyme is not 100%. That is, in this case it may be
390 convenient to add an additional parameter, the reference solution residual activity, to
391 clarify that the expressed activity decrease is not only the result of the decrease of activity
392 due to the enzyme-support reaction, but also (partially) due to enzyme inactivation under
393 the immobilization conditions. Usually such inactivation by the immobilization conditions
394 will not be significant provided the final global enzyme activity yield is acceptable, but this
395 may complicate the corresponding calculations.

396 **6.1.2.** *The immobilization yield is not 100%, the activity of the reference decreases more*
397 *rapidly than the activity of the suspension*

398 In some cases, the enzyme becomes stabilized under the immobilization conditions
399 just after the first immobilization, because it is produced via a multi-point or multi-subunit
400 immobilization (Figure 8b). In this way, using the previous method to define expressed
401 activity, the enzyme will apparently become “hyper-activated”, while the global enzyme
402 activity yield will not exceed 100%, as this is not really an improvement of the enzyme
403 activity after immobilization, but a prevention of enzyme inactivation due to the
404 immobilization conditions. In this instance, the best way to treat the results is not to
405 consider the expressed activity but give just immobilization yield and global enzyme
406 activity yield, stating why the expressed activity is not included: this parameter gives the
407 effect of immobilization on the enzyme activity and here that is not possible (because the
408 immobilization conditions also affect the enzyme activity). Thus, in this context it will have
409 no sense. This is very relevant because in some instances the free enzyme could be
410 completely inactivated during the immobilization process, while the suspension maintains
411 reasonable activity (e.g., Figure 8c). In these cases, the global activity yield is the only
412 reliable data, but it should include the immobilization time course in order to understand
413 the immobilization process. This has been reported in some instances using glyoxyl agarose
414 as an immobilization support, since in this support the first immobilization must be
415 performed via at least two points, and it must be performed at alkaline pH, where some
416 enzymes may not be fully stable (137).

417 **6.2. Cases where the enzyme stability or stability depends on the enzyme**
418 **concentration**

419 This is not such a strange case. For example, multimeric enzyme stability may
420 depend on enzyme concentrations, since a higher enzyme concentration produces a higher
421 percentage of multimeric enzyme forms, usually more stable than the monomeric forms
422 (138, 139) (Figure 9). In this way, as the immobilization progresses and a few enzyme
423 molecules are in the supernatant, it is eventually possible that this diluted multimeric
424 enzyme tends to dissociate giving a lower stability. To discriminate this, reference solutions
425 with the lowest concentration of enzyme that can be considered relevant for the
426 immobilization (e.g., 5 or 10% concentration of the immobilization solution) can be
427 prepared and their stabilities determined under immobilization conditions. This will show
428 if the enzyme really maintains its stability over the entire range of enzyme concentrations
429 during the immobilization time course (Figure 9). If that is not the case, this should be
430 considered in the calculations and the information used to explain the immobilization
431 process should be added. One trick to visualize the relevance of this is to maintain the
432 amount of enzyme per g of support constant, to check the immobilization parameters at
433 different enzyme concentrations (altering the support to enzyme solution ratio). If that
434 phenomenon is not relevant, the final activity of the biocatalyst should be independent of
435 the concentration of enzyme used during the immobilization (Figure 9b). If enzyme
436 dissociation of the diluted enzyme is relevant, the final activity of the immobilized
437 biocatalyst will increase when the concentration of enzyme is increased (Figure 9b).

438 Moreover, lipases tend to form lipase-lipase dimers via specific interactions
439 between the open forms of the two lipase molecules (Figure 10), and these aggregates have
440 different stability/activity with respect to the monomeric enzymes(140, 141, 142, 143, 144).
441 That is, the concentrated enzyme in the reference will have a specific activity that may be
442 lower than the one in the supernatant of the immobilization suspension, where the enzyme
443 concentrations decrease during the immobilization time course and in this way, the specific
444 activity will increase during the immobilization process (Figure 10). This will reduce the
445 reported enzyme loading of the support and immobilization yield, but will increase the
446 expressed activity. This could make the understanding of the results confusing. The use of
447 detergents during the immobilization and/or during the lipase activity determination may
448 help to solve this situation (Figure 10). It can break the dimers, although they also may
449 have some effects on enzyme activity/stability (145, 146), making necessary a further study
450 of these specific effects.

451 **6.3. Some enzyme release from the support**

452 In this case, global enzyme activity yield is lower than that expected from the
453 immobilization parameters. If we can discard the effects of the end point process (see
454 below), then enzyme release from the support may become a possible explanation. This
455 may be relevant in physical methods of immobilization (e.g. adsorption or entrapment) and
456 in some “covalent” methods, where the support is really hetero-functional (147), and the
457 enzyme is just physically immobilized although the support can, in theory, covalently react
458 with it.

459 The measurement of activity in the washing solutions, mainly the initial ones, may
460 reveal this problem. The total value of released enzyme may be hard to determine unless all
461 enzyme is washed away, due to the dilution of the enzyme in the washing solution that can
462 make it difficult to give an accurate value of the released enzyme, although enough to
463 indicate that the problem exists. If all enzyme molecules can be released, the
464 immobilization protocol is not a valid one and should be discarded. If some enzymes
465 become strongly attached to the support and the method is considered valid, a disagreement
466 between global enzyme activity recovery, the immobilization yield and expressed activity
467 may be found. In such cases, it should be noted that a percentage of enzyme is lost in the
468 washing steps.

469

470 **6.4. The end point of the immobilization is not compatible with the activity** 471 **measurement**

472 In many instances, it is possible to continue measuring the activity of the
473 immobilization suspension during the end point process (e.g., in blocking protocols). This
474 allows determination of the effect of this treatment on the enzyme activity and ensures full
475 control of the process. It is even possible to check the effect of this protocol on soluble
476 enzyme or on enzyme immobilized by another strategy.

477 However, in some instances the enzyme activity determination is not possible. For
478 example, using sodium borohydride the production of hydrogen bubbles makes it almost
479 impossible to measure anything in a spectrophotometer (and this may also change pH). If in
480 this case, the final activity of the enzyme is much lower than expected from the expressed

481 activity and immobilization yield, there are two options. In the first, the enzyme is
482 inactivated during the end point step. In the second, the enzyme is not really covalently
483 attached and it is released from the support during the end point process.

484 The first case may be checked by incubating an immobilized enzyme (immobilized
485 using another strategy) to check if the end point step has (or has not) any effect on enzyme
486 activity.

487 The second may be harder to check. A small percentage of enzyme release during
488 the washings may be difficult to determine, since the enzyme will be quite diluted, and the
489 activity determination cannot be performed in the first washes, as the end point agent may
490 still interfere with the enzyme activity determination. It is possible to think as the real
491 explanation when other likely explanations considering other causes for the low global
492 enzyme activity yield are discarded.

493 **6.5. Immobilized enzyme is released from the support during activity determination**

494 This is quite common using physical methods of enzyme immobilization. This can
495 happen for example, if the enzyme activity of ion exchanged enzymes is determined under
496 conditions where the enzyme is released (different pH value, higher ionic strength) (148,
497 149), or lipases immobilized via interfacial activation on hydrophobic supports are
498 measured in the presence of detergents (or detergent like substrates) (150). Indeed it may
499 occur even in some covalent immobilization procedures, e.g., using glyoxyl supports that at
500 neutral pH (or in the presence of aminated substrates) will be unable to retain the
501 immobilized enzyme on the support (151). This means that until somehow the
502 immobilization is made irreversible, the measured activities are those of the soluble

503 enzyme: without steric hindrance, no diffusion limitation and no enzyme distortion. This
504 way, an “immobilization time course” like the one shown in Figure 11a will be obtained
505 (when the actual situation is that shown in figure 11b). However in an irreversible
506 immobilization all these problems arise. This may be simply via reduction of imino bonds
507 using sodium borohydride, use of glutaraldehyde to crosslink enzyme molecules (or
508 enzymes and support) etc. In those moments, the enzyme activity may decrease because
509 now it is really immobilized during the activity determination, and the researcher can
510 wrongly conclude that the problem is the step that makes irreversible the enzyme
511 immobilization, when what is really responsible is the enzyme-support interaction that was
512 not seen previously.

513 **6.6. Negative effect of some reagents released from the activated support on the** 514 **enzyme stability/activity**

515 In some cases, the support itself can release compounds used in the activation (e.g.,
516 if after support activation the washings are not sufficient), and in this way the enzyme in
517 the supernatant of the immobilization suspension may become inactivated by reaction with
518 these reagents. Consequently, immobilization yield may be overestimated, while expressed
519 activity will be underestimated. More intense support washing is the obvious solution (an
520 immobilized enzyme biocatalyst should not release any contaminant to the reaction media),
521 but to detect the problem, a comparison of the reference solution and one prepared using as
522 medium a supernatant after incubating the support under identical conditions to that of the
523 immobilization may prove useful. In any case, if the release of compounds is not possible
524 to avoid, then the immobilization method should be discarded.

525 **6.7. The enzyme needs to be physically or chemically modified before being**
526 **immobilized**

527 There are many examples, but one very clear one is the immobilization of enzymes
528 on aminated supports via the carbodiimide route, where the enzyme is at least modified
529 using carbodiimide (152, 153, 154). In these cases, the effect of each enzyme modification
530 on the enzyme activity should be shown, and the reference solution should be prepared
531 using the native and also the modified enzyme, to check if the changes in enzyme activity
532 with time are due to the enzyme's natural instability under immobilization conditions, or
533 the result of the chemical modification. When presenting the results, all these facts should
534 be made clear. Moreover, the global enzyme activity yield should show the results starting
535 with the non-modified enzyme, and the data used in the determination of the other
536 parameters should be clearly stated.

537 **6.8. There is not an actual immobilization time course**

538 This is not such a rare occurrence. For example, using the immobilization of
539 enzymes by the strategy of crosslinked enzyme aggregates (CLEAs) (155, 156, 157, 158)
540 this situation can arise. Here, the first step is enzyme aggregation. Many authors show the
541 effect of this aggregation on enzyme activity, but to do that, they re-dissolve the enzyme
542 aggregate before measuring enzyme activity. This information is very valuable, but it only
543 shows the irreversible inactivation caused by the aggregation agent, meaning that diffusion
544 limitations, steric problems or enzyme distortion in the aggregate are not determined. Next,
545 the aggregates need to be chemically crosslinked, usually using glutaraldehyde. This step
546 shows simultaneously the effect of the chemical modification and also of the diffusion

547 limitations, steric problems or enzyme distortion that now cannot revert because the
548 enzyme immobilization becomes irreversible. One specific problem is when crosslinking
549 fails, and individual enzyme molecules (or small enzyme aggregates) are released from the
550 CLEA and washed away. This may be determined by measuring the activity of the
551 suspension and supernatants in each washing step. The solution may be to add media rich
552 in primary amino groups, proteins or polymers, amination of the enzyme or alternatively
553 use other cross-linkers (159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168).

554 **6.9. The support is able to adsorb the substrate and/or the product**

555 In some instances the support is able to adsorb a certain amount of substrate or
556 product. If it is the substrate, the concentration of substrate available for the enzyme will be
557 lower, that way perhaps producing an apparent decrease in enzyme activity if the
558 measurements are not done under substrate saturation conditions (Figure 12). If this is
559 exaggerated, it may even be possible that the suspension has less activity than the
560 supernatant, if the immobilization is not very rapid and the activity of the first supernatant
561 measured is significant, and this will already give some clues to the problem (Figure 12a).
562 However, in other instances perhaps not so clear, the observed (solid line) and actual
563 (pointed line) results may be very different (Figure 12b). This can be investigated by
564 adding soluble enzyme to a mixture of support and substrate. Here, if the activity is much
565 lower than in absence of the support, the likeliest explanation is that substrate has been
566 adsorbed on the support. This will produce an apparently lower expressed activity than the
567 real one. The easiest way to solve this problem is to increase the concentration of substrate,
568 but in some instances this strategy is not possible because the substrate concentrations are

569 already close to maximum solubility. To avoid this, another possibility is to alter the
570 medium conditions during the activity determination in such a way that the substrate can
571 hardly be adsorbed on the support. For example, using a hydrophobic support and a
572 hydrophobic substrate, this can be prevented using detergent or an organic co-solvent.
573 However, we must consider that this can also lead to enzyme release during activity
574 determination, as stated above. The effect of this problem is an incremental increase in
575 apparent K_M after enzyme immobilization.

576 If the problem is the product adsorption, again an apparent low expressed activity
577 will be observed. A simple way to confirm this is by adding the support after the
578 determination of the activity using the soluble enzyme. If the absorbance decreases, one can
579 confirm that the problem is the adsorption of the final product on the support. The solution
580 will be to use conditions where the product does not become adsorbed on the support. The
581 effect of this will be a decrease in the apparent maximum activity, which may also affect
582 the apparent K_M , since when the product saturates the support, the activity will increase.

583 These problems will not have real relevance during operation, since the support will
584 be rapidly saturated by the great excess of substrate/product, but may perhaps interfere in
585 the first minutes of operation in a flow reactor, or in the first cycle of a batch process.

586

587 **6. 10. Immobilization is very rapid but is not total: less than 100% immobilization**
588 **yield**

589 In some instances, immobilization is very rapid but is not complete (Figure 13). The
590 most obvious reason for this result is that an amount of enzyme that is over the capacity of
591 the support has been used. However, in some cases this low immobilization yield may be
592 based on other reasons.

593 For example, it is possible that the utilized enzyme extract contains several enzymes
594 able to catalyze the reaction and only some of these enzymes become immobilized on the
595 support. The case of a lipase extract contaminated by another non-lipase esterase when
596 immobilized on hydrophobic supports at low ionic strength, (following the activity using *p*-
597 nitrophenyl esters), is perhaps one of the most best illustrations (169, 170, 171, 172). Only
598 the lipase will be immobilized on these supports under these conditions, and the esterase
599 will remain in the supernatant (Figure 13). To check this (or similar situations), when using
600 different amounts of enzyme per g of support, a similar immobilization yield should be
601 always obtained until reaching an enzyme loading that can fully saturate the support surface
602 with the target enzyme. Beyond that point the lipase immobilization yield should start to
603 decrease. When presenting these results, an immobilization yield under 100% at all enzyme
604 concentrations should be seen. However, it should be noted that this is a positive result.: the
605 enzyme has effectively been purified during the immobilization process (Figure 14). This
606 lipase immobilization peculiarity has been used even to separate different lipases having
607 different affinities on different supports (173).

608 In other cases, the reason for not all of the enzyme being immobilized may be
609 simply because of different extents of glycosylation between different enzymes (e.g. to

610 immobilize hyper-glycosylated enzymes may prove very difficult), this will give observed
611 behavior similar to the case above.

612 In other cases, the problem may be the presence of some large soluble protein
613 aggregates that can close the pores and that way prevent enzyme immobilization. This can
614 be overcome by adding moderate amounts of chaotropic agents to break the aggregates
615 (Figure 15).

616 To distinguish between the different possibilities, clean supports must be offered to
617 the supernatant of the previous immobilization suspension. If some enzyme is immobilized,
618 an overestimate of the loading capacity of the support may be the problem. If this problem
619 remains when using different enzyme loadings, a likely explanation is that something in the
620 extract is blocking the enzyme immobilization.

621 If no more enzyme activity is immobilized in this experiment, it is clear that the
622 remaining enzymes that express this percentage of activity cannot become immobilized on
623 the used support, and they must be different from the enzyme that has been immobilized.

624 **6.11. The enzyme extract contains an inhibitor that is adsorbed by the support**

625 Many liquid commercial enzyme extracts are supplemented with some stabilization
626 formulations, and in some instances some of these components may interfere with the
627 activity determination measurement (e.g. inhibition of the enzyme, since the compounds
628 become adsorbed to the support matrix). This can lead to some curious “immobilization
629 time courses” (Figure 16). The concentration of such an inhibitor in the supernatant will
630 progressively decrease , and in this way the observed activity of the enzyme in the

631 supernatant will increase, while the activity of the reference is maintained during the entire
632 immobilization time course. If the adsorbed inhibitor is unable to interact with the
633 immobilized enzyme, also the immobilized enzyme will apparently increase activity during
634 immobilization (Figure 16 a). That way, the expressed activity will be over 100%, but the
635 calculation of immobilization yield will be nearly impossible (in the figure it shows a
636 “negative yield”), and the global enzyme activity yield will give a confusing number. Here,
637 the combination of activity and protein concentration data may be helpful.

638 Results may be wrongly too negative for the global enzyme activity yield. A
639 theoretical case may be the use of a hydrophobic support able to immobilize an inhibitor by
640 hydrophobic interaction. Figure 16b shows an example where the inhibitor is released
641 during the activity determination (e.g., some solvent or detergent is added). In this way, it
642 can also interact with the enzyme in the supernatant and can show an almost real
643 immobilization time course. After immobilization, the immobilized biocatalyst is washed
644 with water (that may not be eliminated by the inhibitor), and now we determine the activity
645 at a high concentration of enzyme because these are the desired operating conditions: the
646 enzyme will be exposed to more inhibitor, and that can produce a falsely low activity.

647 In these cases, the problem is to ensure what is the cause of the results.

648 To discriminate this, the supernatant of the immobilization suspension may be
649 taken, offered to a new batch of clean support, and check to see if the problem remains or if
650 now the enzyme activity in the supernatant is maintained. Using inactivated immobilized
651 enzyme may also help to reveal if a component added to the support after immobilization
652 has altered the enzyme activity. A more satisfying way to do the experiment may be to

653 dialyze the enzyme extract and check if this has some effect on enzyme activity and the
654 immobilization time course (although may be the amount of inhibitor is insufficient or else
655 cannot be dialyzed). In case dialysis can remove the inhibitor, it would be better to use the
656 dialyzed extract to perform the immobilization, even though this can produce some
657 problems for enzyme inactivation during immobilization.

658

659 **7. IMPLICATIONS OF DEFINITION OF ENZYME IMMOBILIZED** 660 **BIOCATALYSTS FOR PROCESS APPLICATIONS**

661 Today there are two important drivers for the increased application of immobilized
662 enzymes in biocatalysis. The first concerns the need to retain and easily separate enzymes
663 run in continuous flow systems (15). This has attracted great interest in the pharmaceutical
664 industry where it is the ability of enzymes to selectively and accurately produce high
665 quality product that is exploited. Flow systems can capitalize upon this, since the residence
666 time of material in the reactor is very carefully controlled, and this necessitates also enzyme
667 immobilization for enzyme retention. In such cases knowledge about the observed activity
668 is extremely important since it helps explain deviations from the expected results when
669 operating in such a different hydrodynamic environment to that where standard enzyme
670 tests may be performed. Additionally a feature of flow reactors is that very rapid changes in
671 conditions can be made (due to the high surface area) which may also give interesting
672 results. The second driver for the increased application of immobilized enzymes is in the
673 low-priced chemical (and biofuel) industry. Here reuse of the enzyme is essential or else
674 continuous operation required. In either case immobilization is a key tool, in order to

675 separate or retain enzyme. Here too understanding the immobilization protocol and its
676 effects are essential, in this case since the economy is vital to the viability of the final
677 process. Even small improvements in observed activity can have a marked benefit to the
678 process. Likewise the amount of activity which can be loaded in the reactor can become of
679 great importance (related also to enzyme purity and loading on the immobilization support).

680

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Figure legends

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Figure 1. Examples of enzyme immobilization where the global enzyme activity yield is 50%. In case A the immobilization is too slow to immobilize all the protein in the given time? That way immobilization yield is 50% and expressed activity is 100%. In case B, the immobilization is rapid but only involve to 50% of the enzyme activity, the expressed activity???is maintained, again immobilization yield is 50% and expressed activity is 100%. In case C, the immobilization yield is 100%, but the expressed activity is 50%. Reference solution: triangles; Immobilization suspension: solid squares, Supernatant of the immobilization suspension: empty squares.

Figure 2. Examples of immobilization where the global enzyme activity yield is over 100% due to enzyme hyperactivation. In cases A and B, the enzyme increases the activity immediately after immobilization. In case C, it increases the activity progressively after all enzyme has been already immobilized. Reference solution: triangles; Immobilization suspension: solid squares, Supernatant of the immobilization suspension: empty squares.

Figure 3. Temperature/activity profile of free enzyme (squares) and immobilized/stabilized enzyme (triangles). Activity is given as absolute activity per mg of free or immobilized enzyme.

1376 **Figure 4. Effect of enzyme orientation and support loading on the activity of**
1377 **immobilized enzymes versus large substrates.**

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1379 **Figure 5. Schematic representation of the substrate diffusion limitations.**

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1381 **Figure 6. Decreasing the substrate diffusion limitation by reducing the size of**
1382 **the biocatalyst: milling the biocatalysts or use of a milled support to immobilize the**
1383 **enzyme.**

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1385 **Figure 7. Effect of enzyme loading on enzyme activity: The higher the enzyme**
1386 **loading, the higher the diffusional problems.**

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1388 **Figure 8. Immobilization time courses where the immobilization yield is lower**
1389 **than 100% and the activity of the reference solution decreases during the**
1390 **immobilization time.** Case A is a standard immobilization, cases B and C shows are
1391 examples where the enzyme becomes more stable after immobilization and maintains more
1392 activity at the end of the immobilization than the reference solution. Reference solution:
1393 triangles; Immobilization suspension: solid squares, supernatant of the immobilization
1394 suspension: empty squares.

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1396 **Figure 9. A. Effect of enzyme concentration on the maintenance of the activity**
1397 **of a multimeric enzyme under immobilization conditions.** Triangles: concentration used
1398 to immobilize the enzyme, circles: enzyme at 50% concentration, squares: enzyme at 10%
1399 concentration. **B. Expected effect of enzyme concentration on final biocatalysts activity**
1400 **maintaining the enzyme loading.** Triangles; diluted enzyme tends to become inactivated
1401 via subunit dissociation, squares; inactivation of multimeric enzyme via subunit
1402 dissociation is not a problem.

1403

1404 **Figure 10.** Effect on activity/enzyme concentration profile of the formation of
1405 lipase-lipase dimers. The use of detergent may solve the problem.

1406

1407 **Figure 11. The obtained (A) and actual (B) immobilization courses when the**
1408 **enzyme is released from the support during enzyme activity determination.** Reference
1409 solution: triangles, immobilization suspension: solid squares, supernatant of the
1410 immobilization suspension: empty squares.

1411

1412 **Figure 12. Observed immobilization time courses when the substrate becomes**
1413 **massively (A) or just partially (B) adsorbed on the support.** Reference solution:
1414 triangles; observed immobilization suspension: solid line, solid squares, real
1415 immobilization suspension: pointed line, solid squares, supernatant of the immobilization
1416 suspension: empty squares.

1417 **Figure 13. Immobilization coupled to purification of lipases from esterases via**
1418 **immobilization on hydrophobic supports at low ion strength.** Immobilization yield is
1419 not 100%, but it is likely that really 100% of the lipase has been immobilized and the
1420 enzyme has been purified.

1421

1422 **Figure 14. Immobilization yield/enzyme loading expected is some catalytically**
1423 **active component of the enzyme extract is not immobilized on the support.**

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1425 **Figure 15. The problems of enzyme aggregation in enzyme immobilization.**

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1427 **Figure 16. Enzyme immobilization time courses when the enzyme extract have**
1428 **an inhibitor that is immobilized on the support.** (A) The adsorbed inhibitor is unable to
1429 interact with the enzyme. (B). The adsorbed inhibitor is released during the activity
1430 measurement and can interact with the enzyme. The figure shows the activity of: Reference
1431 solution: triangles; observed immobilization suspension: solid line, solid squares, real
1432 immobilization suspension: pointed line, solid squares; observed supernatant of the
1433 immobilization suspension: empty squares, solid line; real supernatant of the
1434 immobilization suspension; empty squares, dotted line.