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## Performance of a tube-in-tube CO<sub>2</sub> gas cooler

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, a tube-in-tube heat exchanger model applicable to supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> and water was developed. The developed model is first validated with some existing measurements. Normally, the variation of the heat transfer rate for a constant-property working fluid shows a monotonic decrease from the inlet of minimum heat capacity flow rate ( $C_{\min}$ ). By contrast, the CO<sub>2</sub> may present a local minimum and a local maximum along the length of the heat exchanger, provided CO<sub>2</sub> passes through the pseudo-critical temperature, and this phenomenon becomes more and more pronounced when the pressure is close to the critical pressure. In contrast, it is possible for a local maximum heat transfer rate to occur near the inlet of  $C_{\min}$  even when the CO<sub>2</sub> does not pass through the pseudo-critical point. This happens when  $C_{\min}$  is on the water side and the property variation of CO<sub>2</sub> is taken into account. The calculation also shows that the effect of the inlet pressure on the variation of the CO<sub>2</sub> temperature is not as apparent as the effect of the inlet pressure on the heat transfer rate, even when there is a significant change in the overall heat transfer coefficient, implying that the heat transfer characteristics of CO<sub>2</sub> near the pseudo-critical region is similar to normal refrigerants, which show an invariant temperature at the condensation point. Hence, it would be beneficial to extend the influence of the pseudo-critical region when taking the heat transfer augmentation into consideration.

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## Performance d'un refroidisseur de gaz au CO<sub>2</sub> à double tube

Mots clés : dioxyde de carbone ; refroidisseur de gaz ; échangeur de chaleur ; supercritique ; pseudo-critique

### 1. Introduction

The use of natural refrigerants for heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, and refrigeration applications has attracted much attention recently. Among the possible candidates, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is regarded as one of the most promising

candidates because it is environmentally benign, nontoxic, and possesses comparatively good thermodynamic properties. Carbon dioxide is also comparable to HCFC refrigerants and outperforms conventional refrigerants when it is used in hot water heaters and automobile air conditioners (Lorentzen and Pettersen, 1993; Lorentzen, 1994; Lorentzen, 1995). In CO<sub>2</sub>

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Nomenclature			
A	surface area (m <sup>2</sup> )	T	temperature (°C)
C	heat capacity flow rate (W K <sup>-1</sup> )	u	velocity (m s <sup>-1</sup> )
C <sub>p</sub>	specific heat (J kg <sup>-1</sup> K <sup>-1</sup> )	U	overall heat transfer coefficient (W m <sup>-2</sup> K <sup>-1</sup> )
d	diameter (m)	<i>Greek letters</i>	
f	friction factor	ΔT	temperature difference (K)
h	heat transfer coefficient (W m <sup>-2</sup> K <sup>-1</sup> )	μ	viscosity (kg m <sup>-1</sup> s <sup>-1</sup> )
i	specific enthalpy (kJ kg <sup>-1</sup> )	ρ	density (kg m <sup>-3</sup> )
ID	inner diameter (m)	<i>Subscripts</i>	
k	conductivity (W m <sup>-1</sup> K <sup>-1</sup> )	b	bulk
L	tube length (m)	c	carbon dioxide
LMTD	log mean temperature difference (K)	c,i	ith segment of carbon dioxide
$\dot{m}$	mass flow rate (kg s <sup>-1</sup> )	f	film
M <sub>w</sub>	mass flow rate for water (kg s <sup>-1</sup> )	H	hydraulic diameter
M <sub>c</sub>	mass flow rate for CO <sub>2</sub> (kg s <sup>-1</sup> )	i	inner
Nu	Nusselt number (hd k <sup>-1</sup> )	i	ith segment of the heat exchanger
OD	outer diameter (m)	max	larger one
P	pressure (MPa)	min	smaller one
Pr	Prandtl number	o	outer
Q	heat transfer rate (kW)	w	water
R	thermal resistance (C W <sup>-1</sup> )	wall	wall
Re	Reynolds number (ρud μ <sup>-1</sup> )	w,i	ith segment of the water side

air-conditioning and heat pump systems, CO<sub>2</sub> rejects heat at a pressure above the critical pressure (7.38 MPa) in the gas cooler without phase change. When the CO<sub>2</sub> is at supercritical pressures, some small fluid temperature and pressure variations may produce large changes in the thermophysical properties, and this is especially pronounced when the temperature is near the critical point. The gigantic change in the thermophysical properties may result in significant deviations in both heat transfer and fluid flow behaviors.

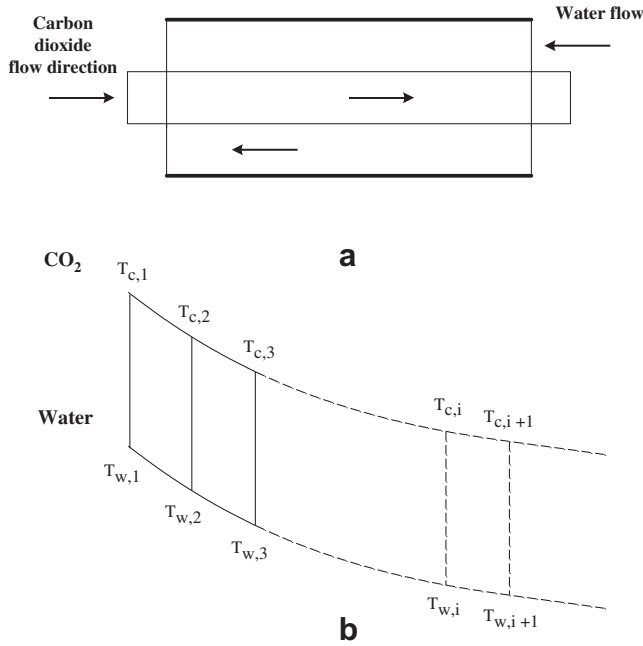
In contrast, investigations associated with CO<sub>2</sub> are mainly performed on either system performance (e.g., Austin and Sumathy, 2011; Goodman et al., 2011; Cecchinato et al., 2005) or the heat transfer characteristics between tubes and channels (e.g., Cheng et al., 2008; Dang and Hihara, 2004a, 2004b; Dang et al., 2007, 2008, 2010; Gao et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2008; Liao and Zhao, 2002; Yun et al., 2005, 2007). There are comparatively fewer studies concerning the overall performance of heat exchangers (gas coolers). The relevant studies on the performance of gas coolers are normally classified into two categories—air cooled and water cooled—and most studies were related to air-cooled systems (Asinaria et al., 2004; Chang and Kim, 2007; Park and Hrnjak, 2007; Zhao and Ohadi, 2004; Zilio et al., 2007). Note that the dominant thermal resistances for an air-cooled gas cooler mainly occur on the air side, and thus its performance is normally controlled by the air flow rather than the CO<sub>2</sub>, irrespective of appreciable changes in the physical properties of CO<sub>2</sub>. In contrast, comparatively fewer studies investigate the water-cooled gas cooler. The only studies investigating the water-cooled gas cooler were carried out by Fronk and Garimella (2011a, 2011b) and Wang and Hihara (2002). The former conducted an analysis of the heat transfer mechanisms of a water-coupled gas cooler with a compact, multipass cross-counter flow of aluminum-brazed plate and a microchannel CO<sub>2</sub> gas cooler and validated the analysis with experimental

data. The later presented an analysis of a concentric counterflow heat exchanger by solving a set of complicated partial differential equations, including conservation of mass, momentum and energy equations, between CO<sub>2</sub> and water and considering the wall conduction in both the radial and axial directions. They found that the variation of the local heat flux revealed a local maximum within the heat exchanger due to the tremendous change in the specific heat of CO<sub>2</sub>.

For a typical gas cooler, irrespective of the inlet pressure, the temperature of CO<sub>2</sub> changes quite significantly along the length of the heat exchanger and may pass through the pseudo-critical point, where an appreciable change in the heat capacity may occur. In addition, the effect of changes in the physical properties of CO<sub>2</sub> is even more severe for a liquid-cooled gas cooler because the controlled thermal resistance could switch to the CO<sub>2</sub> side. Despite the considerable efforts that were devoted in determining the heat transfer performance of CO<sub>2</sub> above the critical point, the existing studies of liquid-cooled gas coolers are limited and complicated. Hence, it is the objective of this study to develop a simple heat exchanger model that is capable of investigating and analyzing the heat transfer behavior of a CO<sub>2</sub> tube-in-tube water-cooled gas cooler subject to a given set of inlet conditions.

## 2. Numerical method

The model heat exchanger is a double-pipe heat exchanger with water flowing in the annulus and CO<sub>2</sub> flowing counter-currently in the tube. Fig. 1 is a schematic of the heat exchanger. Because considerable changes in the physical properties of CO<sub>2</sub> may be encountered, especially near pseudo-critical temperatures, the heat exchanger must be subdivided into many small segments. A prior sensitivity analysis of the influence of the segments was performed, and



**Fig. 1 – (a) Schematic of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger and (b) Definition of the temperature for CO<sub>2</sub> and water along the length of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger.**

a total of 65 segments were used in the simulation. A schematic showing the variation of the temperature for CO<sub>2</sub> and water is shown in Fig. 1(b), where the subscript c denotes CO<sub>2</sub> and w represents water. The heat balance between the water and the coolant in each segment *i* can be expressed by the following equations:

$$Q_i = m_c C_{p,c,i} (T_{c,i} - T_{c,i+1}) = m_w C_{p,w,i} (T_{w,i} - T_{w,i+1}). \quad (1)$$

$$Q_i = (UA)_i \times (\text{LMTD})_i. \quad (2)$$

The overall heat transfer coefficient is obtained from

$$\frac{1}{UA} = \frac{1}{h_w A_{o,i}} + \frac{\ln \frac{d_o}{d_i}}{2\pi k_{\text{wall}} L} + \frac{1}{h_c A_{i,i}}. \quad (3)$$

The physical properties of CO<sub>2</sub> are a function of the local pressure and temperature, and the properties of water are related to the local temperature. The relevant properties are obtained from REFPROP, 2007. The heat transfer coefficient of CO<sub>2</sub> is based on the Dang and Hihara, 2004a, i.e.,

$$h_c = Nu_c k_c / d. \quad (4)$$

$$Nu_c = \frac{\left(\frac{f_c}{8}\right) (Re_b - 1000) Pr}{1.07 + 12.7 \sqrt{\frac{f_c}{8}} (Pr^{2/3} - 1)}. \quad (5)$$

where

$$Pr = \begin{cases} \frac{C_{p,b} \mu_b / \lambda_b}{C_{p,b} \mu_b / \lambda_f}, & \text{for } C_{p,b} \geq \frac{C_p}{2} \\ \frac{C_{p,b} \mu_b / \lambda_f}{C_{p,b} \mu_f / \lambda_f}, & \text{for } C_{p,b} < \frac{C_p}{2} \text{ and } \mu_b / \lambda_b \geq \mu_f / \lambda_f \\ \frac{C_{p,b} \mu_f / \lambda_f}{C_{p,b} \mu_f / \lambda_f}, & \text{for } C_{p,b} < \frac{C_p}{2} \text{ and } \mu_b / \lambda_b < \mu_f / \lambda_f \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

$$\overline{C_p} = \frac{h_b - h_{\text{wall}}}{T_b - T_{\text{wall}}}. \quad (7)$$

$$Re_b = \frac{G d_i}{\mu_b}. \quad (8)$$

$$f_c = [1.82 \log(Re_b) - 1.64]^{-2}. \quad (9)$$

where the subscript b represents the bulk temperature, wall is evaluated at the wall temperature and *f* denotes a calculation at the film temperature. The film temperature, *T<sub>f</sub>*, is defined as *T<sub>f</sub>* = (*T<sub>b</sub>* + *T<sub>wall</sub>*)/2. In contrast, the heat transfer coefficient for the water side, *h<sub>w</sub>*, is obtained via the Gnielinsk (1976) correlation:

$$h_w = Nu_w k_w / d_H. \quad (10)$$

$$Nu_w = \frac{\left(\frac{f_w}{8}\right) (Re - 1000) Pr}{1.07 + 12.7 \sqrt{\frac{f_w}{8}} (Pr^{2/3} - 1)}. \quad (11)$$

where

$$f_w = [1.82 \log(Re_w) - 1.64]^{-2}. \quad (12)$$

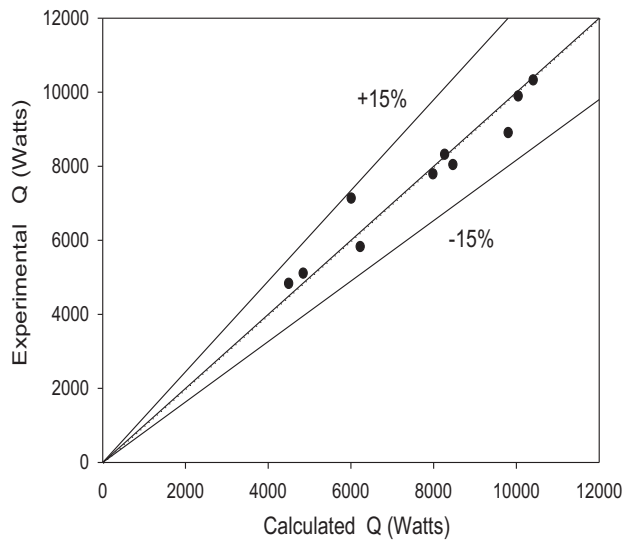
### 3. Results and discussion

To validate the proposed model, the calculation is first compared with the measurements of Pitla et al. (2000). Pitla et al. (2000) conducted experiments exploiting a CO<sub>2</sub> tube-in-tube heat exchanger with an ID of 0.00472 m and an OD of 0.00635 m for the inner tube. The ID for the outer tube is 0.01575 m. Their test conditions are tabulated in Table 1. Using the inlet conditions for their raw data, the calculated cooling capacity vs. their measurements is depicted in Fig. 2. As seen, the calculations are in line with the experimental measurements, suggesting the applicability of the present modeling.

Fig. 3 is a schematic showing the relevant influence of the local heat transfer rate as a function of position, starting at the inlet of the fluid where the minimum thermal capacitance rate (*C<sub>min</sub>*) occurs. Fig. 3(a) depicts a schematic showing the local heat transfer rate vs. the dimensionless distance from the inlet of *C<sub>min</sub>* for a typical tube-in-tube heat exchanger using a conventional, subcritical, single-phase fluid such as water/water. In general, the variation in the local heat transfer rate shows only monotonic variation, and the heat transfer rate peaks at the inlet of *C<sub>min</sub>*, regardless of whether *C<sub>min</sub>* is on

**Table 1 – Test conditions for Pitla et al. (2000).**

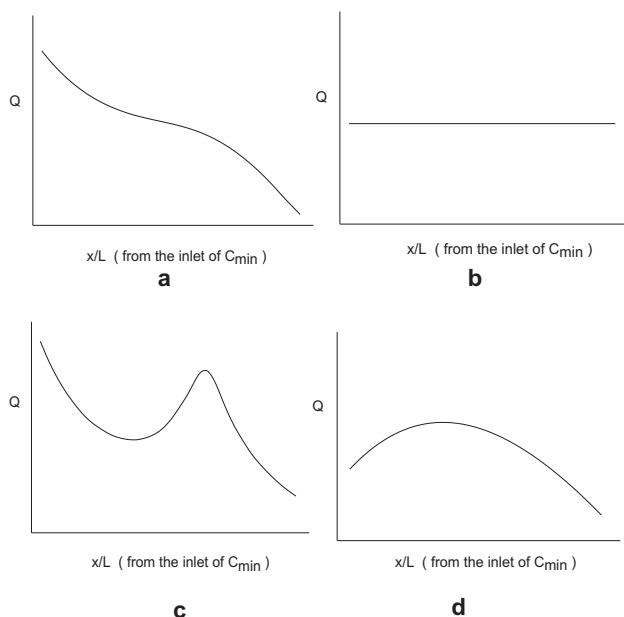
Variant	<i>T</i> <sub>CO<sub>2</sub>,in</sub> (°C)	<i>P</i> <sub>CO<sub>2</sub>,in</sub> (MPa)	<i>T</i> <sub>water,in</sub> (°C)	<i>Mc</i> (kg s <sup>-1</sup> )	<i>Mw</i> (kg s <sup>-1</sup> )
Run1	121.2	9.44	20.8	0.01963	0.04011
Run2	126	11.19	24.2	0.0274	0.040497
Run3	73.3	13.33	36.12	0.02043	0.12914
Run4	123.5	10.8	27.21	0.02862	0.084087
Run5	107.2	8.11	24.2	0.0198	0.0455
Run6	123.4	8.98	22.3	0.02996	0.067864
Run7	118.3	7.79	21.2	0.02123	0.066434
Run8	115.8	8.60	18.9	0.03436	0.084087
Run9	114.9	8.76	18.9	0.03638	0.065091
Run10	113.4	9.50	15.9	0.03825	0.109052



**Fig. 2 – Comparison of the local heat transfer rate for the calculations and Pitla et al.'s data (2000).**

the hot side or the cold side, followed by a steady decrease from the inlet of  $C_{\min}$  toward the outlet. In an extreme case in which  $C_{\min} = C_{\max}$ , the variation of the local heat transfer rate remains unchanged, provided the overall heat transfer coefficient is unchanged, as shown in Fig. 3(b).

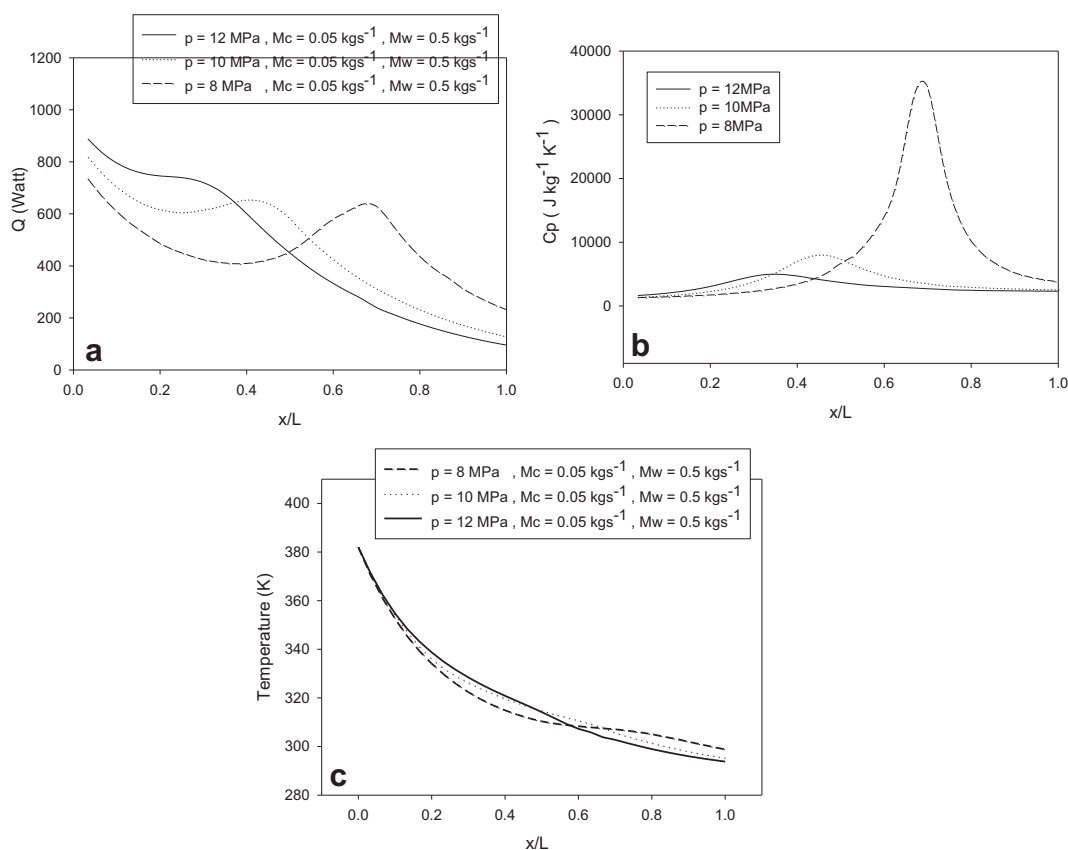
Apart from the constant-property condition, appreciable changes in the thermophysical properties of  $\text{CO}_2$  give rise to some certain unique characteristics. Of course, the variation in the local heat transfer rate for a  $\text{CO}_2$  heat exchanger still behaves quite similarly to the constant-property scenario (Fig. 3(a)) as long as the  $\text{CO}_2$  does not pass the pseudo-critical



**Fig. 3 – Schematic of the variation of the local heat transfer rate for a tube-in-tube heat exchanger: (a) Constant property,  $C_{\min} \neq C_{\max}$ ; (b) Constant property,  $C_{\min} = C_{\max}$ ; (c)  $\text{CO}_2$  flow across the pseudo-critical point; and (d) Variable property.**

point. Aside from the conventional monotonic behavior, there are two special phenomena that may be seen for the  $\text{CO}_2$  heat exchanger, namely, a local minimum and a plateau (Fig. 3(c)) and a local maximum may occur within the heat exchanger (Fig. 3(d)). To illustrate these special phenomena, calculations are performed with a  $\text{CO}_2$  tube-in-tube heat exchanger with an ID = 0.020 m and an OD = 0.025 m for the inner tube and an ID = 0.050 m for the outer tube. The calculations are made for inlet pressures of 12, 10, and 8 MPa. The inlet temperatures of  $\text{CO}_2$  and water are 382 K and 287 K, respectively, while the mass flow rates for water and  $\text{CO}_2$  are both  $0.5 \text{ kg s}^{-1}$ . The variation of the local heat transfer rate as a function of the dimensionless tube length is shown in Fig. 4(a). As clearly seen in this figure, the  $\text{CO}_2$  heat exchanger shows a peculiar trend compared with that of constant-property fluids. The local heat transfer rate does not show a consistently monotonic decrease from the inlet of  $C_{\min}$  along the length of the heat exchanger. Conversely, the local heat transfer rate first decreases to a local minimum, followed by a rise to a plateau, and finally decreases again toward the outlet. This strange phenomenon becomes more and more apparent when the inlet pressure is further reduced. In fact, a significant recovery of the local heat transfer rate is encountered for  $p = 8 \text{ MPa}$ , despite the fact that the maximum temperature difference still occurs at the  $\text{CO}_2$  inlet. To explain this phenomenon, one must understand the variation of the specific heat capacity of  $\text{CO}_2$  above the critical point, as shown in Fig. 4(b). For a given supercritical pressure, a sharp rise in the  $c_p$  is seen at the so-called pseudo-critical temperature. In practice, when cooling, the very hot  $\text{CO}_2$  gas may inevitably pass through this temperature. In this sense, a significant increase in  $c_p$  is seen near this temperature, leading to an increase in the heat transfer coefficient and a much larger overall heat transfer coefficient accordingly. This phenomenon becomes even more pronounced when the pressure is further decreased as  $c_p$  increases near the critical point. As a result, a significant recovery of the local heat transfer rate and a second maximum occur in the tube-in-tube heat exchanger. The temperature variation of  $\text{CO}_2$  as a function of the tube length is depicted in Fig. 4(c). The effect of the inlet pressure on the variation of the  $\text{CO}_2$  temperature is not as apparent as the variation of the heat transfer rate, even when there is a significant change in the overall heat transfer coefficient. One of the explanations involves the considerable increase in the heat capacity flow rate ( $C$ ) of the  $\text{CO}_2$  near the pseudo-critical temperature. Based on a simple energy balance formula,  $Q = C_c \Delta T$ , it is not surprising that the variation of the  $\text{CO}_2$  temperature tends to show a very slowly decreasing trend adjacent to the pseudo-critical region when compared with the inlet or outlet region. Apparently, this phenomenon becomes more pronounced as the inlet pressure is decreased, thereby leading to intersections of the temperatures profiles along the length of the heat exchangers. The foregoing results imply that the heat transfer characteristics of  $\text{CO}_2$  near the pseudo-critical region resemble normal refrigerants, which show an invariant temperature at the condensation point.

In contrast, it is possible for a local maximum to occur near the inlet of  $C_{\min}$  (Fig. 3(d)) even when  $\text{CO}_2$  does not pass through the pseudo-critical point. This occurs when  $C_{\min}$  is on the water side and the effect of the variable properties has



**Fig. 4 – Effect of the inlet pressure on (a) The variation of the local heat transfer rate vs. the dimensionless tube length, (b) The variation of  $c_p$  vs. the dimensionless tube length and (c) The variation of the  $\text{CO}_2$  temperature vs. the dimensionless tube length.**

been accounted for. Basically, the recovery of the local heat transfer rate is quite small and could also be applicable to any working-fluid subject to the same conditions.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The present study described a tube-in-tube heat exchanger model applicable for supercritical  $\text{CO}_2$  and water. The developed model is validated with some existing measurements. In addition, a further calculation is made to examine the influence of the inlet pressure of  $\text{CO}_2$  on the heat transfer performance. Normally, the variation of the local heat transfer rate for constant-property working fluids shows a monotonic decrease from the inlet of  $C_{\min}$ . Conversely the  $\text{CO}_2$  may present a local minimum and a local maximum along the length of the heat exchanger, provided  $\text{CO}_2$  passes through the pseudo-critical temperature, and this phenomenon becomes more and more pronounced when the pressure is close to the critical pressure. The phenomenon is attributed to the significant increase in the specific heat of  $\text{CO}_2$  near the pseudo-critical temperature. The calculation also shows that the effect of the inlet pressure on the variation of the  $\text{CO}_2$  temperature is not as apparent as the variation of the heat transfer rate, even when there is a significant change in the overall heat transfer coefficient. This is also associated with a considerable increase in the heat capacity flow rate of the

$\text{CO}_2$  near the pseudo-critical temperature. As a consequence, the variation of the  $\text{CO}_2$  temperature tends to show a very slow decreasing trend adjacent to the pseudo-critical region when compared with the inlet or outlet region. Apparently, this phenomenon becomes more pronounced as the inlet pressure is decreased, thereby leading to intersections of the temperatures profiles along the length of the heat exchangers. The foregoing results imply that the heat transfer characteristics of  $\text{CO}_2$  near the pseudo-critical region resemble those of normal refrigerants, which show an invariant temperature at the condensation point. Hence, it would be beneficial to expand the influence of the pseudo-critical region when considering heat transfer augmentation.

In contrast, it is possible for a local maximum heat transfer rate to occur near the inlet of  $C_{\min}$ , even when  $\text{CO}_2$  does not pass through the pseudo-critical point. This happens when  $C_{\min}$  is on the water side and the variation in the  $\text{CO}_2$  properties is taken into account.

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