‘Lab on a Chip’ Systems for Environmental Analysis

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Stavanger, August 2014

Rhituparna Paul Payel
Abstract

‘Lab on a chip’ refers to devices and methods for controlling and manipulating fluid flows at micro levels. These microfluidic devices used for manipulating and controlling fluids are widespread now, and are used in many scientific and industrial contexts. ‘Lab on a chip’ fabrication requires different geometries than the laboratory processes. It also depends on the interplays of multiple physical effects such as pressure gradients, electrokinetics, capillarity force etc. This thesis provides an overview of different techniques of flows in microdevices with focus on electrokinetics, mixing and dispersion, different microfluidic components, injection techniques, different sensing processes. It also focused here about the existing ‘lab on chip’ applications in industry and its future prospects. Lab on a chip system is growing very fast, replacing laboratory procedures and man work. It not only synthesizes chemicals efficiently but also carries out biological and chemical analyses. It has developed its applications in modern chemistry, clinical chemistry, fabrication, engineering and materials science, biology, physics, electronics, aiding communication and collaboration across disciplines. Most biological applications on lab on a chip are already commercialized in global market whereas for environmental chemistry, the field is still developing. Some established applications of lab on a chip in environmental chemistry and life science are discussed here.
Table of Contents

Title Page...................................................................................................................................................................... II
Acknowledgement............................................................................................................................................................ III
Abstract .......................................................................................................................................................................... IV
Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................................................. VI
1. Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Motivations for lab on chip.................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 ‘Lab on a chip’ at present ................................................................................................................................... 2
2. Techniques and Components ................................................................................................................................. 3
   2.1 Chemical Sensing Techniques .......................................................................................................................... 3
      2.1.1 Spectrometry .............................................................................................................................................. 3
      2.1.2 Luminescence ............................................................................................................................................ 6
      2.1.3 Fluorescence .............................................................................................................................................. 7
      2.1.4 Capillary electrophoresis ........................................................................................................................ 8
      2.1.5 Electrochemical ......................................................................................................................................... 9
      2.1.6 Laser .......................................................................................................................................................... 9
      2.1.7 Mass Spectrometry ............................................................................................................................... 10
   2.2 Components ........................................................................................................................................................ 11
      2.2.1 Injectors ...................................................................................................................................................... 11
      2.2.2 Transporters ............................................................................................................................................ 12
      2.2.3 Preparators ............................................................................................................................................... 13
      2.2.4 Mixers ....................................................................................................................................................... 15
      2.2.5 Reactors .................................................................................................................................................... 17
      2.2.6 Separators ................................................................................................................................................. 18
      2.2.7 Controllers .............................................................................................................................................. 19
      2.2.8 Power Supply ......................................................................................................................................... 20
3. Existing Applications of LOC ............................................................................................................................... 21
   3.1 Application in Environmental Chemistry ....................................................................................................... 21
   3.2 Applications in Life Science ............................................................................................................................ 26
4. Adoption to new technologies and general issues to adoption ................................................................. 36
5. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................................... 38
6. Expected Future Developments ....................................................................................................................... 38
References ................................................................................................................................................................. 39
**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.L</td>
<td>Bioluminescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Bone Marrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Cord Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCD</td>
<td>Charged Coupled Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Capillary Electrophoresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.L</td>
<td>Chemiluminescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMOS</td>
<td>Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Cyclic Voltammetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARPA</td>
<td>Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEP</td>
<td>Di-Electrophoresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Deoxyribonucleic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMV</td>
<td>Electromagnetic valve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESI-MS</td>
<td>Electro Spray Ionization Mass Spectrometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBB</td>
<td>Microfluidic BreadBoard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPC</td>
<td>Gas-Phase Chromatography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLA</td>
<td>Human Leukocyte Antigen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPLC</td>
<td>High-Pressure Liquid Chromatography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBS</td>
<td>Laser Induced Breakdown Spectrometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASS</td>
<td>Laser Spark Spectrometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>Lab on a Chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD</td>
<td>Limit of Detection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Microchip Electrophoresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMS</td>
<td>Micro Electromechanical Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGA</td>
<td>Microfluidic Genetic Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>1-(2-pyridylazo)-2-naphthol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>Peripheral Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDMS</td>
<td>Poly Dimethylsiloxane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMMA</td>
<td>Poly Methyl Methacrylate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>Polymerase Chain Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PET</td>
<td>Positron Emission Tomography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PZT</td>
<td>Piezoelectric Transducer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC</td>
<td>Red Blood Cell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA</td>
<td>Ribonucleic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE</td>
<td>Solid-phase extraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>White Blood Cell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

Lab on a chip is the science and technology of systems that process or manipulate microscopic amounts (10⁻⁹ to 10⁻¹⁸ liters) of fluids. It uses channels with dimensions of tens to hundreds of micrometers. The applications of microfluidic technologies have been in study. They offer a number of different useful capabilities like the ability to use very little amount of samples and reagents; carry out separations and detections with high sensitivity and resolution; lower cost; minimum time for analysis; and the smaller analytical devices.

1.1 Motivation for lab on chip

The field of microfluidics is based on the development of four different sectors: molecular analysis, biodefence, molecular biology and microelectronics. The origins of microfluidics lie in microanalytical methods like gas-phase chromatography (GPC), high-pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC) and capillary electrophoresis (CE). These methods combined with the capability of the laser optical detection made it possible to gain high sensitivity and high resolution using very small amounts of sample. With the ongoing successes on these microanalytical methods, it is obvious now to widen the field with new, more compact and more versatile formats for them, and their applications in chemistry and biochemistry and biology.

The second motivation for the development of microfluidic systems rose after the end of the cold war. To counter the threats from chemical and biological weapons from terrorists, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) of the US Department of Defense supported a series of different programs in the 1990s aiming at the development of field-deployable microfluidic systems to serve as detectors for chemical and biological threats. These programs worked as the main stimulator for the rapid growth of microfluidic technology.

The third motivation came from the molecular biology. The explosion of genomics in the 1980s was followed by the initiation of other areas of microanalysis related to molecular biology like DNA sequencing. These required analytical methods with higher sensitivity and resolution and much greater throughput than had been contemplated in biology earlier. Microfluidics approached to overcome these issues.

The fourth motivation was microelectronics. The main optimism of microfluidics was photolithography and the associated technologies. These implementations had been so successful in silicon microelectronics and in micro electromechanical systems (MEMS). It would be directly applicable to microfluidics. Some of the earliest work in fluidic microsystems used silicon and glass, but now-a-days, these materials have largely been replaced by plastics. For analyses of biological and chemical samples in water, glass and silicon fabricated devices are usually inappropriate. Silicon is expensive and difficult for visibility. For detection, ultraviolet light cannot be used because of this invisibility along with conventional optical methods. It is
easier to construct the components required for micro analytical systems in elastomers like PDMS (Poly Dimethylsiloxane) than in rigid materials[1].

1.2 ‘Lab on a chip’ at present

At present, lab on a chip, together with new methods of fabrication has been able to utilize certain fundamental differences between the physical properties of fluids moving in large channels and those travelling though micrometer-scale channels [2-4]. There are now different enough methods of fabrication of ‘lab on a chip’ and a sufficient range of components which makes it possible to begin to apply lab on a chip systems to the resolution of problems. The most developed applications are screen conditioning like pH, ionic strength, compositions and concentrations. Cell biology and chemical synthesis; these two fields are the most common fields for lab on a chip applications. Cell biology entered a new phase with lab on a chip development. Jensen et al.[5] described different new tools useful for cell biologists. In chemical synthesis, lab on a chip technology fits naturally. But this adaption seems to be bit slow because of the flexibility of conventional apparatus and PDMS dissolves in many organic solvents [6]. The use of glass or silicon in the place of PDMS can resolve this issue but the fabrication of lab on chip with any of these materials are more difficult and challenging than that with PDMS.
2. Techniques and Components

2.1 Chemical Sensing Techniques

This section describes about different detection techniques used for ‘Lab on a chip’ analysis. These include spectrometry, luminescence, fluorescence, chromatography, electrochemical, mass spectrometry, laser and electrophoresis.

2.1.1 Spectrometry

This is mainly the analysis of electromagnetic radiation. Every chemical element absorbs photon at a certain wavelength. The measurement of this absorption is called absorption spectrometry.

I. Absorption, Transmission and Concentration

There is a relation between concentration of molecule in solution and photon absorption. This relationship is described by the Beer-Lambert-Bouger Law. According to that, Equation 2.1:

\[- \frac{dP}{P_z} = \sigma NA \, dz\]

Equation 2.1

Where, $dP$= Power absorbed by infinitesimal slab of thickness $dz$ for monochromatic light

$P_z$= Power entering the slab

$NA$= Avogadro's number

$\sigma$ = Effective absorption cross section of module

The amount of light absorbed is proportional to the amount of molecules in the medium which the light passes through. So, in the medium, the concentration of a molecule is directly proportional to the amount of light absorbed. The one drawback for this law is that it is only applicable when the molecules are evenly distributed and behaves differently from another absorbing species. The graphical representation in Figure 2.1 shows deviation caused by polychromatic light in the Beer-Lambert-Bouger Law.
In commercial cases, the linear relationship between concentration and absorption remains valid until the absorption is greater than 3 (excitation source filters used). Table 2-1 shows typical absorption performance data.

Table 2-1: Existing absorption spectrometry in lab on a chip analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Detector material</th>
<th>Wavelength(nm)</th>
<th>Min. Absorption(A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shimadzu UV-3600</td>
<td>Pbs, InGaAs, PMT</td>
<td>185-3300</td>
<td>0.0003 [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasco V-670</td>
<td>PMT, Pbs</td>
<td>190-3200</td>
<td>0.002 [9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU 800</td>
<td>Si</td>
<td>190-1100</td>
<td>0.005 [10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitachi U4100</td>
<td>PMT, Pbs</td>
<td>175-2600</td>
<td>0.002 [11]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Direct Spectrophotometry

The concentration of molecules, especially in sea water, like nitrate can be determined by calculating zero, first and second derivatives of absorption measurements. These absorption measurements are taken form UV-Vis spectrophotometry. Zero derivative gives measurement of absorption at a set wavelength whereas first derivative gives rate of change of absorption with wavelength and second derivative is the rate of change of first derivative. Figure 2.2a is a graph of absorption peak for nitrate at 210nm using the zero derivative. Both the first and second derivative are limited to nitrite detection in the solution of pH>5. This is because at more acidic environment nitrite becomes nitrous oxide and reduces the absorbance. This does not happen in sea water as sea water is alkaline. For the first derivative detection of nitrate, it is affected by the salinity of water [12] and other salts [13]. To minimize effect of other species on first derivative measurement, it is calculated using multiple wave lengths. Figure 2.2b shows nitrate having different absorption peaks at 203nm and 302nm which distorts the absorption level as spectra overlaps.
On the other hand, second derivative direct spectrometry has the efficiency of measuring nitrate containing other species as well without using any reagent. It also allows detection of nitrate and nitrite simultaneously [14, 15] as it is capable of separating those overlapped spectrums. The main disadvantage of direct spectrometry is that the derivation of spectra can amplify noise and highly dependent on the instrument condition.

![Figure 2.2](image.png)

**Figure 2.2:** a. 210nm absorption peak for nitrate [15] b. comparison of nitrite and nitrate spectra [16].

### III. **Indirect(Colorimetric) Spectrophotometry**

The mostly used colorimetric spectrophotometry is for Nitrite detection with Griess reaction [17]. Figure 2.3 shows the Griess reaction in which under acidic conditions nitrite reacts with the amino group of sulfanilic acid in the form of diazonium cation which is coupled to a-napthylamine [7]. Colorimetric spectrophotometry is also known as indirect spectrophotometry. Nitrate and ammonia is also detectable by indirect spectrophotometry using greiss reaction. Before detection, both of them have to be reduced to nitrite. Equation 2.2 illustrates that NaOCl transforms NH$_3^-$ to monochloramine (at pH > 7.5) and in presence of bromide, this monochloramine is reduced to nitrite. For nitrate, the reduction of nitrate to nitrite is done by cadmium. Equation 2.3 shows the reaction of nitrate with cadmium column.

\[
\text{NH}_4^+ + \text{OH}^- \rightarrow \text{NH}_3 + \text{H}_2\text{O} \quad \text{Equation 2.2}
\]

\[
\text{NH}_3^- + \text{NaOCl} = \text{NH}_2\text{Cl} + \text{NaOH}
\]

\[
\text{NH}_2\text{Cl} \xrightarrow{\text{Br}^-} \text{NO}_3^-
\]
\[ \text{NO}_3^- + 2\text{H}^+ + 2\text{e}^- \rightarrow \text{NO}_2^- + \text{H}_2\text{O} \quad \text{Equation 2.3} \]

\[ \text{Cd} \rightarrow \text{Cd}^{2+} \ 2\text{e}^- \]

**Figure 2.3**: The Griess Reaction which shows under acidic condition, nitrite reacts with the amino group of sulfanilic acid to form Azo dye [18].

### 2.1.2 Luminescence

There are two most commonly used luminescence methods: Bioluminescence(B.L) and Chemiluminescence(C.L). B.L uses natural luminescence created in a living organism when chemical energy is converted to light energy [19, 20]. C.L uses luminescence from chemical or biochemical reaction. **Figure 2.4** shows an overview of the mechanism leading to C.L. Here the reaction produces sufficient energy to excite an electron. This electron then decays to a lower energy state and emits a photon. C.L method is used for the detection of nitrite and nitrate in sea water[21]; but it can also be used to detect other elements or compounds like hydrogen peroxide, ammonium, chlorine, oxygen, copper, phosphate and sulphites. Very few chemical reactions can produce C.L. Because of limited selectivity of reagents, large sample volume, low measurement frequency, C.L method is not a commonly used method for in situ sensors.
2.1.3 Fluorescence

Optical detection is considered as the most common detection method in lab-on-a-chip devices. Its integration simplicity has made this technique most popular. Additionally, light distribution on the chip enables integration of multiple individual detectors on a single chip [22]. In case of fluorescence detection, cells (labeled with fluorescent dye) emit light once they are excited with a light source (laser) [23, 24]. One main drawback for this is dye emission light usually gets overwhelmed by the excitation light in fluorescence detection. A band pass filter is used to overcome this [25, 26]. Klotzkin and Papautsky [27] proposed alternate solution with integration of a polarizer to isolate excitation light from the detector. Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6 shows techniques for fluorescence and polarizer analysis. Banerjee described cross polarization strategy which is used with organic photodiode detectors in a fluorescence-based lab-on-a-chip [28] which is currently in use. Absorption spectroscopy [29, 30] is also widely used in optical detection due to its label-free environment. The intensity of a beam of light is measured before and after interaction with the analyte according to this technique. Absorption detection shows a lower sensitivity resulting in reduced limit of detection (LOD).
2.1.4 Capillary electrophoresis

Capillary electrophoresis (C.E) is the technique of separating ionic species by their charge and frictional forces. It was first used by Landers in 1995[31]. Figure 2.7 shows schematic of capillary electrophoresis. A voltage is applied across the electrodes in capillary, solute ions will move towards an electrode of opposite charge. Concentration of nitrate and relevant chemicals in water can be detected using CE method [32]. Success with CE is highly dependent on the buffer solution used and it is not easy to analyze anions in seawater [33]. Table 2-2 illustrates different modes of CE operation.

Table 2-2: Different Mode dependent CE operation[31]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Operating Principle</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone electrophoresis</td>
<td>Charge to mass ratio</td>
<td>Small ions, proteins, small molecules, DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micellar electrokinetic</td>
<td>Charges species</td>
<td>Peptides, DNA, small molecules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iso tachophoresis</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Peptide, protein and small molecules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromatography</td>
<td>Ratio and partitioning into micelles according to hydrophobicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gel electrophoresis</td>
<td>Slewing based on charge to mass ratio</td>
<td>Peptides, proteins, DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iso electric focusing</td>
<td>Iso electric point</td>
<td>Proteins and peptides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.5 Electrochemical

Electrochemical detection is comprised of three electrodes. The working electrode is dipped into the solution which contains analyte. To facilitate the electron transfer to and from the analyte, a voltage is applied. A reference electrode is also used as a reference to measure and control working electrodes. The auxiliary electrode gives the current needed to balance the current measured at the working electrode. This electrode is also named as counter electrode. To provide a conductive environment, additional electrolyte is added in the system. The ease of fabrication and integration of electrochemical cells with micro fluidic devices is the main advantage of this technique and making it suitable for biosensor systems that are based upon biochemical reactions for recognition [35].

Wei et al. described that working electrode potential is ramped linearly versus time in cyclic volumetric analysis [36]. When the potential reaches the set potential, the working electrode potential ramp is inverted. Again the potential of the working electrode is varied, and the resulting current from faradic processes occurring at the electrode is monitored as a function of time in chronoamperometry [35, 37]. According to Dong, a series of regular voltage pulses can be superimposed on the potential linear sweep or stair steps in differential pulse in voltametry technique [38]. During deposition, working electrode is electroplated with the analyte of interest where the species is oxidized from the electrode during stripping step [39].

2.1.6 Laser

Laser induction techniques are of two types: a) Laser induced breakdown spectrometry (L.I.B.S) and b) Laser spark spectrometry (L.A.S.S). These techniques began to be used since 1980 for single wavelength multi-element analysis. LIBS is now used for total spectral analysis in gas or
water enabling removal of performing thousands of measurements. **Figure 2.8** shows the schematic of LIBS technique. This is the analysis of light emission which is produced when a pulsed laser beam put on a sample in order to create high temperature micro plasma[40]. Photosynthesis detectors collect the spectrum of light emission and record the intensity at a specific wavelength. LIBS is unsuitable for in situ deployment because of its size, power requirement and low sensitivity whereas in situ deployment is low cost and miniaturized sensors are used.

![Figure 2.8: Schematic of LIBS[40].](image)

### 2.1.7 Mass Spectrometry

Mass spectrometry takes in concern the ratio of charge to mass of particles. By this ratio, chemical composition of a compound is identified. This technique can provide molecular weight and structural information; so it is used in proteomics analysis. For electro spray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS) detection of concentrated and resolved cytochrome c peptides, two Spellman high-voltage power supplies are given to deliver electric potentials of 18 KV to the glass vial and 3 KV to the micro dialysis junction to maintain an electric field of 300 V/cm over a 50 cm separation distance as well as induce the electro spray of peptides [41]. Yang et al first reported that polymer-based microchip have direct integration with an electro spray emitter and an internal gold electrode [42].
2.2 Components

The functionality of a lab on a chip system depends on: injector, transporter, preparator, mixer, reactor, separator, detector, controller, and power supply[39]. Figure 2.9 illustrates the component view of a lab on a chip system.

![Figure 2.9: Lab on a chip component view[39].](image)

2.2.1 Injectors

Injectors are used to ensure precise micro/nano liter volume delivery of sample or reagent into a lab on-a-chip process for analytical analysis. Injector principal depend on two different technologies:

I. Between the external world and the lab-on-a-chip.
II. Among the internal components of the lab-on-a-chip.

Table 2-3 shows different existing injection methods for lab on a chip system. These injectors have been developed and used in on-board of lab-on-a-chip devices. Syringe pumps and robotic pipettes are the most commonly used injectors. Precise sample volume delivery among different components is a most required for reaction and separation tasks in chemical and biological analysis on chip systems.
Table 2-3: Developed Injectors in existing lab on a chip system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Injection method</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External Injection</td>
<td>Robotic pipette</td>
<td>3µL delivery volume [43]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic pipette</td>
<td>100 nL–1µL range from a pipette loaded with 10µL [44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syringe pipe</td>
<td>75 µL delivery volume [45]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metering chamber based on capillary burst valve</td>
<td>µL range to µL range delivery volume [46]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among internal components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volume measurement</th>
<th>Repeatability of standard deviation [47]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.30% for the 50 µL dispenser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45% for the 100 µL dispenser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.30% for the 150 µL dispenser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electronic hydrodynamic focusing</td>
<td>1 pL delivery volume [48]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2 Transporters

Fluidic transporters are used to control fluids flow sequence, flow duration, flow direction, and flow rate for fluid manipulation.

Table 2-4 gives examples of existing transporters in lab on a chip system. It can be categorized in the following two groups according to their actuation and driving force:

I. **Active transporter**

Active transporters require energy to actuate or give a driving force. Different kinds of driving forces are there like pneumatic, thermo-pneumatic, piezoelectric, hydrodynamic and electro osmosis, electrochemical and hydrostatic. Higher driving voltage is required for Pneumatic, thermo-pneumatic, and piezoelectric driven micro pumps and micro valves and these results in high power consumption. It is more complicated with the inclusion of a large voltage source which is usually bulky and inappropriate for point-of-care devices. On the other hand electrochemical pumping systems are preferable because they eliminate the design complexity and require a lower fabrication cost compared to their pressure-driven counterparts.
Table 2-4: Developed active and passive transporters in existing lab on a chip system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving Force</th>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>Maximum Flow rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pneumatic</td>
<td>Peristaltic pump and switch valves</td>
<td>10 mm/s to 14 mm/s depending on material [48]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serpentine-shaped micro-pump and 4 micro-valves</td>
<td>39.8 µL/min [49]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rotary pump with electromagnetic valves</td>
<td>170 µL/min at 30 psi [50]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spider-web peristaltic micro pump</td>
<td>8.4 µL/min at 150 kPa [51]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermo-pneumatic</td>
<td>Pump chamber and micro-valves</td>
<td>730 nL/min at 500 mW [52]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piezoelectric</td>
<td>Peristaltic pump</td>
<td>1,500 µL/min [53]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrodynamic and electro-osmosis</td>
<td>T-shaped micro channels with 4 reservoirs</td>
<td>0.2 mm/s [54]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrochemical</td>
<td>Micro-pump</td>
<td>0.8 ml/min [55]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syringe micro-pump and 2 check valves</td>
<td>0.74 mm/min [56]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrostatic pressure</td>
<td>Silica capillary</td>
<td>100 µL/min [57]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Passive transporter

Passive transporters neither require energy to actuate nor give a driving force. In the field of reactive cellular and tissues studies, diffusion mediated transporters are preferred because of their simplicity as they do not require any external force or power supplies. Various flow rates are achieved by manipulating Channel dimensions and geometries [58, 59]. Another passive transportation technique is gravity-driven pumping system which is able to maintain its flow rate regardless of the fluid in the reservoir [57]. Hydrostatic pressure is the key to generate gravity driven micro flow injection. As the gravity pump cannot generate steady flow, to ensure reproducibility of the micro flow injection analytical signals for two-phase segmented flow, reasonable liquid level difference and regular sample and solvent aspiration are needed. Absorption and capillary force are also common as passive transporter techniques [60].

2.2.3 Preparators

Sample pre-treatment is a mandatory step in molecular analysis especially in different kinds of amplification like DNA amplification. Also, residual material from the samples can inhibit the process reducing the efficiency of PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) amplification. These are also applicable to environmental and food samples collected for contaminants examination and pathogen detection. Integration of sample preparation on micro fluidic devices is challenging due to existence of the raw sample in different formats. Also the treatment and preparation of the sample is dependent on the type of analysis to be performed. Existing on-chip sample preparation protocols are filtration, pre-concentration, cell lysis and derivatization.
I. Filtration

Filtration is the most common technique to isolate the analyte of interest from the samples. Micro filters are the typical instrument for this. To strain wanted cells from the sample, filters structures can be designed. Filter can work in the form of membrane filters with holes diameter of 4–12 µm and thickness of 1–3 µm. Figure 2.10 shows different shapes of existing micro filters. These filters are used to filtrate airborne particles from airflows [61].

Another filtration method is by using micro fabricated silicon structures[62]. Filtration by hydrophoretic strategy exploits the differences in size and deformability of cells. The practical implementation is in red blood cells filtration [63]. The most robust and effective system for filtration of larger particles(2 µm) in liquid is acoustic focusing as it requires low surface area [64]. Acoustic standing waves are generated via an integrated piezoelectric transducer (PZT) in the micro channel. Different driving voltage and particle size results in different focusing efficiency. By adjusting the driving conditions of the transducer, particles above a selected size can be removed.

The most common problems faced in filtration systems are due to clogging and surface adsorption.

II. Pre-concentration

Sample enrichment plays an important role in improving the detector sensitivity. Here comes the point of sample pre-concentration. This can be done by applying a voltage difference between sample reservoir and pre concentrator reservoirs based on the principle of field-amplified sample stacking [65]. Solid-phase extraction (SPE) creates a mobile phase and a stationary phase for mixture separation in medium. The desired or unwanted particle is retained at the stationary phase while the migrated particles through the stationary phase is either collected or discarded. Desired particles trapped at the stationary phase are collected by rinsing stationary chamber using appropriate solution. One frequently used SPE application is for isolation of nucleic acid which is a extraction from one liquid phase to another [66].
III. **Cell lysis**

For intracellular and single cell studies, lysing of cell ruptures the membrane cell to access their contents. Several cell lysis methods are used like mechanical, chemical, physic-chemical, enzymatic, optical, acoustic, and electrical. This selection depends on the downstream analysis to be performed [67].

IV. **Derivatization**

Derivatization is a sample preparation method which is frequently used in chemical analysis to convert a chemical compound into a product of similar chemical structure. This improves detector sensitivity and selectivity in laser-induced fluorescent detection in capillary electrophoresis. A comprehensive report describing different derivatization techniques has been published by Waterval et al [68].

2.2.4 **Mixers**

The main function of mixer is to mix multiple streams of fluids in micro channels of a lab on a chip. Mixing of multiple liquids in mixers is performed based on laminar diffusion under normal conditions. **Table 2-5** shows different existing mixers on lab on a chip system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating principle</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magnetic</td>
<td>Maximum Mixing time is 0.5 s [69]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultrasonic</td>
<td>Turbulence occurs instantaneously after the ultrasonic vibration causes the mixing to spread nearly throughout the entire chamber after 2 s [70, 71]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumatic</td>
<td>Mixing index is 96.3% [72]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>Mixing is achieved at &lt;10 ms over a length of 200 µm [73]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic mixing</td>
<td>Complete mixing is achieved within &lt;1 ms after the two liquids make contact [74]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mixers can be classified into two groups according to the mixing force (A1, A2):

A1. **Active Mixer**

External forces are required to improve the mixing of input fluids. It is more expensive to develop integrate active mixers on a lab-on-a-chip though active mixers offer more rapid mixing of liquids in a short time interval. Several kinds of active forces are available like magnetic actuated [75] and PZT (piezoelectric transducer) generated ultrasonic vibration [71]. **Figure 2.11** interprets the working process of active and passive mixer.
A2. **Passive Mixer**

The mixing force is the flow characteristics to mix multiple fluids without applying any force. Passive mixers are more robust and stable. But longer period of time is required for ideal mixing. Though it is hard to obtain turbulent flow in the micro channel without external force, mixing can be still enhanced by secondary flow, swirling flow, and vortices [77-80].

According to the technique mixers use to mix fluids, it can be divided into three main categories (B1, B2, B3):

B1. **Serpentine**

These mixers are also known as Chicane mixers. This type of mixer is mostly used due to the easiness in fabrication and design. These are simple rectangular channels. The key working principle is diffusion along the boundary layer of the fluid. In one serpentine mixer, only a long single boundary layer is needed to complete mixing resulting in high back pressure. Figure 2.12A shows typical serpentine mixer.

**Figure 2.12**: A. Serpentine Mixer B. Split and Recombine Mixer C. Herringbone Mixer

B2. **Split and Recombine**

Split and Recombine is the improved version of a serpentine mixer. The main principle here is to increase the number of diffusion boundary layers which results in mixing over a higher length. Both horizontal and vertical lamination can be used [81, 82]. It must be taken care of that
smearing is not increased due to offset fluid flows. Figure 2.12 B shows the illustration of Split and Recombine micromixer.

B3. **Herringbone**

This type of mixer was first introduced by Stroock et al [83, 84]. The channel grooves are designed for folding and stretching (helical flow) within the fluid and to increase the boundary level contact area [85-87]. This technique is not suitable for high resolution sensors as this produces smearing. The main advantage of this is that it gives lower pressure drop. Figure 2.12 C shows a typical illustration of the herringbone mixer.

Table 2-6 shows comparison of these three mixers at micro liter flow rate which is useful to determine suitable micro mixer for the system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of mixer</th>
<th>Flow Rate(µL/min)</th>
<th>Mixing Length(mm)</th>
<th>Mixing level(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serpentine</td>
<td>405.5</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&gt;90 [88]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>81 [89]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split and Recombine-Horizontal</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>&gt;90 [90]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split and Recombine-Vertical</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>&gt;90 [90]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herringbone</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>&gt;90 [81]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&gt;90 [83]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>80.5 [87]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.5 **Reactors**

Reactors act as controller for chemical or biological reaction. The reactor is usually equipped with heaters, sensors, or actuators to control and monitor the reaction process [39]. Reactors reduce cost and risk significantly as only minimal volume of sample and reagent is required for the reaction process. Table 2-7 shows existing reactors in lab on a chip system. Reactors are divided in three groups depending on types of function:

I. **Gas Phase Reactor**

II. **Liquid Phase Reactor**

III. **Packed Bed Reactor**
Table 2-7: Reactors in existing lab on a chip systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Reactor</th>
<th>Work done</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gas-phase</td>
<td>Hydrogen production</td>
<td>Production of 88.19% hydrogen from methanol [91]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid-phase</td>
<td>Amide formation</td>
<td>After 1 h, 1.7 g of crude product (90% pure) were obtained. Reaction yield is 81% [92]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packed-bed</td>
<td>Amie N-alkylation process</td>
<td>N-alkylation in ethanol: time taken is 150 s. Reaction yield of N ethylbenzylamine is 85%. Reaction yield of N-ethylaniline is 34% [93]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.6 Separators

Separators are used to isolate sample and reagents after mixing or reaction processes. This can be used to perform selection of a pre-determined cell for analysis, or isolation of a large number of single cells where a pre-determined cell cannot be identified and determined. Micro-separation technique plays a significant role in chemical and biological analysis. Also, capillary electrophoresis (CE) is the mostly used trend in segregation of desired analyte. There are other techniques such as optical tweezers, magnetic, di-electrophoresis (DEP), iso tachophoresis, chromatography; capillary electrophoresis and laminar flow based filter are also emerging for lab on a chip analysis. Table 2-8 shows existing separators in lab on chip systems.

Table 2-8: Separators in Existing Lab on a Chip Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Separation Target</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optical tweezers</td>
<td>Homogenous mixtures</td>
<td>Count accuracy for homogenous mixture is 98-100% [94]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnetic Separation</td>
<td>Magnetic micro beads</td>
<td>Highest trapping ratio of 84.3% at a flow rate of 20 μL/min with Spiral micro-coil with magnetic pillar [95]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di-electrophoresis (DEP)</td>
<td>Human lung cancer cells, Beads mixture</td>
<td>Separation accuracy for viable cells is 84% and non-viable cells is 81% [49] For purity gained beads of 15 μm diameter is 96.8 ± 0.6%; and for 6 μm diameter is 99.5 ± 0.5% [96]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iso tachophoresis</td>
<td>Tryptophan enantiomers</td>
<td>suitable for analysis of sample containing high concentration enantiomers [97]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laminar flow</td>
<td>Erythrocytes and small fluorescent particles</td>
<td>About 80% of erythrocytes are collected [98]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capillary electrophoresis</td>
<td>Organic peroxides</td>
<td>Separation is achieved within 120 s [99]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.7 Controllers

Controllers manage all on-chip activities like control, data acquisition, and signal processing. They are also responsible for sending control signals to on-chip components such as actuators, heaters, and so on. They collect data from on-chip sensors. A typical controller consists of microcontroller, communication interface, programmable memory, control circuitry, signal preconditioning circuitry and power interface circuitry. Table 2-9 shows different controller applications. Based on integration, controllers are of two types:

I. On-Chip

For lab on a chip technology, it is necessary to integrate all components on chip, not off chip. Lab on a chip for human immunodeficiency virus assay with an on-chip controller was proposed by Guo [100]. The proposed design consists of three modules: micro fluidic chip, sensor, actuators, executor, and a CCD imaging device. Advancement in micro fluidic and CMOS fabrication technology will make the incorporation of controllers in lab-on-a-chip analysis achievable.

II. Off-Chip

Pumps and valves integrated in lab-on-a-chip systems require control circuitry to perform their operations. Wang and Lee [51] developed control circuits and electromagnetic valves to control the motion of pumps. Tseng et al. [72] utilized a microcontroller to control the driving force of electromagnetic valves to generate pumping and mixing effects. A control system is also used in sample concentration and detection based on both insulator-based dielectrophoresis and electrical impedance measurement on lab-on-a-chips. This is shown in the work of Sabounchi et al. [101]. All types of low level and real time micro fluidic interfaces and data acquisition are done by microprocessors.
Table 2-9: Controllers in existing ‘lab on a chip’ systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration of Controller</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-chip</td>
<td>Actuators executor and Sensors [100]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-chip</td>
<td>Programmable high voltage power supply, HVS448 (Lab-Smith, Livermore, CA, USA); Laptop; Sequence software program (LabSmith); Modular power supply connections; Instrument communication; Impedance data acquisition and processing; A/D and D/A converters; 8-bit Rabbit 2000 microprocessor [101] ARM microprocessor [102] Electromagnetic valves, SMC Inc., S070M-5BG-32, Japan; Control circuit [51] Waveform generator (model 33220A; Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA); RF power amplifier (model 325LA; EIN); Lab view program [64]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.8 Power Supply

Power supply is a mandatory thing for lab on a chip analysis. Without a power supply, on-chip components including transducers, actuators, and electronic circuits cannot be energized. Batteries are used as power source in portable lab-on-a-chip devices. On the other hand, lab-on-a-chip systems using electrophoresis or dielectrophoresis, require a very high voltage power supply. It can manipulate the voltage values also; for this high voltage programmable power supplies are needed. Tsai et al. [103] used a programmable high voltage power supply in order to generate the electrokinetic driving forces. This driving force is required for sample injection and separation steps in the CE process. A reusable integrated high voltage power supply for electrokinetic transportation of fluids is presented by Erickson et al. [104]. The self-containable and adjustable power supply was powered by an onboard cell battery.
3. Existing Applications of LOC

Lab on a chip technology is exhilarating the interest of scientists in every aspect. This technology is used not only to synthesize chemicals efficiently and economically but also to carry out biological and clinical analyses. It also performs combinatorial chemistry and carries out full-scale analyses from sample introduction to chemical separation and detection. All of these happen on a single, miniaturized device i.e the chip. The lab on a chip technology is growing very fast in both industrial and academic sectors. It has its applications in modern chemistry, clinical chemistry, fabrication, engineering and materials science, biology, physics, electronics, aiding communication and collaboration across disciplines. Lab on a chip also covers key areas such as: Combinatorial chemistry, Biotechnology, Electronics, Analytical chemistry, Environmental monitoring, Synthetic chemistry, Medical diagnostics and screening, Clinical chemistry, Genomics, proteomics, cellomics (DNA probes, PCR), Pharmaceuticals, Materials science, Engineering, Fluidics, Reactor technology, Fabrication, Robotics, Waste minimization. Biological applications on lab on a chip are already commercialized in global market whereas for environmental chemistry, the field is still developing. Some established applications of lab on a chip in environmental chemistry and life science are discussed here.

3.1 Application in Environmental Chemistry

3.1.1 Microfluidic pH analysis

Currently available laboratory methods are unstable for applications on in situ platforms. Microfluidic pH systems give the opportunity of pH analysis using simple design with low consumption of power and reagents. Such a pH microsensor with high precision and accuracy is being developed at National Oceanographic Center, Southampton, UK. The main indicator is sulfonephthalein (sulfonic acids derived from phthaleins) indicator where the pK value should be comparable to the expected pH of the indicator sea water solution as pK-1 ≤ pH ≤ pK [105]. The microfluidic flow cell comprising the absorption cell as well as a static mixer is made of PMMA(poly methyl methacrylate). Four micro inert valves(Harvard Apparatus Nanomite, Kent, UK) are directly mounted on the chip and the syringe pumps controls fluid propulsion. The 10mm absorption cell has a volume of 5µL and this is connected to a light source and detector with two optical fibers. Figure 3.1 shows the schematic of microfluidic pH analysis. The light source is a tri color LED. This system was continuously on operation for over a month without any interruption except for maintenance [106]. Processing and analysis time takes only 6 minutes.
3.1.2 Sea water Nitrate and Nitrite Analysis

The most widely used method for nitrite detection is the Griess reaction. Nitrate and ammonia can also be detected using the same method but with some additional steps. For detection, both ammonia and nitrate shall be reduced to nitrite. The chemical reaction is shown in Figure 3.2. Under acidic conditions, nitrite reacts with sulfanilic acid and forms diazonium cation. This cation is then coupled to an α-naphthylamine and forms colored chromophores named as azo dye. The absorption of azo dye is directly proportional to nitrite concentration.

The chip for nitrate and nitrite analysis contains three absorption cells: one 25 mm reference cell, one 25 mm measurement cell for concentration< 30 μM, and one 2.5-mm measurement cell for concentration>30 μM. The chip incorporates a fluidic manifold to permit selection of one of four standards: nitrate or nitrite, the sample, and a blank (artificial seawater or Milli-Q). 15 micro inert solenoid valves (LFNA1250325H, Lee Products Ltd., UK) mounted directly to the chip controls the fluid flow in the chip. Three titanium syringes: syringe 1 for sample/standard, syringe 2 for the buffer solution, and syringe 3 for the Griess reagent are also mounted on the chip. Dark PMMA reduces the amount of LED background light reaching the photodiode. When the cell is 2.5cm, additional background light rejection is gained by maximizing light passing through the cell and by spacing the LED and photodiode 14.5 mm apart from each other and using a 10.15 mm long ‘light tube’ to transmit light between the LED and the cell. For nitrite analysis, fluid is passed through the reference cell and mixed with Griess reagent. This mixture is then passed through the 0.25 mm long serpentine mixing channel. Absorption is determined in the two sequential measurement cells; separated by a milled groove to prevent cross-talk.

Figure 3.3 gives illustration of the LOC device for nitrate analysis. For nitrate analysis, before passing through the reference cell and mixing with the Griess reagent, fluid is combined with the
imidazole buffer (1,3-Diaza-2,4-cyclopentadiene and Glyoxaline) and passed through a 0.46 mm serpentine mixer and then again through an off-chip cadmium tube (SEAL analytical, UK). This off-chip cadmium tube can be fabricated as part of the chip in future [107]. The cadmium tube can be conditioned periodically to recover reduction efficiency by passing 5 mM copper sulfate solution for 2 min, 6% HCl for 4 min, and again in the copper sulfate solution for 6 min. These solutions are pumped through syringe 2 (in place of the buffer solution) and are selected using dedicated valves [108].

**Figure 3.2:** The Griess reaction under acidic condition.

**Figure 3.3:** A. LOC Device experimental setup for nitrate analysis [7]; B. Fluidic path diagram indicating the three syringes, fifteen valves, and three absorption cells. Inputs for standard solutions are indicated as STD. Hydrochloric acid (6%) is denoted as HCl[108].
3.1.3 Detection of other chemicals in sea water

Apart from nitrite and nitrate, there are also other chemicals in the water column which are important for environmental analysis. Using the same technology as nitrate and nitrite detection, manganese, phosphate and silicate can also be detected in sea water. The basis technology for these detections is spectrometric techniques. In hydrothermal activity, manganese is most sensitive indicator, phosphate is an essential macronutrient for living organisms and silicate is also a macronutrient for fresh water environment [7].

Basic detection principles

1. Manganese Detection

Manganese detection is done by using the solubilisation method of Watanabe[109]. According to Watanabe, 1-(2-pyridylazo)-2-naphtholor (PAN) is solubilized by the surfactant triton X-100 and used as an effective colorimetric reagent. The sample is mixed up with a solution of PAN, Triton X100, Sodium Hydroxide, Boric acid and Desferrioxamine B [110]. The mixing ration will be 5.3:1. A Lab on a chip is necessary to do the setup for the detection method as illustrated in Figure 3.4. Desferrioxamine B is an iron specific chelating agent and it is used to suppress interference from iron. The effectiveness of this chelating agent depends on the grade used and its age. H$_3$BO$_3$ is dissolved in NaOH to make borate buffer. For manganese detection, PAN is mixed with Triton X-100 and MQ (mili Q) water until PAN is dissolved. At this stage, borate buffer was added with the mixer. After that, Desferrioxamine B solution is added when PAN is cooled as the sideramine (iron binding reagent) degrades very quickly when it is warm. Reacting with the sample, this PAN mixer forms PAN-Mn complex. The sample is first passed through the first mixer and then through the absorption cell 1. Reagent PAN-Mn complex is then added to the solution. The manganese is detected at absorption cell 2 as the absorption of solution is proportional to the concentration of manganese at 560nm.

![Figure 3.4: LOC device setup for detection of manganese: The reagent is a solution of 1-(2-pyridylazo)-2-naphtholor (PAN), Triton X100, Sodium Hydroxide, Boric acid and Desferrioxamine B[7].](#)
II. **Phosphate Detection**

When phosphate in a sea water sample comes in contact with ammonium molybdate solution (pH=1.0) in presence of potassium antimony tartrate, antimonymolybdophosphorous acid is formed. This acid works as reagent 1. Reagent 2, ascorbic acid is added to reagent 1 and reduces reagent 1 phosphomolybdenum blue complex [111]. Sea water sample is first passed through absorption cell 1 and then the mixer of the reagent 1 and 2 is added to it. At 710nm, this absorption of the solution is proportional to concentration of phosphate and detected in absorption cell 2. This whole process setup on the lab on chip is shown in Figure 3.5. The chemical reaction is as follows:

\[
\text{Phosphate} + \text{Ammonium Molybdate} + \text{Potassium Antimony tartrate} \xrightarrow{\text{acidic solution(H}_2\text{SO}_4)} \text{Antimonymolybdophosphorus acid}
\]

Antimonymolybdophosphorus acid + Ascorbic acid → Phosphomolybdenum blue complex

![Figure 3.5: LOC device setup for detection of phosphate: reagent 1 is the solution of ammonium molybdate and potassium antimony tartrate; reagent 2 is ascorbic acid [7].](image)

III. **Silicate Detection**

Silicate can be detected from a yellow silicomolybdate complex. This complex is formed when silicate reacts with ammonium molybdate. The yellow complex is then reduced to silicomolybdenum blue by ascorbic acid[112]. This whole process setup for ‘lab on chip’ is shown in Figure 3.6. The reaction for the process can be as follows:

\[
\text{Sodium Silicate} + \text{Ammonium Molybdate} + \text{Oxalic acid} \rightarrow \text{Silicomolybdatae acid}
\]

\[
\text{Silicomolybdate acid} + \text{Ascorbic acid} \rightarrow \text{Silicomolybdenum blue complex} \rightarrow [\text{Mo}_4\text{O}_{12}]^{2-} \rightarrow [\text{Mo}_7\text{O}_{24}]^{6-} \rightarrow [\text{Mo}_8\text{O}_{26}]^{4-} \rightarrow \text{Larger complex}
\]
The sample is first passed through absorption cell 1 and mixed up with reagent 1, ammonium molybdate, in the mixer. Reagent 2, oxalic acid, is then mixed in after the first mixer and forms silicomolybdate acid. Reagent 3, ascorbic acid, mixes in with the silicomolybdate acid and reduce it to the silicomolybdenum blue complex which is detected in the absorption cell 2 at 600 or 800 nm. This absorption of the solution is proportional to concentration of silicate.

Figure 3.6: LOC device setup for detection of silicate: reagent 1 is solution of ammonium molybdate; reagent 2 is Oxalic acid and reagent 3 is ascorbic acid[7].

3.2 Applications in Life Science

3.2.1 Hand-Held Microanalytical Instrument for Chip-Based Electrophoretic Separations of Proteins

Identification of proteins and other bio molecules can be done based on lab on a chip technology. The design, fabrication, and demonstration of hand-held microchip-based analytical instruments are already in process. The components on this lab in chip technology include a 2-cm-square fused-silica microfluidic chip, two independent separation modules incorporating interchangeable fluid cartridges, and a miniature laser-induced fluorescence detection module. Figure 3.7 illustrates the setup for analysis. A custom O-ring sealed manifold plate is used to connect the chip access ports to the fluid cartridges and a syringe injection port, and provides sample introduction and world-to-chip interface. A High-voltage power supply is programmed to provide bidirectional currents up to 100 μA at 5000 V. This enables real-time current and voltage monitoring and also facilitates troubleshooting and methods development. Picomolar (10⁻¹¹ M) detection sensitivity of fluorescent dyes and nanomolar sensitivity (10⁻⁹ M) for fluorescamine-labeled proteins is allowed by laser-induced fluorescence detection[113].
3.2.2 A modular microfluidic architecture for integrated biochemical analysis

The architecture for bio-chemical analysis is conceptualized on two levels: 1) a single chip level, 2) 4 multiple chip module system level. At single chip level, the components are separated into two fundamental categories i.e passive fluid components including chemical reactors and channels and active electrochemical control structures consisting of sensors and actuators. The setup for the analysis involves a multifunctional chip where active and passive fluid components are fabricated. This multifunction chip is known as a FBB (Microfluidic BreadBoard). Figure 3.8 shows a schematic of the FBB. The FBB constitutes the foundation of second chip on which all the passive components are mounted to complete a LOC. An array of pneumatic valves is mounted on the FBB to create flow of the fluids in single fluid paths as well as multiple paths. The valves that control single paths are used for sample loading and reactor isolation whereas the multiple valve controls are used to select between different channels. All the valves are arranged symmetrically around each side of the FBB following simplified channel routing. One most common need for LOCs is a microreactor which mixes small volumes of two or more different solutions. A valve-assisted mixing system is built on the FBB. Figure 3.9 contains frames from a video that shows a pH-sensitive, colorimetric acid-base reaction used to demonstrate the operation of the mixing system. The basic solution was first saturated with a pH indicator Cresol red and then titrated with an acidic solution. This indicator fluid is yellow colored.
Figure 3.8: A. Microfluidic breadboard including electromechanical components and through wafer fluidic connections. B. A complete LOC created by bonding a passive fluidic chip with an FBB [114].

Figure 3.9: System for mixing picoliter-scale volumes of fluid; video frames illustrate the process of precise volumes of the fluid loading into either side of a microreactor and mixed by diffusion[114].
Figure 3.10: The System design for the detection of fPSA with the BBC protocol. The PSA is separated in the first stage of the device by flowing solutions from the inlet to the waste outlet with valve 1 open and valve 2 closed. Barcode DNA provides indirect amplification which is released from the sandwich and transferred from the FBB to the detection chip. Valve 1 and valve 3 remains closed and valve 2 allows the bar-code transfer. The bar codes attach to the surface of the DNA modified the detection chip and are sandwiched with gold NPs to provide a direct optical readout of the result. The gold NPs becomes silver strained. [114].

Figure 3.10 illustrates the procedure for detection of fPSA with BBC protocol. The basic solution was flowed into separate sides of the valve controlled metering channels where specific volume measurements are taken. The measured volumes were then introduced into either side of the micro reactor. These volumes were separated by a valve oriented along the length of the chamber. This process was repeated until the desired volumes are achieved in the reactor (maximum 400 pL in each half). By Closing the chamber isolation valves and opening the central valve, the fluids are allowed to combine and mix by diffusion, producing a color change from yellow to purple and this change in color provide direct optical readout of the result. After desired mixing was achieved, the mixture was transported out of the chamber through FBB channels connected to a passive chip [114].
3.2.3 A fully integrated microfluidic genetic analysis system with sample-in–answer-out capability

A microfluidic genetic analysis system is developed with an integrated microfluidic device capable of accepting whole blood as a crude biological sample with the endpoint generation of a genetic profile. The microfluidic genetic analysis (MGA) system has a microchannel architecture with three functional domains, two for sample preparation as solid phase extraction (SPE) and PCR and one for microchip electrophoresis analysis (ME) (Figure 3.11). Five elastomeric normally closed valves are used which have direct flow from a single syringe pump and can localize the existing chemicals (Figure 3.11b). Valve V1 isolates the reagents used for DNA extraction in the SPE domain from the PCR chamber (because these are known as PCR inhibitors). The PCR domain is separated from the ME domain by V3 and V4 valves. These valves must be passivated to avoid protein fouling and deactivation of the Taq polymerase (thermostable DNA polymerase). Valves V3 and V4 isolates the two domains and/or pump amplicon (piece of DNA/RNA and artificially or naturally created from amplification/replication of DNA/RNA) from the PCR chamber, whereas valves V2 and V5 work as injector for the DNA standard from the marker reservoir. The sample is passed through the analysis channel for injection, and then the components are separated and detected by laser-induced fluorescence. V4 works as outlet valve and V3 is diaphragm valve. The elastomeric membrane valving process isolates each distinct functional region of the device. Using the resistive flow principle, the valve directs purified DNA and PCR reagents from the extraction domain into a 550-nl chamber for rapid target sequence PCR amplification. The injection process is pressure based and done repeatedly. These injections of nanoliter aliquots of amplicon along with the DNA sizing standard allow electrophoretic separation and detection providing DNA fragment size information. The presence of *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax) in 750 nL of whole blood from living asymptomatic infected mice and of *Bordetella pertussis* in 1 μL of nasal aspirate from a patient suspected of having whooping cough were confirmed by the test done through this LOC device. It confirmed that it is because of the genetic profile [115].
3.2.4 Microfluidic systems for extracting nucleic acids for DNA and RNA analysis

Microfluidic components are integrated in a chip to perform isolation of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) from white blood cells and ribonucleic acid (RNA) from viruses in the blood. For DNA extraction, white blood cells (WBC) are captured and red blood cell (RBC) concentration is depleted. Hemoglobin of RBC works as a contaminant to inhibit downstream process of DNA amplification by PCR. For Viral RNA extraction, a submicron filter removes both RBC and WBC with a minimal reduction in the concentration of the viruses in plasma. In terms of requirement of basic microfluidic components, both DNA and RNA extractions uses similar equipments like mixers for mixing reagents, filters for capturing or separating the blood cells, and a binder for capturing and purifying the DNA/RNA molecules.

Figure 3.12: A) DNA extraction Chip; B)RNA extraction chip [116].
The microfluidic chip designed and fabricated for DNA extraction consists of an integrated mixer, two paraffin valves, a filter with 3-μm gap and a binder. W.C Hui et al[116] developed the microfluidic chip for analysis. Figure 3.12 shows chip setup for extraction of RNA and DNA. The Experimental setup included a test block to connect the microfluidic chips and the external microfluidic delivery system. The delivery system consists of several syringes containing the sample and the various reagents. A microlinear motion actuator is used to actuate the syringe to deliver the sample (µL) or reagent (µL). This actuator is controlled by a calibrated computer system. A microscope with a CCD video camera is used to monitor and capture both experimental parameters and video images. Figure 3.13 shows the basic experimental setup for DNA and viral RNA extractions. Besides, there are differences in the sizes of WBC and viruses; the concentration of the virus is typically much lower than WBC. This causes a much higher volume of blood for filtering to extract viral RNA, especially for detection of the viruses at an early stage of infection. With proper modifications of the protocols, it has been demonstrated that both the DNA and the viral RNA can be extracted successfully in the microfluidic device. The quality of the extracted samples was later verified by PCR and gel-electrophoresis [116]. Figure 3.14 shows a commercially available microfluidic system for DNA and RNA extraction.

**Figure 3.13:** Basic experimental setup for DNA and viral RNA extractions[116].

**Figure 3.14:** The portable microfluidic system for: A. DNA extraction, B. RNA extraction[116].
3.2.5 Integrated microfluidic system for electrochemical sensing of urinary proteins

The main function of the kidneys in a body is to filter blood to avoid metabolic wastes excreted out of the body in the form of urine. If the kidneys are functioning normally, they can retain or reabsorb filtered protein molecules and get them back to the blood. Hence, for healthy human beings, proteins should not be detected in the urine. But, if the kidneys are damaged, the filtering mechanism becomes less effective making the proteins detectable in urine. Using an electrochemical method, it is easy to detect protein in the urine sample. By cyclic voltammetry (CV) method, the amount of the urine proteins can be accurately measured. A microfluidic chip integrated two-way spiral-shape micropump is used to facilitate the automatic transportation of the samples. The spiral-shape micropump can drive the fluid flow inwards or outwards by using single electromagnetic valve (EMV). The spiral design makes it possible to drive samples through four microchannels giving provision of four parallel detection of protein with fewer samples. The electrochemical sensing module consists of four sets of urinary protein sensors. Each urinary protein sensor has three sensing electrodes: a working electrode, a counter electrode and a reference electrode. Figure 3.15 shows the illustration of electrodes. The conductive area of the working electrode is reduced when proteins are absorbed onto the working electrode, and thus the electric resistance increases. The change in electric current between the working and the reference electrodes is used for measurement of urinary proteins. Figure 3.16 shows the experimental setup for urinal protein analysis. The operational principle for electrochemical sensing of protein is the difference between the isoelectric point (pl) value of protein and pH of urine. For the protein lysozyme, pl=10.7. Thus it carries positive charge in urine (pH=5.5). So, the application of negative potential on the working electrode is it induces lysozyme to be absorbed onto the negatively charged surface. Similar thing happens with another protein albumin having pl=4.7. The working pressure for both of the proteins is 20 psi and EMV frequency is 10 Hz. Pressure is an important factor for this analysis as it controls the flow of the liquid throughout the chip[117].

Figure 3.15: A. Four microchannels with a spiral pneumatic micropump B. An Electrochemical Sensing module[117].
3.2.6 An integrated microfluidic system for isolation, counting, and sorting of hematopoietic stem cells

Huei-Wen Wu et al[118] designed and developed an integrated microfluidic system which is capable of isolation, counting, and sorting of hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs). HSCs are very useful for cell therapies and are commonly recognized to express antigen CD34. This can be derived from PB(peripheral blood), BM(bone marrow) and CB(cord blood). HSCs from CB are widely used for transplantation and it can decrease human leukocyte antigen(HLA) mismatch from related family donor. All these increase the need to isolate HSCs from CB. HSCs are detectable in an automatic format by utilizing a magnetic-bead-based immunoassay. There are three functional modules: cell isolation, cell counting and cell sorting modules. All are integrated on a single chip by using microfluidic technology. Figure 3.17 illustrates the experimental setup of the microfluidic system for HSCs. The cell isolation module has four membrane type micromixer to bind the target stem cells, the magnetic beads with two pneumatic micropumps transport the sample, and an S-shaped channel isolate HSCs using a permanent magnet underneath. The counting and sorting of HSCs are carried out by the cell counting and sorting modules. Experimental results showed a separation efficiency of 88% for HSCs from cord blood within 40 min from a sample volume of 100 μl. Therefore, the development of this integrated microfluidic system is becoming promising for various applications such as stem cell research and cell therapy [118].
Figure 3.17: Experimental setup for isolation, counting, and sorting of hematopoietic stem cells[118].
4. Adoption to new technologies and general issues to adoption

There are many early-stage applications of microsystems containing fluids such as exploration of fluidic optics and cells, fabrication of microrobotic systems using hydraulic systems based on microfluidics, development of new types of organic synthesis in small-channel systems, fluidic versions of MEMS, development of technologies based on large arrays of detectors, high-throughput screening, and biomimetic systems with microfluidic components. The extension from microfluidic systems to nanofluidics compares the dimensions of the channels and the thickness of the layer of structured fluid at the walls of the device. These also enable exploration of properties of near-surface water, and ion and electrolyte transport at this interface. PDMS is biocompatible for which it may be possible to embed microfluidic devices in vivo for certain types of biomedically relevant analysis. Single-cell and single-molecule analysis require work with small volumes of sample, which allow the testing of fundamental assumptions of molecular chemistry, cell biology and biology. The development of new ‘lab on a chip’ tools for genomics, proteomics and metabolomics is proceeding very rapidly in research laboratories, and will provide a stimulus for large-scale production. There are, in principle, high-value applications for microfluidic systems. Developing these applications requires innovations in both microfluidics and in biomedicine or other fields. The development of different new types of bioassays for monitoring patient response to therapy is one such applications like development of assays for home testing, or for use in doctors’ offices at early stages of disease (early detection of ‘biomarkers), is a matter of second now [1]. Most recent efforts of ‘lab on a chip’ concerns devices along with the application in chemistry, biology and medicine. The developments of miniaturized systems are also considered for integrating the possibilities by microfabrication and microfluidics. The adoption of LOC in general research can be grouped in two categories: i) analytical studies in chemical, clinical, bio-clinical, bio analytical studies. And ii) true applications addressed in clinical, environmental, food, toxicological, agriculture and industrial fields [119].

To apply microfluidic systems in practice, there are new methods of fabrication, and a sufficient range of micro components. These have opened the door for application rather than simple demonstration of principles. The most highly developed ‘lab on a chip’ applications are their use to screen conditions such as pH, ionic strength and composition, co solvents and concentrations for protein crystallization [120-122]. Some of this technology is now commercially available. Other applications such as separations coupled to mass spectroscopy[123], high-throughput screening in drug development [124, 125], bioanalyses [126], examination and manipulation of samples consisting of a single cell [127, 128] or a single molecule [129, 130] and synthesis of 18F-labelled organic compounds for positron emission tomography (PET) [131] are demonstrated in laboratory. The development of practical ‘lab on a chip’ systems especially for bioanalysis is rapid [132-135]. This is due to the limited technology in two parts of analysis: sample preparation and detection. Samples used in analysis are of two types: environmental sampling (such as soil) and clinical samples (such as blood or faeces) and these are often diluted
or complicated. Samples must be converted to a form that is compatible with the intended analysis before they can be analyzed by microfluidic devices. The requirement to complete these tasks are sample dependent and not necessarily ‘micro’ in scale. After a sample has been prepared and introduced into the analytical device and then processed, it must be detected. This detection is done on chip. The microfluidic chip is a small part of a system in which sample introduction and detection are much more complicated than the chip’s operation, but it detracts from the potential advantages of microfluidic devices. Other standard issues as pumping, valving and on-chip reagent storage also require better solutions than available ones so far.
5. Conclusion

Lab-on-a-chip systems facilitate miniaturization and integration of complex functions. ‘Lab on a chip’ systems automate repetitive laboratory tasks reducing the man work and time. Standardization in lab-on-a-chip system will improve the design process, reduce development cost and time, and simplify technology transfer among different areas. With the expansion of micro/nanofabrication technologies and micro/nanoelectromechnical systems development, it is expected that incorporation of all components on board of the chip will be accomplished and consequently benefit the environmental laboratory processes and the point-of-care diagnosis. Furthermore, the incorporation of nanotechnology in lab-on-a-chip systems will go one step ahead in realizing real-time sensing as well as label free and non-invasive therapeutic devices.

6. Expected Future Developments

Microfluidics has shown its growth with the rapid development of new methods of fabrication, and of the components. These components have been developed to replace the old laboratory equipments such as the micro channels that serve as pipes, and other structures that form valves [136, 137], mixers and pumps. All these are essential elements of micro chemical ‘factories’ on a chip. However, its impact on science has not yet been revolutionary. Revolutions in technology is still going on; regaining both a broad range of different types of components and subsystems, and their integration into complete, functional systems. The field of micro fluidics is in early adolescence, and still developments are going on in both of these essential requirements. In addition, it also opens doors to the integration of components into systems that can be used by the non-experts. As a field, it is a combination of unlimited promise, inflammation and incomplete assurance. This is a very exciting phase for the lab on chip systems, but still a lot of research is needed to find out exactly what it will be when the ‘lab on a chip’ systems grows up.

There are many interesting questions related to the fluid mechanics that come up with microdevices and many more that remain to be investigated. One main vision of microfluidics is the “chemical plant” on a chip. In a more general viewpoint, it encompasses science and applications in chemistry, cellular biology, material science etc. Microfluidic technology offers a synthetic system for controlling transport and chemistry at different length scales below a few millimeters. These systems allows new challenges in fluid dynamics, transport, and engineering design for generations of researchers [2].
References

9. *JASKO UK limited*


