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BENEFICIATION OF LOW-GRADE FELDSPAR ORE USING CYCLOJET FLOTATION CELL, CONVENTIONAL CELL AND MAGNETIC SEPARATOR

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Abstract. In order to increase the quality of feldspar ore and to obtain sellable feldspar concentrate, it is necessary to remove coloring impurities such as iron and titanium contained in it. For the removal of coloring minerals from feldspar ore the most widely used method is reverse flotation method. Reverse flotation process is generally carried out in conventional mechanical cells. In this study, it was aimed to enrich low-grade feldspar by using cyclojet flotation cell which was developed as an alternative to conventional cell. Then, experiments were performed by using conventional cell and wet magnetic separator and the results were compared with the flotation results obtained by using cyclojet cell. In experimental studies, 200 micrometer grain sized feldspar (albite) ore obtained from Muğla province at the west side of Turkey was used. It was detected that the sample was containing 0.100% Fe₂O₃ and 0.360% TiO₂ as coloring minerals. Cyclojet cell, conventional cell and magnetic separator reduced the Fe₂O₃ content down to 0.010%, but TiO₂ content was different in the concentrates obtained by different devices. There was almost no reduction in TiO₂ content by magnetic separation method. Cyclojet cell reduced TiO₂ content down to 0.030% and mechanical cell reduced TiO₂ content down to 0.020%. The weights of the concentrate were detected as the highest (92.70%) in magnetic separator and as the lowest (75.40%) in cyclojet cell. Therefore, it is possible to say that cyclojet cell can compete with mechanical cell and removal of TiO₂ in cyclojet cell is much better than the removal of TiO₂ in magnetic separator. Generally, in the flotation process performed by using a reagent of Aero801 and Aero825 mixture in natural pH medium, both Fe₂O₃ and TiO₂ can be removed at a rate of up to 90%, but magnetic separator can only remove Fe₂O₃ mineral.

keywords: feldspar, separation, flotation

1. Introduction

Feldspar is an important industrial raw material used in ceramic, porcelain and glass industries. Sixty percent of the World feldspar production is used in ceramic industry, 35% is used in glass industry, and 5% is used in welding electrode, rubber, plastic and paint industry as filling material. It is known that total feldspar reserves of the World is $1.740 \cdot 10^6$ Mg and a large part of this reserve is located in Asia. Turkey

has a reserve of $240 \cdot 10^6$ Mg which is 14% of the World feldspar reserves and it has the largest Na-feldspar reserves among other countries in the World (Bayraktar et al., 1998; Kangal and Guney, 2002; Anonymous, 2010). Commercial and the most important ones of feldspar group minerals are albite ($\text{NaAlSi}_3\text{O}_8$), orthoclase (KAlSi_3O_8) and anorthite ($\text{CaAl}_2\text{Si}_2\text{O}_8$) which are named according to the Na, K, and Ca contents in their structures. Since there are not many commercial anorthite deposits in the World, feldspar production mainly depends on albite and orthoclase minerals (Bayraktar et al., 2001; Karaguzel and Çobanoğlu, 2010).

Iron and titanium minerals existing in mineralogical structures of feldspar are known as unwanted impurities because of their coloring properties. Therefore, Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 contents of 0.50% or below are required in feldspar. The main impurity minerals observed in feldspar ores are rutile and sphene for titanium, mica minerals and minerals such as garnet, hematite, hornblende, tourmaline, biotite, and muscovite for iron oxides. In case that the amounts of these minerals are higher than the specific values, the quality of glass and ceramic decreases and the color changes accordingly. Therefore, the main goal in enrichment of feldspars is based on removal of the coloring minerals from the ore. Magnetic separation appears to be the most appropriate method for enrichment of feldspars in terms of cost and simplicity. However, flotation method is generally preferred according to the mineralogical property because magnetic susceptibilities of titanium minerals such as sphene and rutile are very low and also magnetic separators used in this area can perform efficient separation down to a specific grain size. Conventional reverse flotation method is still the most widely used method in the World for the removal of the impurities in feldspars. On the other hand, chemical and biological methods also can be used for the removal of impurities. In chemical method, feldspar is leached by organic and inorganic acids and in biological method, microorganisms are used instead of chemicals (Styriakovaa et al., 2006; El-Rehiem and Abd El-Rahman, 2008). Agglomeration or selective flocculation methods are also used for enrichment of feldspar (Doğu and Arol, 2004).

In this study, Na-feldspar ore obtained from Muğla province (Turkey) was enriched by cyclojet cell which is an alternative jet flotation technique, conventional cell and magnetic separator and the results obtained from the devices were compared.

2. Experimental studies

2.1. Cyclojet flotation cell

Cyclojet cell is a high density jet flotation cell developed in Turkey in 2006 for the enrichment of coal slimes. In the previous studies, outstanding success of cyclojet for the enrichment of coal slime has been proven by many researches. It was observed that clean coals containing ash between 7% and 15% were obtained from coal slime having ash contents of about 45-55% fed into cyclojet cell (Hacifazlıoğlu, 2009; Hacifazlıoğlu and Toroğlu, 2008). This device, which is effective in enrichment of

very fine particles, was used for the flotation of 200 micrometer grain sized Na-feldspar in this experiment.

Cyclojet cell, although it has some structural differences, mainly works with the principle of jet flotation. In this system, jet movement of pulp and centrifugal forces generated within the hydrocyclone and the cell are used. "Jet movement" is created linearly by a nozzle formed by a large number of holes in conventional jet flotation systems, but it is created as cone-shaped by a hydrocyclone apex in a cyclojet cell. In other words, pulp jet created in a cyclojet cell submerges into cell with a cyclonic move and creates a more efficient flotation providing more intensive shearing forces. Furthermore, intense mixing occurring within the cell and hydrocyclone minimizes the coating of particle with slime and it enables an effective flotation process without removing slime from the ore.

Schematic view of pilot-scale cyclojet cell test assembly installed in Istanbul University, Mining Engineering Department Mineral Processing Laboratory is shown in Figure 1. According to Figure 1, pulp conditioned in a 67 dm³ conditioner for 10 minutes with the addition of collector and frother is fed tangentially into a hydrocyclone having a diameter of 16 cm with a pressure of 0.1-0.6 bar (10-60 kPa) by a centrifugal pump driven by a 1.5 kW motor. There are a conical tube with a height of 25 cm just below the hydrocyclone, and a separation cell having a diameter of 30 cm and height of 40 cm below conical tube. Upper flow outlet pipe of hydrocyclone is completely closed in order to prevent the upward movement of the pulp. In this case, high pressure pulp is first mixed thoroughly by swirling in hydrocyclone and then submerges into separation cell by forming a cyclonic jet. Meanwhile, an air gap created by the effect of the jet within the conical tube provides the suction of air from the atmosphere with a vacuum effect. Air from the atmosphere is sucked with a sectional velocity of 0.2 cm/sec through a circular hole with 1 cm diameter on the conical tube. Then, pulp jet mixed with the air sucked quickly submerges into the pulp in the separation cell and allows the formation of a large number of very fine-sized (300-500 microns) air bubbles by action of shear forces. Separation is performed by taking hydrophobic grains (coloring impurities) interfere with the bubbles in the separation cell from the upper part of the cell and taking hydrophilic grains (feldspar) which do not interfere with the air from the lower part of the cell. A by-pass was mounted into the system in order to ensure continuity in the cell and cleaning of feldspar ore over and over again. In other words, the bottom outlet pipe of the separation cell is connected to the conditioner with another pipe. In cyclojet flotation, sulphonate type collectors named as Aero801 and Aero825 manufactured by American CYTEC Company are used with a mixing ratios of 50% and dosages of 1000 and 2000 g/Mg. All experiments were performed by using tap water and at 24°C room temperature and at natural pH value of (7-8). Solid content of the pulp and conditioning period were selected as 30% and 8 minutes respectively. Products obtained by reverse flotation were dried in the oven after filtration, and were

analyzed by XRD for Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 content. Then, Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 removal efficiencies were calculated by the following equations:

$$\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 \text{ removal efficiency (\%)} = [1 - (\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 \text{ content in concentrate} / \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 \text{ content in feed})] \cdot 100,$$

$$\text{TiO}_2 \text{ removal efficiency (\%)} = [1 - (\text{TiO}_2 \text{ content in concentrate} / \text{TiO}_2 \text{ content in feed})] \cdot 100.$$

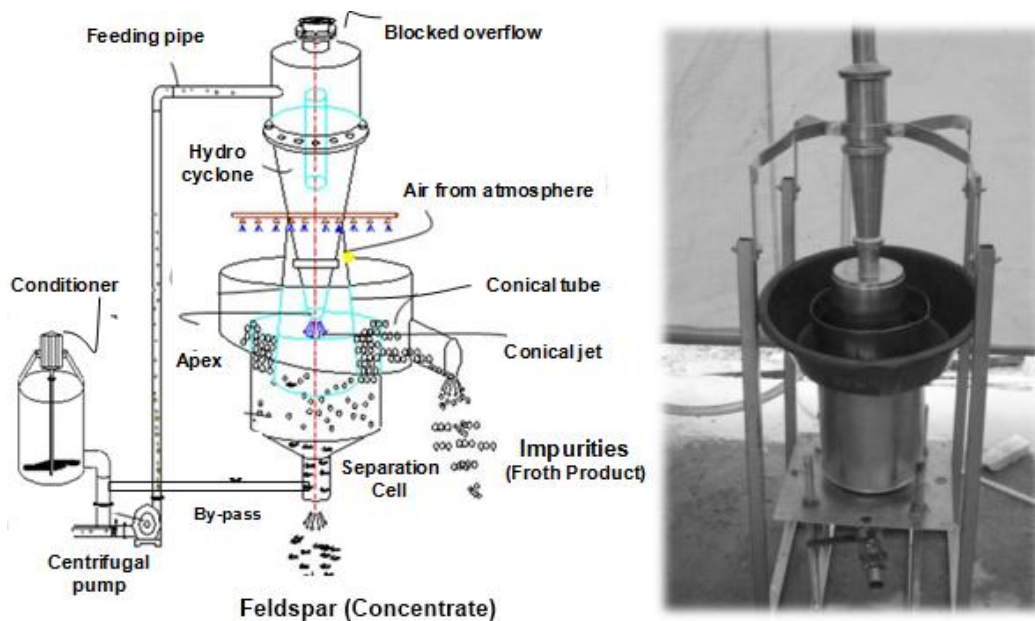


Fig. 1. Cyclojet flotation cell experimental set-up

2.2. Na-feldspar sample

A 50 kg Na-feldspar sample was taken from the feldspar enrichment plant owned by Esan Company operating in Muğla province located in the south-west part of Turkey. In this plant, the ore ground to 0.5 mm is enriched by using conventional mechanical mixing flotation cells. Before the enrichment, slime is removed from the Na-feldspar ore by 14 inch hydrocyclones and then feldspar is fed into flotation cell and coloring impurities are removed by reverse flotation. The main coloring impurities in the sample are minerals such as hematite, garnet, anatase, rutile, sphene, biotite and ilmenite containing iron and titanium. It was observed during microscopic observations done that 90% of the colored minerals were liberated from the feldspar grains with size under 200 micrometers. The whole sample was ground gradually by ceramic ball mill down to fine sizes under 200 micrometers in order to allow cyclojet cell to be effective at fine sizes ($<200 \mu\text{m}$) and to obtain high rate of liberation. According to the results of the chemical analysis of the sample used in the experimental studies done by using X-Ray diffractometer (XRD), the following were

detected: SiO₂ 67.38%; Al₂O₃ 19.28%, Fe₂O₃ 0.10%, TiO₂ 0.36%, MgO 0.25%, CaO 1.08%, K₂O 0.43% and Na₂O 10.07%.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Optimization of cyclojet operation parameters

Some of the parameters of the study should be optimized in order to allow cyclojet cell to be effective in feldspar flotation. The most important ones are amount of reagent, pulp pressure, conical jet length and conical tube submerging depth. In the experiments performed to find the effect of the amount of reagent (collector), feeding pressure, conical jet height and conical tube submerging depth, solid concentration were set to 40 kPa, 10 cm, 30% respectively. In all experiments, total conditioning time was set to 8 minutes and total flotation time (froth removal time) was set to 10 minutes. Any additional frother or any chemical for pH adjustment were not used in the experiments since the Aero 801 and Aero 825 collectors have frothing characteristics. All experiments were performed by using tap water and at natural pH value of 7-8. The effects of various parameters on concentrate and waste characteristics during cyclojet flotation are given in Table 1. Every optimum parameter obtained was used in the next experiment.

Table 1. The effects of various parameters on concentrate and waste characteristics during cyclojet flotation

Parameters	Values	Concentrate (Feldspar)			Reject (impurities)		
		Fe ₂ O ₃ content(%)	TiO ₂ content(%)	Wt. (%)	Fe ₂ O ₃ content(%)	TiO ₂ content(%)	Wt. (%)
Reagent	750	0.070	0.230	76.600	0.198	0.786	23.400
Aero801+825 (g/Mg)	1500	0.020	0.040	67.200	0.264	1.016	32.800
Feed pressure (kPa)	10	0.090	0.270	82.200	0.146	0.776	17.800
	40	0.010	0.040	65.400	0.270	0.965	34.600
Conical jet lenght (cm)	10	0.010	0.030	66.100	0.275	1.003	33.900
	20	0.060	0.190	70.100	0.194	0.759	29.900
Conical tube submerging depth (cm)	10	0.010	0.030	67.000	0.283	91.667	33.000
	20	0.050	0.150	74.000	0.242	58.333	26.000

As shown in Table 1, removal of both Fe₂O₃ and TiO₂ increased with the increase in reagent amount. By increasing the reagent amount from a dosage of 750 g/Mg to a dosage of 1500 g/Mg, the Fe₂O₃ content in the concentrate was decreasing from 0.070% to 0.020%, while TiO₂ content decreased from 0,230% to 0,040%. Increase in the reagents amount provided flotation of greater amounts of impurities. On the other hand, with a fixed reagents dosage (1500 g/Mg), the Fe₂O₃ content in the concentrate

was reduced from 0.090% to 0.010% by increasing pulp pressure from 10 kPa to 40 kPa. The TiO_2 content in the concentrate was reduced from 0.270% to 0.040% by increasing the feeding pressure. Removal of Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 minerals was lower at lower feeding pressure (10 kPa) because sufficient shear forces within the separation cell were not created. In other words, bubbles in cyclojet cell are formed by the pulp jet rapidly flushing from the apex. Here, the larger shear forces are generated as the pulp jet velocity gets higher, and consequently, a large number and relatively small-sized bubbles are formed within the cell.

Another important parameter affecting flotation efficiency in cyclojet cell is the conical jet length. As it can be seen clearly from the results indicated in Table 1 that concentrates having lower Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 contents are obtained. The Fe_2O_3 content in the concentrate decreased from 0.060% to 0.010% by decreasing the jet length from 20 cm to 10 cm. The TiO_2 content in the concentrate decreased from 0.190% to 0.030%. The reason of this situation is related with the formation of sufficient number of bubbles as in the case of pressure effect. With the high jet length (20 cm), shear force was reduced due to jet activity and a smaller number of bubbles were formed in the cell. When the jet length was decreased to 10 cm, more bubbles were formed and more impurities were moved into froth product.

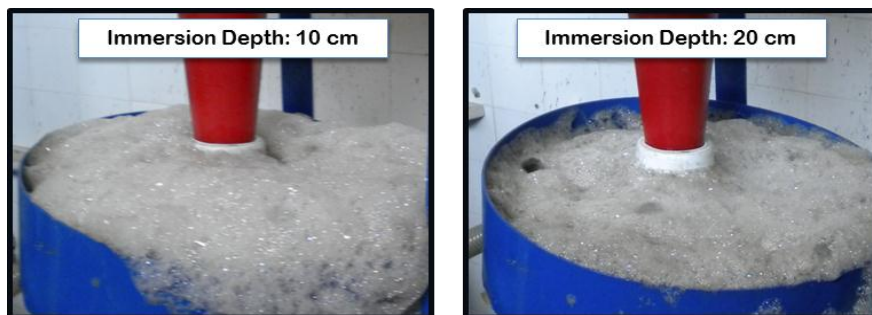


Fig. 2. Pictures of the froth at low and high conical tube submerging depths

In jet flotation systems, hydraulic pressure applied on the unit surface area at the outlet point of the tube increases as the depth of the substance increases. Therefore, velocity of the pulp leaving the discharge point and the velocity of formation of the bubbles decrease. Furthermore, the sizes of the bubbles decrease because of high pressure (Güney et al., 2002; Cowburn et al., 2006; Çınar et al., 2007). A similar situation is also valid for the cyclojet cell, the sizes of the bubbles formed decrease as the depth of the substance increases. However, the number of the bubbles formed decreases because of the changing medium conditions and high pressure. The pictures of the bubbles (froth) obtained at conical tube submerging depths of 10 and 20 cm are given in Fig. 2. It can be seen clearly in Figure 2 that a more intense layer of froth and therefore more number of bubbles were formed at an immersion depth of 10 cm and a thinner layer of froth was formed at an immersion depth of 20 cm. While Fe_2O_3

content was 0.010% at the immersion depth of 10 cm, the Fe_2O_3 content increased to 0.050% at the immersion depth of 20 cm. A possible reason is that grains cannot spread into the cell completely at higher immersion depths and they by-pass and mix with feldspar product. In other words, the impurities that must be moved with the froth could not pass over the conical tube and by going down to the bottom of the cell they entered the channel from which the feldspar concentrate is taken. Furthermore, as a result of formation of bubbles in insufficient number, less amount of impurity moved into froth product and a part of the impurities remained in the feldspar concentrate.

3.2. Cyclojet flotation tests performed under optimum conditions

Several flotation tests were performed in the cyclojet cell with a reagent amount of 1500 g/Mg at a feeding pressure of 40 kPa conical jet length and immersion depth of 10 cm, with solid concentration of 30%. Flotation tests were performed at 5 different foam skimming times such as 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 minutes. In other words, the concentrate and the reject were taken separately at the end of 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 minutes and they were dried and then analyzed. Characteristics of the concentrates obtained for different flotation times are shown in Fig. 3.

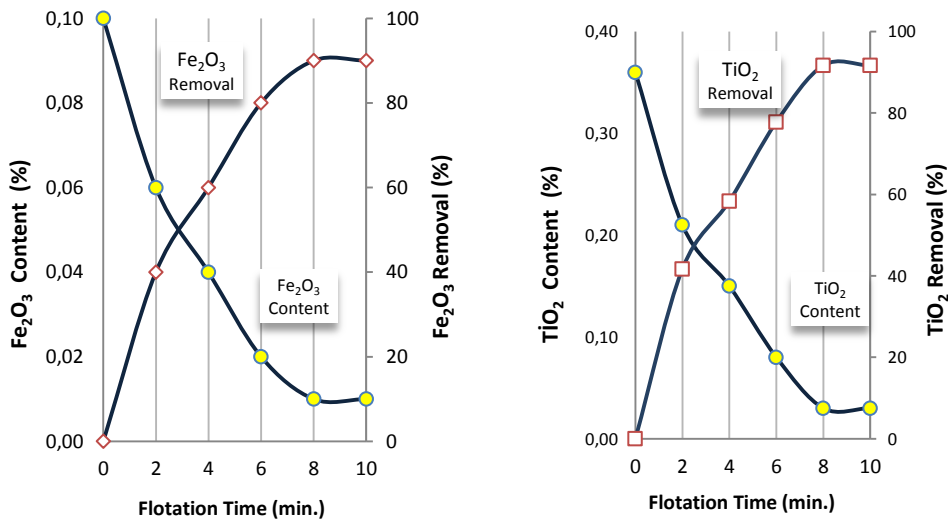


Fig. 3. Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 content in concentrate and removal efficiency versus flotation time

As it was stated before, a by-pass was connected to the concentrate (feldspar) outlet pipe in the cyclojet cell. Feldspar concentrate obtained was transferred to the conditioner again through this by-pass pipe. Then, it was fed back to cyclojet cell by a centrifugal pump. Therefore, continuous flotation conditions are obtained in the cyclojet cell and products with different characteristics can be obtained with to the flotation time. As it can be seen in Fig. 3, the removal of both Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2

increased with increasing flotation time. While the Fe_2O_3 removal was 40% at the end of a flotation time of 2 minutes, it increased to 90% at the end of a flotation time of 10 minutes. A similar situation is also valid for TiO_2 because that the removal of TiO_2 at the end of flotation times of 2 and 10 minutes were 41.66% and 91.66%, respectively. Impurities which could not interfere with froth in the first stage interfere with froth in the second stage and then in the third stage and they were efficiently removed from the feldspar concentrate with increasing time of flotation. This situation has been clearly established in all the experiments. However, the contents of Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 in the concentrates obtained at and after 8 minutes of flotation were similar. The amounts of the concentrate detected at the end of flotation times of 8 and 10 minutes were 75.40% and 66.10%, respectively. A further increase in the flotation time caused floating the feldspar grains and consequently a decrease in the weight of the concentrate. Therefore, the optimum flotation time for flotation of feldspar in cyclojet cell has been determined to be 8 minutes. At the end of this flotation time, the contents of Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 have been detected as 0.010% and 0.030% respectively. The weights of the concentrate and the residue have been determined as 75.40% and 24.60%, respectively.

3.3. Comparison of the results obtained by cyclojet cell with the results obtained by mechanical cell and magnetic separator

Conventional flotation experiments were performed in Denver Model D-12 laboratory flotation cell having a volume of 3 dm³. Following optimization studies, flotation was carried out under similar conditions with cyclojet cell. As reagent, a mixture of Aero 801 and Aero 825 with 50% mixing ratios and 1500 g/Mg dosage was used. Experiments were performed by using tap water and at natural pH (7-8). Mixer rotations and froth skimming time were chosen as 800 rpm and 10 minutes, respectively. Magnetic separation experiments were performed by using Boxmag Rapid LWHL type high field strength wet magnetic separator having maximum magnetic field strength of 1.9 T. This magnetic separator has a metal grade type matrix which can be moved between two fixed bobbin terminals. While the pulp was passing through the matrix, iron compounds are caught by the matrix. During preliminary experiments performed, pulp flow was too high because feeding size was too fine (-200 micrometers) and the hole between grade matrix was large (3000 micron meters). In this case, iron compounds could not be caught efficiently by the matrix. Therefore, periphery of grade matrix was surrounded with a wire matrix (Fig. 4) and the retention time of the grains in the matrix was increased. Then, the experiments have been carried out with a feeding velocity of 15 g/sec and at a solid rate of 30%. Obtained samples were passed through the magnetic separator 3 times. In other words, 3 stage cleaning process was performed.

Under similar conditions, the results obtained by cyclojet cell and mechanical cell are given together with the results obtained by magnetic separator in Table 2. Percentages of Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 removal are shown in Fig. 5 comparatively. According

to Table 1, while cyclojet cell was producing a feldspar concentrate containing 0.010% Fe_2O_3 and 0.030% TiO_2 , mechanical cell produced a concentrate containing 0.010% Fe_2O_3 and 0.020% TiO_2 . The Fe_2O_3 contents of both types of cell are the same, but TiO_2 contents are different. TiO_2 content of the concentrate obtained from the mechanical cell is lower. Possible reason for this situation is that the mechanical cell has smaller sizes and more favorable conditions for the removal of TiO_2 were present. On the other hand, the magnetic separator showed a similar performance with the cyclojet cell and mechanical cell in respect to Fe_2O_3 removal. The Fe_2O_3 content of the concentrate was detected as 0.01% with 90% removal efficiency. However, the magnetic separator showed poor performance for the removal of TiO_2 . Since the minerals such as rutile and sphene forming the TiO_2 content have no magnetic sensitivity or too low sensitivity, these minerals were not caught by magnetic separator and merged into the concentrate.



Fig. 4. View of wire matrix in wet magnetic separator

Table 2. Characteristics of the products obtained by cyclojet, mechanical cell and magnetic separator

Devices	Concentrate (feldspar)			Reject (impurities)		
	Fe_2O_3 content(%)	TiO_2 content(%)	Wt. (%)	Fe_2O_3 content(%)	TiO_2 content(%)	Wt. (%)
Cyclojet Flotation Cell	0.010	0.030	75.400	0.376	1.371	24.600
Mechanical Cell	0.010	0.020	78.500	0.429	1.601	21.500
Wet Magnetic Separator	0.010	0.340	92.700	1.243	0.614	7.300

When examining the weights of concentrate, it is observed that the highest efficiency was obtained by magnetic separator and the lowest efficiency was obtained by cyclojet cell. The amounts of the concentrates obtained by magnetic separator, mechanical cell and cyclojet cell were detected as 92.70%, 78.50% and 75.4% respectively. During flotation process, at normal pH (7-8) feldspars can float in the froth and emerge into froth product (impurities) in the course of time, but the lack of this problem in magnetic separation is the main cause for the high gravimetric efficiency. The complete chemical analyses of the final concentrates obtained by 3 different devices are shown in Table 3 together with the analysis of the feldspar

sample feed. As it can be seen from Table 3, the contents of the minerals such as SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , CaO , MgO , Na_2O did not change drastically as a result of the enrichment of feldspar ore by flotation and magnetic separation. While the flotation reagent was floating Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 minerals, magnetic field in the magnetic separator affected only Fe_2O_3 mineral in feldspar which has magnetic sensitivity.

Because of this situation, as it can be seen clearly in Table 3 (foam products) that the Fe_2O_3 content in the residue was 0.146% at a feeding pressure of 10 kPa and it increased to 0.270% at a feeding pressure of 40 kPa. Similarly, TiO_2 content in the residue was 0.776% and 0.965% at feeding pressures of 10 and 40 kPa respectively.

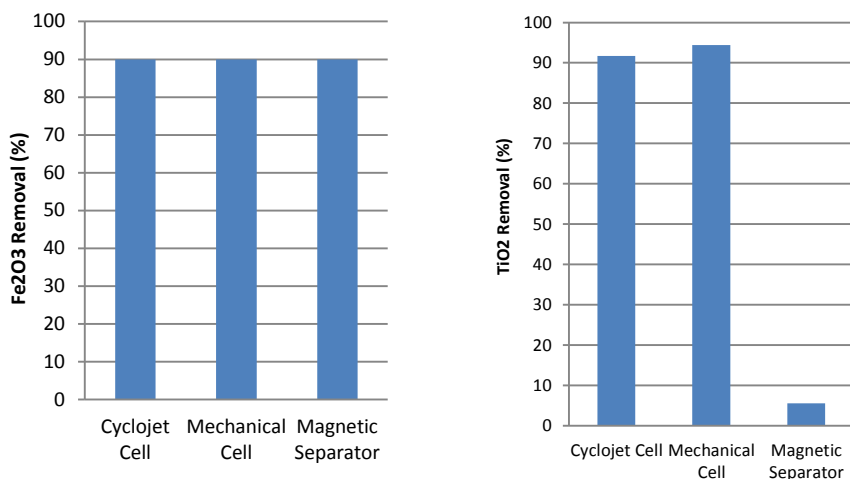


Fig. 5. Comparison of Fe_2O_3 and TiO_2 removal from feldspar by various devices

Table 3. Complete chemical analysis of feed and concentrates obtained from cyclojet, mechanical and magnetic separation

Component	Feed %	Cyclojet Cell Concentrate, %	Mechanical Cell Concentrate, %	Magnetic Sep. Concentrate, %
SiO_2	67.380	67.810	67.920	67.540
Al_2O_3	19.280	19.430	19.550	19.270
Fe_2O_3	0.100	0.010	0.010	0.010
TiO_2	0.360	0.030	0.020	0.340
MgO	0.250	0.010	0.010	0.100
CaO	1.080	0.950	0.940	1.150
Na_2O	10.070	10.310	10.300	9.970
K_2O	0.430	0.210	0.210	0.320
P_2O_5	0.080	0.010	0.010	0.020
MnO	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010
Cr_2O_3	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.020
Others	0.058	0.060	0.060	0.078
L.O.I.	0.900	1.140	0.980	1.170

4. Conclusion

It is known that the coloring minerals found in feldspar ore can be removed by various methods. It has been observed that 90% of Fe_2O_3 can be removed by the performed flotation and magnetic separation processes, but TiO_2 content can only be removed by flotation. As a result of cyclojet flotation experiments TiO_2 content was reduced from 0.360% to 0.030%, and by magnetic separation TiO_2 content was reduced in a negligible amount down to 0.34%. Similarly, TiO_2 content was reduced down to 0.020% by the conventional flotation cell. On the other hand, all 3 devices showed similar performances in respect to Fe_2O_3 removal. The reason of this situation is that Fe_2O_3 mineral has magnetic sensitivity, but TiO_2 mineral have no magnetic sensitivity or low magnetic sensitivity. It is clearly seen from the results of this study that for the ores containing small amounts of TiO_2 only magnetic separation is sufficient, but for the ores containing high amount of TiO_2 cyclojet or mechanical cell can be used.

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