

**NANO EXPRESS**

**Open Access**

# Surfactant-free ionic liquid-based nanofluids with remarkable thermal conductivity enhancement at very low loading of graphene

Fuxian Wang<sup>1</sup>, Lijuan Han<sup>1</sup>, Zhengguo Zhang<sup>1\*</sup>, Xiaoming Fang<sup>1</sup>, Jingjing Shi<sup>2</sup> and Wenshi Ma<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

We report for the first time the preparation of highly stable graphene (GE)-based nanofluids with ionic liquid as base fluids (ionic liquid-based nanofluids (Ionanofluids)) without any surfactant and the subsequent investigations on their thermal conductivity, specific heat, and viscosity. The microstructure of the GE and MWCNTs are observed by transmission electron microscope. Thermal conductivity (TC), specific heat, and viscosity of these Ionanofluids were measured for different weight fractions and at varying temperatures, demonstrating that the Ionanofluids exhibit considerably higher TC and lower viscosity than that of their base fluids without significant specific heat decrease. An enhancement in TC by about 15.5% and 18.6% has been achieved at 25 °C and 65 °C respectively for the GE-based nanofluid at mass fraction of as low as 0.06%, which is larger than that of the MWCNT-dispersed nanofluid at the same loading. When the temperature rises, the TC and specific heat of the Ionanofluid increase clearly, while the viscosity decreases sharply. Moreover, the viscosity of the prepared Ionanofluids is lower than that of the base fluid. All these advantages of this new kind of Ionanofluid make it an ideal fluid for heat transfer and thermal storage.

**Keywords:** Ionanofluid, Graphene, MWCNTs, Thermal conductivity, Specific heat, Viscosity

## Background

A nanofluid is a dilute suspension produced by dispersion of metallic or nonmetallic nanomaterials with a typical size of less than 100 nm in a base liquid, having the advantages of high dispersion stability and reduced pumping power and particle clogging as compared with conventional solid-liquid suspensions for heat transfer intensifications [1]. Since the pioneer work by Chol in 1995 [2], nanofluids have attracted extensive attention due to their enhanced thermophysical properties and heat transfer performance and their potential applications in many fields including cooling, thermal power generation, refrigeration, and so on [3]. Up to now, most of the previous researches have been focused on the nanofluids based on water, ethylene glycol, and synthetic oil [4-6]. Although these base fluids are readily available,

water and ethylene glycol are usually used in relatively low temperature, and synthetic oil suffers from high vapor pressure and poor thermal stability. Therefore, it is necessary to develop novel nanofluids based on the fluids other than these conventional fluids.

Ionic liquids (ILs), organic salts with low melting points, have the characteristics of a wide range of liquid temperature, low vapor pressure, and high thermal stability, which make them possibly be used as a new group of heat transfer fluids for heat exchange in chemical plants, absorption cooling cycle system [7], and solar thermal power generation [8], where water and ethylene glycol may not be suitable for the application owing to the limitation of their thermophysical and chemical properties. Consequently, the nanofluids based on ILs are being explored intensely in recent years, in which Au [9], CuO [10], Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> [11], and multi-walled carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) [12] have been used as the nanoadditive. It has been shown that the ionic liquid-based fluids (Ionanofluids) exhibit enhanced thermal conductivity (TC) as compared with the pure ILs, which

\* Correspondence: cezhang@scut.edu.cn

<sup>1</sup>Key Laboratory of Enhanced Heat Transfer and Energy Conservation, the Ministry of Education, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou 510640, China  
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

just overcomes the inherent shortcoming of ILs. GE is a novel carbon nanomaterial with excellent electronic, mechanical, and thermal properties. The TC of GE is as large as around 5,000 W/m K, which makes it to be the most promising nanoadditive for nanofluids [13]. Accordingly, the nanofluids containing GE have attracted an increasing attention in the past 2 years, in which only the conventional fluids including water [14], ethylene glycol [15] and engine oil [16] have been used as the base fluids. In order to obtain stable GE-dispersed nanofluids, several measures have been taken in those previous work, such as adding surfactants into the nanofluids [15], making GE functionalized by chemical treatments [17], or using graphene oxide instead of GE as the additive [18]. It has been presented that GE can be functionalized by ILs through noncovalent interactions owing to their unique structure [19]. In the current work, with the purpose of combining GE possessing excellent TC with ILs having good thermophysical properties along with the virtue of making GE functionalized, GE has been dispersed into the IL 1-hexyl-3-methylimidazolium tetrafluoroborate ([HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>) without using any surfactant to prepare novel GE-based Ionanofluids for the first time. The thermophysical properties of the GE-dispersed Ionanofluids were investigated together with those of the Ionanofluids containing MWCNTs for comparison purpose.

## Methods

### Chemicals and materials

MWCNTs and graphite were purchased from Nanjing XFNano Material Tech Co., Ltd. (China); H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, HNO<sub>3</sub>, and KMnO<sub>4</sub>, from Alfa Aesar (Ward Hill, MA, USA). [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> (CAS number, 244193-50-8) was provided by Lanzhou Institute of Chemical Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Other reagents such as H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>·H<sub>2</sub>O were used as received.

### Synthesis of GE nanosheets

Graphite oxide (GO) was synthesized using Hummers' method [20]. Graphite powder (2.0 g) was put into cold (4 °C) concentrated H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> (46 mL) followed by gradually adding 6.0-g KMnO<sub>4</sub> under stirring for 2 h while the temperature of the mixture was kept at below 10 °C. After stirring the mixture at 35 °C for 30 min, 92 mL of deionized (DI) water was slowly added into the system to keep the temperature of the mixture at 98 °C for 15 min. Then, the mixture was further diluted using approximately 300-mL DI water. After that, 15-mL H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (30%) was added to the mixture to reduce the residual KMnO<sub>4</sub> until the color of the mixture changed into brilliant yellow. Finally, the mixture was filtered and washed with 5% of HCl aqueous solution to remove metal ions followed by washing with 1.0 L of DI water to remove the acid. The obtained solid was dried at 60 °C for 24 h.

For further purification, the as-obtained GO was re-dispersed in DI water and then was dialyzed for 1 week to remove residual salts and acids.

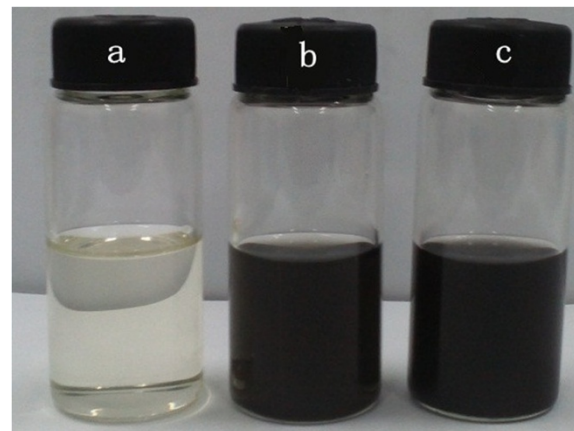
Prepared GO powder (100 mg) was added to 100-ml water. After being ultrasonically dispersed for 1 h, 1-g hydrazine hydrate was added to the mixture followed by being refluxed for 24 h to reduce graphene oxide to GE nanosheets. The solid product was isolated by centrifugation, washed with distilled water and ethanol for three times, and finally dried at 60 °C in a vacuum oven for 24 h to remove residual solvent.

### Preparation of ionanofluids based on ILs

MWCNTs and GE were dispersed into [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> using a 100-W, 40-kHz ultrasonicator for 8 h. Then, the mixtures were sonicated for 2 min using a 25-W Ultrasonic Cell Disrupter System (JYD 900, Shanghai Zhisun Equipment Co., Ltd, China). Figure 1 displays the digital photograph of the graphene and MWCNT-dispersed nanofluids, respectively. In this paper, we prepared Ionanofluids at very low weight percentage of 0.03% and 0.06%; when the weight percentage goes up to 0.09%, the Ionanofluids are not stable and they will coagulated in a couple of hours.

### Characterization and measurements

TEM images were obtained on a PHILIPS TECNAI 10 electron microscope (FEI Corporation, Hillsboro, OR, USA) at an accelerating voltage of 100 kV. The TEM samples were prepared by dispersing the powder products in alcohol by ultrasonic treatment followed by dropping the suspension onto a holey carbon film supported on a copper grid and drying it in air. Dispersion and stability of these ionanofluids were observed by a light microscope (LEICA, DM 2500P, Leica



**Figure 1** Digital photograph of (a) pure [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>, (b) 0.03% of GE/[HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>, and (c) 0.03% of MWCNT/[HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>.



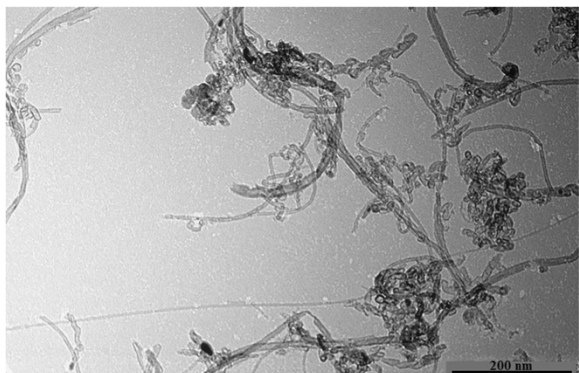
**Figure 2** TEM image of pristine GE.

Microsystems Ltd., Milton Keynes, UK) at same magnification ( $\times 500$ ).

TC of the samples were measured at the temperatures ranging from 25 °C to 65 °C using a thermal constants analyzer (Hot Disk TPS 2500 S, Hot Disk AB, Gothenburg, Sweden). In order to precisely control the temperature, a cyclic silicone oil bath was applied. After every increase in temperature, the samples were equilibrated for at least 5 min before measurements. The TC measurements were repeated several times, and the average values were calculated for use in this paper.

The specific heat of the samples were evaluated with a differential scanning calorimeter (DSC Q20, TA Instruments, New Castle, DE, USA) using the sapphire method. The temperature was kept at 0 °C for 5 min then ramped to 80 °C at the increasing rate of 10 °C  $\cdot$  min<sup>-1</sup> followed by keeping for another 5 min. We have checked the accuracy of the measurements by measuring the specific heat of DI water between 20 °C and 85 °C and found deviations less than 0.98%, with an average deviation of 0.418%.

The viscosities of the samples were measured by a viscometer (DV-2 + PRO, Shanghai Nirun Intelligent



**Figure 3** TEM image of MWCNTs.

Technology Co., Ltd, Yangpu, Shanghai, China) at a revolution rate of 100 rpm. Each sample was measured at the temperatures ranging from 25 °C to 75 °C.

## Results and discussion

### TEM analysis

The morphology and structure of the pristine and GE and MWCNT were observed by TEM, which were observed again after all the experiments, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The observations from Figures 2 and 3 revealed that the received pristine MWCNT was not only aggregated, but entangled, whereas the GE we prepared was relatively well dispersed and stretched. The obtained Ionanofluids are black and can keep stable for a long time. It is suggested that GE and MWCNTs have good dispersity in [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>, which is probably attributed to that GE and MWCNTs can be functionalized by [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>.

### Stability and dispersion of ionanofluids

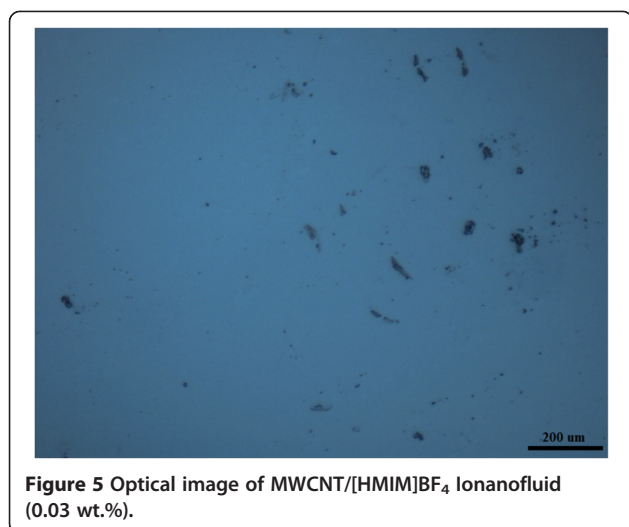
Optical images of these Ionanofluids were taken by putting a drop of fluid on a cleaned glass and observing the dispersion of particles in the base fluids. Figures 4 and 5 show that the MWCNT is not well dispersed in [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> as the graphene does. The nonhomogeneity of MWCNT particles is visible in Figure 3b, while Figure 3a shows uniform dispersion and distribution of graphene particles in [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub>. Compared to MWCNT/[HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> Ionanofluid, graphene/[HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> Ionanofluid is more homogeneous and stable.

### Thermal conductivity of ionanofluids

TC of the obtained Ionanofluids was measured at different temperatures by the transient plane source (TPS) method, which is an advanced technique evolved from the hot wire method by Hot Disk AB. As shown in Figure 6, the TC of



**Figure 4** Optical image of graphene/[HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> Ionanofluid (0.03 wt.%).

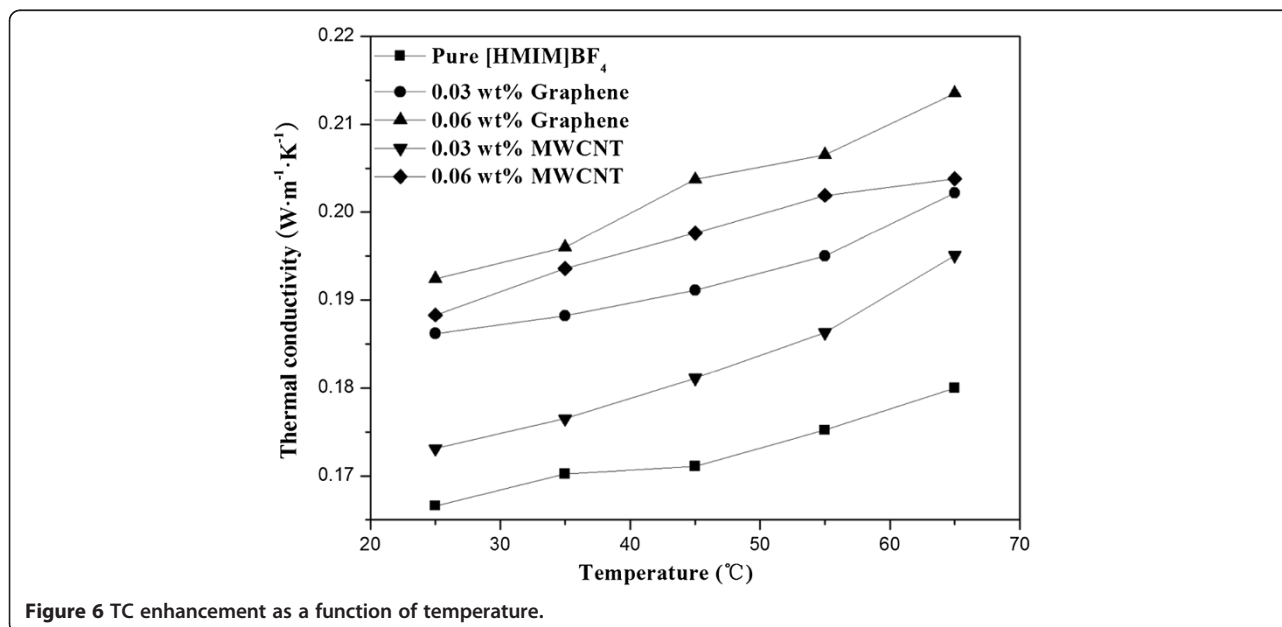


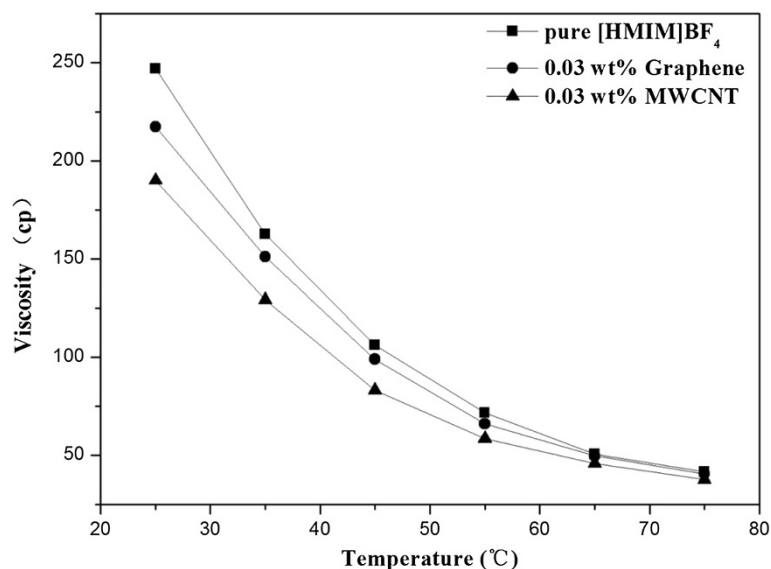
the Ionanofluid containing 0.03% of GE increases from 0.1862 to 0.2022 W·m<sup>-1</sup>·K<sup>-1</sup> as the temperature increases from 25 °C to 65 °C and accordingly increases from 0.1924 to 0.2135 W·m<sup>-1</sup>·K<sup>-1</sup> when the GE loading is 0.06%. In this paper,  $k$  and  $k_0$  refer to the TC of the Ionanofluid and the pure ionic fluid, respectively, and  $(k - k_0)/k_0$  is defined as the TC enhancement ratio. The TC enhancement ratios of the Ionanofluid containing GE of 0.03% range from 11.8% to 12.3% as the tested temperature varies from 25 °C to 65 °C and accordingly increases from 15.5% to 18.6% as the GE loading is increased to 0.06%. It is indicated that the TC enhancement ratio of the GE-dispersed Ionanofluids increases with the mass fraction of GE. The remarkable TC enhancement ratio of more than 10% is achieved by the Ionanofluid containing GE with the mass fraction of

as low as 0.03%, implying that GE is a good nanoadditive for the nanofluids based on ILs. For the Ionanofluids containing MWCNTs, their TC enhancement ratios range from 3.9% to 8.4% as the tested temperature varies from 25 °C to 65 °C and accordingly increases to 13.0% and 13.2% as the MWCNT loading is increased to 0.06%. It is revealed that the TC enhancement ratios of the MWCNTs-based Ionanofluids are less than those of the GE-based Ionanofluids at the same nanoadditive loading, which is probably due to the extraordinary high thermal conductivity of GE and Brownian motion of nanoparticles at the molecular and nanoscale levels [21]. Significantly, the TC enhancement ratios of all the Ionanofluids are less than 20%, consistent with the results obtained from the benchmark study on the TC of nanofluids [22]. No anomalous TC enhancement is achieved by the obtained nanofluids, in which their TC values have been measured by the TPS method other than the hot wire method commonly used in the previous work.

#### Viscosity studies of ionanofluids

The viscosities of pure [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> and the GE- and MWCNT-dispersed Ionanofluids at the same nanoadditive loading of 0.03 wt.% were measured at different temperatures, respectively. As plotted in Figure 7, the viscosity of the Ionanofluid containing 0.03% of GE decreases from 217.4 to 40.6 cp as the temperature increases from 25 °C to 75 °C, indicating that the viscosity of the Ionanofluid can be dramatically reduced by increasing temperatures. Previous works also demonstrated the decrease of the viscosity of nanofluids against the increase of temperature [23-25]. However, according to previous reports, the viscosity of TiO<sub>2</sub>/water nanofluids [26] and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/water





**Figure 7** Viscosity as a function of temperature.

nanofluids [27] is found to be substantially higher than the values of pure water, alumina/propylene glycol nanofluids [28], and copper/ethylene glycol nanofluids [29], which are reported to exhibit higher viscosity than their base fluids. The viscosity increase of these nanofluids compared with their base fluids may restrict their application as heat transfer fluids. Conversely, in our experiments, the addition of GE or MWCNTs can slightly decrease the viscosity of the base fluid, consistent well with Baogang Wang's result, in which the F-MWCNTs/[Bmim][PF<sub>6</sub>] nanofluids show lower viscosity than pure [Bmim][PF<sub>6</sub>] especially under high shear rates [30]. This phenomenon could be attributed to the self-lubrication of GE and MWCNTs. Definitely, the Ionanofluids with lower viscosity and higher TC than their base fluids are what we expected to see.

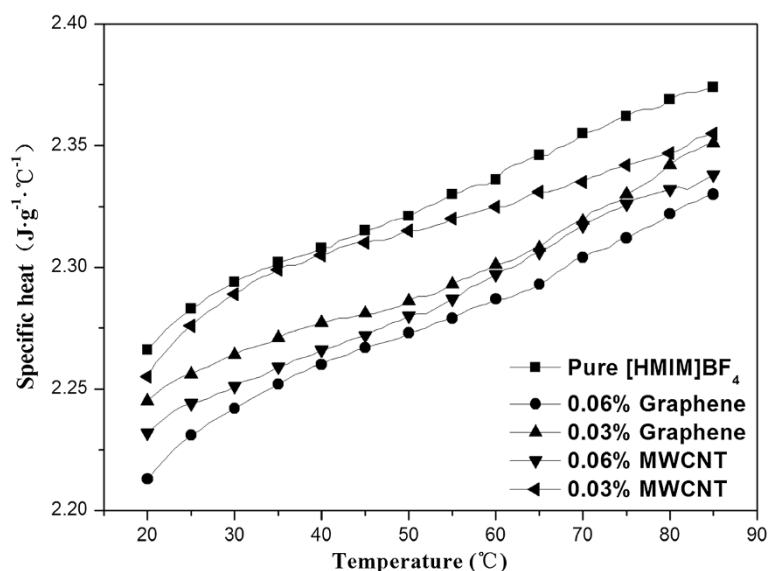
#### Specific heat study of ionanofluids

The specific heat of pure [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> and the GE- and MWCNT-dispersed Ionanofluids were tested at the same nanoadditive loading of 0.03 and 0.06 wt.% at different temperatures. As shown in Figure 8, the specific heat of pure [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> increases from 2.266 to 2.369 J·g<sup>-1</sup>·°C<sup>-1</sup> as the temperature increases from 20 °C to 80 °C, indicating that the specific heat of the IL increases with the tested temperature, and the same trend was found in Ionanofluids too. It can be seen that the specific heat of the GE-dispersed Ionanofluid is lower than that of the MWCNT-dispersed one at the same loading. Moreover, the specific heat capacities of these Ionanofluids are lower than that of the neat IL at the same temperature, which has been also observed for the carbon black-based Ionanofluid. According to Bridges' research, the specific heat of pure

[C<sub>4</sub>mim][NTf<sub>2</sub>] decreases from 1.53 to 1.34 J·g<sup>-1</sup>·°C<sup>-1</sup> after adding carbon black of 0.5 wt.%, which means the nanoparticles cause a decrease of specific heat for more than 12% compared with pure IL at a very low loading of 0.5 wt.%. The authors point out that the decrease in specific heat for the Ionanofluid may be due to the increased thermal conductivity of the Ionanofluid [11]. In our experiments, the specific heat of the Ionanofluid containing 0.03% of graphene decreases by 0.93% compared with the pure [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> at 20 °C and by 1.14% at 80 °C, which cannot be explained by traditional theory [31]. In fact, a theoretical model for the specific heat of nanofluids should take other factors into account, such as thermal conductivity, thermal diffusivity, size effects, the interactions of the surface atoms of nanoparticles and the surroundings, and pH [32,33]. In this paper, the decrease in specific heat of nanofluids may be attributed to that the specific heat of the nanoadditives are lower than that of the base fluid and the increased TC of the Ionanofluids.

#### Conclusions

GE and MWCNTs can be dispersed into [HMIM]BF<sub>4</sub> without using any surfactant. The GE-dispersed Ionanofluids are more homogeneous and stable than those containing MWCNTs at the same nanoadditive loading. The remarkable TC enhancement ratio of more than 10% is achieved by the Ionanofluid containing GE with the mass fraction of as low as 0.03%. The TC enhancement ratios of the GE-based Ionanofluids are larger than those of the MWCNT-based Ionanofluids at the same nanoadditive loading. No anomalous TC enhancement is achieved by all the GE- and MWCNT-dispersed Ionanofluids. The



**Figure 8** Specific heat as a function of temperature.

Ionanofluids exhibit lower viscosity than their base fluids, which is beneficial for their application as heat transfer fluids. The specific heat of the GE- and MWCNT-dispersed Ionanofluids is very close to that of the pure IL. Ionanofluids containing graphene are a new class of heat transfer fluids which exhibit fascinating thermophysical properties compared to the base ionic liquids; they have the potential applications from refrigeration systems at the low temperature end to solar energy collection at high temperatures owing to their unique characteristics of a wide range of liquid temperature, low vapor pressure, and high thermal stability. The further experimental research on the thermal and optical properties of Ionanofluids containing graphene at high temperature will be conducted in our future work.

#### Abbreviations

GE: Graphene; GO: Graphite oxide; Ionanofluids: Ionic liquid-based nanofluids; ILs: Ionic liquids; MWCNTs: Multi-walled carbon nanotubes; TC: Thermal conductivity; TEM: Transmission electron microscopy.

#### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

#### Authors' contributions

FW designed and conducted the experiments, carried out the experimental analyses, and drafted the manuscript. JS and LH prepared the GO and GE. ZZ, XF, and WM conceived the study, participated in its design and coordination, wrote the introduction, and modified the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

#### Authors' information

FW received his Bachelor in Material Chemistry from Wuhan University of Technology, China in 2010, and now, he is a postgraduate student at South China University of Technology. His research interests include heat transfer enhancement, nanofluid, and advanced materials. LH received her Bachelor in Chemical Engineering and Technology from Central South University, China in 2010, and now, she is a postgraduate student at South China University of Technology. Her research interests are optical functional

materials. XF received her Bachelor in Organic Chemical Engineering from Chengdu University of Science and Technology in 1990 and PhD in Chemical Engineering from South China University of Technology in 2002. She did her postdoctoral research at National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Japan. She is now a professor at South China University of Technology. Her research interests include phase change and solar cell materials. ZZ received his bachelor degree from Sichuan University in 1990 and PhD from South China University of Technology in 1996. He is now a professor at South China University of Technology and a research leader at the Key Laboratory of Enhanced Heat Transfer and Energy Conservation of the Ministry of Education, China. His research interests include heat transfer enhancement, composite phase change material, and nanofluid. WM received his PhD from South China University of Technology in 1996. He is now a professor at South China University of Technology. His research interests include composite material and nano-technology.

#### Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the Research Fund for the Doctoral Program of Higher Education of China (no. 20090172110015), the Scientific and Technological Project of Guangzhou City (2012J4100004) and the Joint Funds of NSFC-Guangdong of China (U0934005).

#### Author details

<sup>1</sup>Key Laboratory of Enhanced Heat Transfer and Energy Conservation, the Ministry of Education, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou 510640, China. <sup>2</sup>School of Materials Science and Engineering, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou 510640, China.

Received: 1 April 2012 Accepted: 8 June 2012

Published: 19 June 2012

#### References

1. Saidur R, Leong K, Mohammad H: **A review on applications and challenges of nanofluids.** *Renewable Sustainable Energy Rev* 2011, **15**:1646–1668.
2. Chol S: **Enhancing thermal conductivity of fluids with nanoparticles.** *ASME-PUBLICATIONS-FED* 1995, **231**:99–106.
3. Wang XQ, Mujumdar AS: **A review on nanofluids - part II: experiments and applications.** *Braz J Chem Eng* 2008, **25**:631–648.
4. Mintsa HA, Roy G, Nguyen CT, Doucet D: **New temperature dependent thermal conductivity data for water-based nanofluids.** *Int J Therm Sci* 2009, **48**:363–371.

5. Hwang Y, Ahn Y, Shin H, Lee C, Kim G, Park H, Lee J: **Investigation on characteristics of thermal conductivity enhancement of nanofluids.** *Curr Appl Phys* 2006, **6**:1068–1071.
6. Li D, Hong B, Fang W, Guo Y, Lin R: **Preparation of well-dispersed silver nanoparticles for oil-based nanofluids.** *Ind Eng Chem Res* 2010, **49**:1697–1702.
7. Yokozeki A, Shiflett MB: **Water solubility in ionic liquids and application to absorption cycles.** *Ind Eng Chem Res* 2010, **49**(19):9496–9503.
8. Bai L, Zhu J, Chen B, Li C, Fei W: **Applications of ionic liquids in heat transfer and heat storage process.** *Huagong Xuebao/CIESC J* 2010, **61**:3037–3043.
9. Baogang W, Xiaobo W, Wenjing L, Jingcheng H: **Gold-ionic liquid nanofluids with preferably tribological properties and thermal conductivity.** *Nanoscale Res Lett* 2011, **6**:259.
10. Swadzba-Kwasny M, Chancelier L, Ng S, Manyar HG, Hardacre C, Nockemann P: **Facile in situ synthesis of nanofluids based on ionic liquids and copper oxide clusters and nanoparticles.** *Dalton Trans* 2012, **41**:219–227.
11. Bridges NJ, Visser AE, Fox EB: **The potential of nanoparticle enhanced ionic liquids (NEILs) as advanced heat transfer fluids.** *Energy Fuel* 2011, **25**:4862–4864.
12. de Castro CA Nieto, Lourenço MJV, Ribeiro APC, Langa E, Vieira SIC, Goodrich P, Hardacre C: **Thermal properties of ionic liquids and ionanofluids of imidazolium and pyrrolidinium liquidst.** *J Chem Eng Data* 2009, **55**:653–661.
13. Balandin AA, Ghosh S, Bao W, Calizo I, Teweldebrhan D, Miao F, Lau CN: **Superior thermal conductivity of single-layer graphene.** *Nano Lett* 2008, **8**:902–907.
14. Baby TT, Ramaprabhu S: **Investigation of thermal and electrical conductivity of graphene based nanofluids.** *J Appl Phys* 2010, **108**:124308.
15. Yu W, Xie H, Wang X, Wang X: **Significant thermal conductivity enhancement for nanofluids containing graphene nanosheets.** *Physics Letters A* 2011, **375**:1323–1328.
16. Eswarajah V, Sankaranarayanan V, Ramaprabhu S: **Graphene-based engine oil nanofluids for tribological applications.** *ACS Appl Mater Interfaces* 2011, **3**:4221–4227.
17. Baby TT, Ramaprabhu S: **Synthesis and nanofluid application of silver nanoparticles decorated graphene.** *J Mater Chem* 2011, **21**:9702–9709.
18. Yu W, Xie H, Bao D: **Enhanced thermal conductivities of nanofluids containing graphene oxide nanosheets.** *Nanotechnology* 2010, **21**:055705.
19. Lu J, Yang J, Wang J, Lim A, Wang S, Loh KP: **One-pot synthesis of fluorescent carbon nanoribbons, nanoparticles, and graphene by the exfoliation of graphite in ionic liquids.** *ACS Nano* 2009, **3**:2367–2375.
20. Offeman RE, Hummers WS Jr: **Preparation of graphitic oxide.** *J Am Chem Soc* 1958, **80**:1339–1339.
21. Jang SP, Choi SUS: **Role of Brownian motion in the enhanced thermal conductivity of nanofluids.** *Appl Phys Lett* 2004, **84**:4316.
22. Buongiorno J, Venerus DC, Prabhat N, McKrell T, Townsend J, Christianson R, Tolmachev YV, Keblinski P, Hu L, Alvarado JL: **A benchmark study on the thermal conductivity of nanofluids.** *J Appl Phys* 2009, **106**:094312–094314.
23. Kole M, Dey TK: **Thermal conductivity and viscosity of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanofluid based on car engine coolant.** *J Phys D: Appl Phys* 2010, **43**:315501.
24. Yu W, Xie HQ, Chen LF, Li Y: **Investigation of thermal conductivity and viscosity of ethylene glycol based ZnO nanofluid.** *Thermochim Acta* 2009, **491**:92–96.
25. Zhou S-Q, Ni R, Funfschilling D: **Effects of shear rate and temperature on viscosity of alumina polyalphaolefins nanofluids.** *J Appl Phys* 2010, **107**:054317.
26. Turgut A, Tavman I, Chirtoc M, Schuchmann H, Sauter C, Tavman S: **Thermal conductivity and viscosity measurements of water-based TiO<sub>2</sub> nanofluids.** *Int J Thermophys* 2009, **30**:1213–1226.
27. Nguyen C, Desgranges F, Galanis N, Roy G, Maré T, Boucher S, Angue Mintsa H: **Viscosity data for Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> – water nanofluid—hysteresis: is heat transfer enhancement using nanofluids reliable?** *Int J Therm Sci* 2008, **47**:103–111.
28. Prasher R, Song D, Wang J, Phelan P: **Measurements of nanofluid viscosity and its implications for thermal applications.** *Appl Phys Lett* 2006, **89**:133108.
29. Garg J, Poudel B, Chiesa M, Gordon JB, Ma JJ, Wang JB, Ren ZF, Kang YT, Ohtani H, Nanda J, McKinley GH, Chen G: **Enhanced thermal conductivity and viscosity of copper nanoparticles in ethylene glycol nanofluid.** *J Appl Phys* 2008, **103**:074301.
30. Wang B, Wang X, Lou W, Hao J: **Rheological and tribological properties of ionic liquid-based nanofluids containing functionalized multi-walled carbon nanotubes.** *J Phys Chem C* 2010, **114**:8749–8754.
31. Velagapudi V, Konijeti KR, Aduru KSC: **Empirical correlations to predict thermophysical and heat transfer characteristics of nanofluids.** *Therm Sci* 2008, **12**:27–37.
32. De Robertis E, Cosme E, Neves R, Kuznetsov AY, Campos A, Landi S, Achete C: **Application of the modulated temperature differential scanning calorimetry technique for the determination of the specific heat of copper nanofluids.** *Appl Therm Eng* 2012, **41**:10–17.
33. Donghyun S, Banerjee D: **Enhancement of specific heat capacity of high-temperature silica-nanofluids synthesized in alkali chloride salt eutectics for solar thermal-energy storage applications.** *Int J Heat Mass Transf* 2011, **54**:1064–1070.

doi:10.1186/1556-276X-7-314

**Cite this article as:** Wang et al.: Surfactant-free ionic liquid-based nanofluids with remarkable thermal conductivity enhancement at very low loading of graphene. *Nanoscale Research Letters* 2012 **7**:314.

**Submit your manuscript to a SpringerOpen<sup>®</sup> journal and benefit from:**

- Convenient online submission
- Rigorous peer review
- Immediate publication on acceptance
- Open access: articles freely available online
- High visibility within the field
- Retaining the copyright to your article

Submit your next manuscript at ► [springeropen.com](http://springeropen.com)