23–6 ▪ SELECTION OF HEAT EXCHANGERS

Heat exchangers are complicated devices, and the results obtained with the simplified approaches presented above should be used with care. For example, we assumed that the overall heat transfer coefficient U is constant throughout the heat exchanger and that the convection heat transfer coefficients can be predicted using the convection correlations. However, it should be kept in mind that the uncertainty in the predicted value of U can even exceed 30 percent. Thus, it is natural to tend to overdesign the heat exchangers in order to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Heat transfer enhancement in heat exchangers is usually accompanied by *increased pressure drop*, and thus *higher pumping power.* Therefore, any gain from the enhancement in heat transfer should be weighed against the cost of the accompanying pressure drop. Also, some thought should be given to which fluid should pass through the tube side and which through the shell side. Usually, the *more viscous fluid is more suitable for the shell side* (larger passage area and thus lower pressure drop) and *the fluid with the higher pressure for the tube side.*

Engineers in industry often find themselves in a position to select heat exchangers to accomplish certain heat transfer tasks. Usually, the goal is to heat or cool a certain fluid at a known mass flow rate and temperature to a desired temperature. Thus, the rate of heat transfer in the prospective heat exchanger is

$$\dot{Q}_{\max} = \dot{m}C_p(T_{\text{in}} - T_{\text{out}})$$

which gives the heat transfer requirement of the heat exchanger before having any idea about the heat exchanger itself.

An engineer going through catalogs of heat exchanger manufacturers will be overwhelmed by the type and number of readily available off-the-shelf heat exchangers. The proper selection depends on several factors.

Heat Transfer Rate

This is the most important quantity in the selection of a heat exchanger. A heat exchanger should be capable of transferring heat at the specified rate in order to achieve the desired temperature change of the fluid at the specified mass flow rate.

Cost

Budgetary limitations usually play an important role in the selection of heat exchangers, except for some specialized cases where “money is no object.” An off-the-shelf heat exchanger has a definite cost advantage over those made to order. However, in some cases, none of the existing heat exchangers will do, and it may be necessary to undertake the expensive and time-consuming task of designing and manufacturing a heat exchanger from scratch to suit the needs. This is often the case when the heat exchanger is an integral part of the overall device to be manufactured.

The operation and maintenance costs of the heat exchanger are also important considerations in assessing the overall cost.

Pumping Power

In a heat exchanger, both fluids are usually forced to flow by pumps or fans that consume electrical power. The annual cost of electricity associated with the operation of the pumps and fans can be determined from

$$\text{Operating cost} = (\text{Pumping power, kW}) \times (\text{Hours of operation, h}) \\ \times (\text{Price of electricity, \$/kWh})$$

where the pumping power is the total electrical power consumed by the motors of the pumps and fans. For example, a heat exchanger that involves a 1-hp pump and a $\frac{1}{3}$-hp fan (1 hp $=$ 0.746 kW) operating 8 h a day and 5 days a week will consume 2017 kWh of electricity per year, which will cost \$161.4 at an electricity cost of 8 cents/kWh.

Minimizing the pressure drop and the mass flow rate of the fluids will *minimize* the operating cost of the heat exchanger, but it will *maximize* the size of the heat exchanger and thus the initial cost. As a rule of thumb, doubling the mass flow rate will reduce the initial cost by *half* but will increase the pumping power requirements by a factor of roughly *eight.*

Typically, fluid velocities encountered in heat exchangers range between 0.7 and 7 m/s for liquids and between 3 and 30 m/s for gases. Low velocities are helpful in avoiding erosion, tube vibrations, and noise as well as pressure drop.

Size and Weight

Normally, the *smaller* and the *lighter* the heat exchanger, the better it is. This is especially the case in the *automotive* and *aerospace* industries, where size and weight requirements are most stringent. Also, a larger heat exchanger normally carries a higher price tag. The space available for the heat exchanger in some cases limits the length of the tubes that can be used.

Type

The type of heat exchanger to be selected depends primarily on the type of *fluids* involved, the *size* and *weight* limitations, and the presence of any *phase-change* processes. For example, a heat exchanger is suitable to cool a liquid by a gas if the surface area on the gas side is many times that on the liquid side. On the other hand, a plate or shell-and-tube heat exchanger is very suitable for cooling a liquid by another liquid.

Materials

The materials used in the construction of the heat exchanger may be an important consideration in the selection of heat exchangers. For example, the thermal and structural *stress effects* need not be considered at pressures below 15 atm or temperatures below 150°C. But these effects are major considerations above 70 atm or 550°C and seriously limit the acceptable materials of the heat exchanger.

A temperature difference of 50°C or more between the tubes and the shell will probably pose *differential thermal expansion* problems and needs to be considered. In the case of corrosive fluids, we may have to select expensive *corrosion-resistant* materials such as stainless steel or even titanium if we are not willing to replace low-cost heat exchangers frequently.

Other Considerations

There are other considerations in the selection of heat exchangers that may or may not be important, depending on the application. For example, being *leak-tight* is an important consideration when *toxic* or *expensive* fluids are involved. Ease of servicing, low maintenance cost, and safety and reliability are some other important considerations in the selection process. Quietness is one of the primary considerations in the selection of liquid-to-air heat exchangers used in heating and air-conditioning applications.

EXAMPLE 23–10 Installing a Heat Exchanger to Save Energy and Money

In a dairy plant, milk is pasteurized by hot water supplied by a natural gas furnace. The hot water is then discharged to an open floor drain at 80°C at a rate of 15 kg/min. The plant operates 24 h a day and 365 days a year. The furnace has an efficiency of 80 percent, and the cost of the natural gas is \$0.40 per therm (1 therm = 105,500 kJ). The average temperature of the cold water entering the furnace throughout the year is 15°C. The drained hot water cannot be returned to the furnace and recirculated, because it is contaminated during the process.

In order to save energy, installation of a water-to-water heat exchanger to preheat the incoming cold water by the drained hot water is proposed. Assuming that the heat exchanger will recover 75 percent of the available heat in the hot water, determine the heat transfer rating of the heat exchanger that needs to be purchased and suggest a suitable type. Also, determine the amount of money this heat exchanger will save the company per year from natural gas savings.

SOLUTION A water-to-water heat exchanger is to be installed to transfer energy from drained hot water to the incoming cold water to preheat it. The rate of heat transfer in the heat exchanger and the amount of energy and money saved per year are to be determined.

Assumptions **1** Steady operating conditions exist. **2** The effectiveness of the heat exchanger remains constant.

Properties We use the specific heat of water at room temperature, $C_p = 4.18$ kJ/kg · °C, and treat it as a constant.

Analysis A schematic of the prospective heat exchanger is given in Fig. 23–31. The heat recovery from the hot water will be a maximum when it leaves the heat exchanger at the inlet temperature of the cold water. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned}\dot{Q}_{\max} &= \dot{m}_h C_p (T_{h,\,\text{in}} - T_{c,\,\text{in}})\\ &= \left(\frac{15}{60}\ \text{kg/s}\right)(4.18\ \text{kJ/kg}\cdot{}^\circ\text{C})(80 - 15)^\circ\text{C}\\ &= 67.9\ \text{kJ/s}\end{aligned}$$

That is, the existing hot-water stream has the potential to supply heat at a rate of 67.9 kJ/s to the incoming cold water. This value would be approached in a counter-flow heat exchanger with a *very large* heat transfer surface area. A heat exchanger of reasonable size and cost can capture 75 percent of this heat

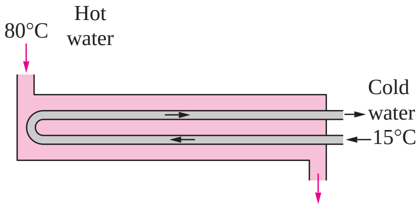

FIGURE 23–31
Schematic for Example 23–10.

transfer potential. Thus, the heat transfer rating of the prospective heat exchanger must be

$$\dot{Q} = \varepsilon \dot{Q}_{\max} = (0.75)(67.9 \text{ kJ/s}) = \mathbf{50.9 \text{ kJ/s}}$$

That is, the heat exchanger should be able to deliver heat at a rate of 50.9 kJ/s from the hot to the cold water. An ordinary plate or *shell-and-tube* heat exchanger should be adequate for this purpose, since both sides of the heat exchanger involve the same fluid at comparable flow rates and thus comparable heat transfer coefficients. (Note that if we were heating air with hot water, we would have to specify a heat exchanger that has a large surface area on the air side.)

The heat exchanger will operate 24 h a day and 365 days a year. Therefore, the annual operating hours are

$$\text{Operating hours} = (24 \text{ h/day})(365 \text{ days/year}) = 8760 \text{ h/year}$$

Noting that this heat exchanger saves 50.9 kJ of energy per second, the energy saved during an entire year will be

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Energy saved} &= (\text{Heat transfer rate})(\text{Operation time}) \\ &= (50.9 \text{ kJ/s})(8760 \text{ h/year})(3600 \text{ s/h}) \\ &= 1.605 \times 10^9 \text{ kJ/year}\end{aligned}$$

The furnace is said to be 80 percent efficient. That is, for each 80 units of heat supplied by the furnace, natural gas with an energy content of 100 units must be supplied to the furnace. Therefore, the energy savings determined above result in fuel savings in the amount of

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Fuel saved} &= \frac{\text{Energy saved}}{\text{Furnace efficiency}} = \frac{1.605 \times 10^9 \text{ kJ/year}}{0.80}\left(\frac{1 \text{ therm}}{105{,}500 \text{ kJ}}\right) \\ &= 19{,}020 \text{ therms/year}\end{aligned}$$

Noting that the price of natural gas is $0.40 per therm, the amount of money saved becomes

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Money saved} &= (\text{Fuel saved}) \times (\text{Price of fuel}) \\ &= (19{,}020 \text{ therms/year})(\$0.40/\text{therm}) \\ &= \mathbf{\$7607/\text{year}}\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the installation of the proposed heat exchanger will save the company $7607 a year, and the installation cost of the heat exchanger will probably be paid from the fuel savings in a short time.

SUMMARY

Heat exchangers are devices that allow the exchange of heat between two fluids without allowing them to mix with each other. Heat exchangers are manufactured in a variety of types, the simplest being the *double-pipe* heat exchanger. In a *parallel-flow* type, both the hot and cold fluids enter the heat exchanger at the same end and move in the same direction, whereas in a *counter-flow* type, the hot and cold fluids enter the heat exchanger at opposite ends and flow in opposite directions. In *compact* heat exchangers, the two fluids move perpendicular to each other, and such a flow configuration is called *cross-flow.* Other common types of heat exchangers in industrial applications are the *plate* and the *shell-and-tube* heat exchangers.

Heat transfer in a heat exchanger usually involves convection in each fluid and conduction through the wall separating the two fluids. In the analysis of heat exchangers, it is convenient to