

REVIEW PAPER

Effect of temperature change on physiology and biochemistry of algae: A review

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ABSTRACT The productivity and survival of algae are strongly affected by their physiological and biochemical processes, as well as biotic and abiotic factors in the environment. In recent years, global climate change such as increased temperature and elevated ultraviolet radiation (UVR) due to ozone depletion has huge impact on organisms particularly the ones in the marine ecosystem. It has been demonstrated that the global temperature increased steadily over the last decade, with an average of 0.74°C. In the coming years, climate model projections summarized by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) indicate that average global surface temperature will likely rise a further 0.5 to 1.6°C by 2030, and rising to 1.1 to 6.4°C by 2100. As algae serve as the primary producer of food chain in both marine and terrestrial ecosystems, it is of great significance to understand the impact of temperature change on their physiological and biochemical processes. This review provides the information on how algae respond to temperature change based on their growth, biochemical composition and fatty acid composition.

ABSTRAK Produktiviti dan kelangsungan hidup alga sangat dipengaruhi oleh proses fisiologi dan biokimia mereka, serta faktor-faktor biotik dan abiotik dalam persekitarannya. Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, perubahan iklim global seperti kenaikan suhu dan peningkatan radiasi ultra-ungu (UVR) akibat penipisan lapisan ozon mempunyai kesan besar terhadap organisma khususnya yang berada dalam ekosistem marin. Telah terbukti bahawa suhu global meningkat secara berterusan sejak berdekad-dekad terakhir, dengan purata 0.74°C. Dalam tahun-tahun akan datang, unjuran-unjuran model iklim yang diringkaskan oleh Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) menunjukkan bahawa purata suhu permukaan global berkemungkinan akan meningkat menjadi 0.5 hingga 1.6°C pada tahun 2030, dan meningkat menjadi 1.1 hingga 6.4°C pada tahun 2100. Memandangkan alga berperanan sebagai pengeluar utama rantai makanan di kedua-dua ekosistem marin dan darat, adalah sangat penting untuk memahami kesan perubahan suhu terhadap proses fisiologi dan biokimia mereka. Ulasan ini menyediakan maklumat tentang bagaimana alga bertindak balas terhadap perubahan suhu berdasarkan pertumbuhan, komposisi biokimia dan komposisi asid lemak mereka.

(**Keywords:** Global warming, algae, temperature, biochemical composition, fatty acid)

INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, changes in global environment such as global warming and ozone depletion have been particularly strong and are topics of great concern. Global climate change is making itself felt in the form of prolonged droughts, warmer air and ocean temperature, increase land-surface precipitation, melting glaciers and ice caps, rising in sea level, thawing of permafrost and changes in atmosphere and oceanic circulation patterns (IPCC, 2007). The effects of

climate change such as global warming and increased UVR on algae have been receiving increase interest (Teoh et al., 2004; Chu et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2007). There is strong evidence which shows that the average global temperature will increase with the increase of anthropogenic greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), ozone (O₃), methane (CH₄) and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the atmosphere.

The elevated anthropogenic greenhouse gases would lead to an increase in the average global

surface temperatures ranging anywhere from 1.8 to 4.0°C, though the actual rise will not be homogenous and some parts of the world will see far larger shifts in temperature than this (Kojima & Harrison, 1998; Hostetler & Small, 1999; IPCC, 2007).

To date, only few authors reported about the issues of global warming in Malaysia (Quadir et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2005; Tangang et al., 2007). Ng et al. (2005) observed a significant increase of the mean annual temperature ranging from 0.99 to 3.44°C / 100 years for the period of 50 years (1951 – 2001) in Malaysia. In a similar study, the surface temperatures in most regions in Malaysia showed significant warming trends of between 2.7 to 4.0°C / 100 years during the last 42 years from 1961 to 2002 (Tangang et al., 2007).

Global warming can have a huge impact on all organisms on Earth. The impact on algae can be far reaching as they are important biotic component in the world's ocean and freshwater ecosystems and account for around 50 % of the net amount of 111 – 117 Pg C assimilated annually (1 Pg = 10¹⁵ g) by photoautotrophs (Behrenfeld et al., 2001; Beardall & Raven, 2004; Falkowski & Raven, 2007). This will eventually affect the whole ecosystem where changes in the food chain will cause changes in the species composition and abundance of organisms up the food chain.

One of the main topics that captured the attention of scientists around the world is the concern on how environments are changing, and how these changes are affecting, or going to affect life on Earth and how it might respond (Peck, 2005; Beardall & Stojkovic, 2006; Beardall et al., 2009). According to Peck (2005), organisms have a limited number of responses that enhance survival in changing environments. These are:

1. To cope with the change using internal physiological flexibility and capacities,
2. To evolve adaptations to the new conditions, or
3. To migrate to areas consistent with survival.

If the organisms failed to migrate or adapt to the changing environment, they will become extinct. With increased temperature, this phenomenon will lead to accelerated growth rate and metabolic activity of algae which is generally positively correlated with temperature within a suitable range. Therefore, temperature is an important factor controlling growth rate, physiological and metabolic processes in algae (Beardall & Raven,

2004; Chu et al., 2005; Staehr & Birkeland, 2006). In addition, there have been several studies on temperature as an important determinant of species composition and geographical distribution of algae (Bischoff & Wiencke, 1995; Pakker et al., 1995; Butterwick et al., 2005).

Response of algae to increased temperature

Growth Rate

Temperature is a fundamental environmental factor that strongly regulates the algal growth (Eppley, 1972; Raven & Geider, 1988). The relationship between temperature and a given biological rate such as algal growth and photosynthesis has often been described by the temperature coefficient Q_{10} or Arrhenius functions (the factor by which a biological rate is increased by a 10°C rise in the temperature) (Ahlgren, 1987; Regier et al., 1990). The use of Q_{10} values assumes an Arrhenius-type relationship between growth rates and temperature. Conversely, both of these functions assume continuous acceleration of growth with increasing temperature. It is assumed that the algal growth rates increase up to the optimal temperature (T_{opt}), beyond which they decrease (Suzuki & Takahashi, 1995; Montagnes & Franklin, 2001).

Temperature is a very important ecological parameter that affects almost every aspect of aquatic life. The effects may vary from increase in the metabolic rate of organisms to displacement or even mortality of sensitive organisms (Rajadurai et al., 2005). The temperature-growth range of an alga is important ecologically because it defines the range over which the alga can be metabolically active and determines the distribution of algae. Different algal species have different ranges of tolerance and physiological responses to temperature changes (Table 1). According to Li (1980), some algae can survive at extreme habitats with temperatures ranging from – 2°C in the Arctic and Antarctic to 75°C in thermophilic hot springs.

A study on the temperature-growth characteristics of 35 taxa (128 isolates) from Antarctic oases showed that all isolates grew at temperatures ranging from 7.5 to 18°C with about 6% of the 128 clones unable to grow at $\leq 5^\circ\text{C}$. Nevertheless, over one-third of the isolates can tolerate high temperature of 30°C (Seaburg et al., 1981). For example, Suzuki & Takahashi (1995) studied the growth responses of several diatoms exposed to different culture temperatures and found that these diatoms showed a maximum growth rate at the temperature very near to the upper limit, which was

generally higher than the isolation temperature. In a study on six Antarctic algae showed that they grow above ambient temperature (Teoh et al., 2004).

Although it is generally assumed that cyanobacteria have high temperature optima for growth (> 20°C), cyanobacteria are often the dominant autotrophic

Table 1: Temperature tolerance and temperature optima of microalgae isolated from different habitats.

Species	Origin	Temperature optima (°C)	Temperature tolerance (°C)	μ optima (d ⁻¹)	Reference
<i>Chlainomonas kolii</i>	Washington	0 – 4	0 – 4	-	Hoham (1975)
<i>Chlainomonas rubra</i>	snow	0 – 4	0 – 4	-	
<i>Chloromonas pichincha</i>		1	0 – 10	-	
<i>Cylindrocystis brebissonii</i>		10	0 – 20	-	
<i>Raphidonema nivale</i>		5	0 – 15	-	
<i>Chlamydomonas globosa</i>	Antarctic	18 – 20	5 – 20	1.76 – 1.82	Seaburg et al.
<i>Chlamydomonas intermedia</i>	oases	15 – 18	-1 – 18	1.54 – 1.58	(1981)
<i>Chlamydomonas subcaudata</i>		10 – 12.5	-1 – 18	1.10 – 1.35	
<i>Chloromonas alpine</i>		12.5 – 15	-1 – 18	1.04 – 1.42	
<i>Nitzschia seriata</i>	Arctic	6 – 12	-1.6 – 12	0.361 – 0.567	Smith et al. (1994)
<i>Mastigocladus laminosus</i>	Hot spring	26 - 50	45	0.023	Singh et al. (1994)
<i>Laurencia sp.</i>	Tropical	25 – 30	15 – 30	-	Bischoff-
<i>Laurencia cartilaginea</i>	island	30	15 – 30	-	Basmann et al.
<i>Hypnea cenomyce</i>	Hainan,	30	15 – 30	-	(1997)
<i>Hypnea spinella</i>	Peoples Republic of China	30	15 – 30	-	
Cyanobacteria (27 isolates)	Arctic Subarctic Antarctica	15 – 35	5 – 35	0.12 – 0.41	Tang et al. (1997a)

*μ optima: Specific growth rate (s) at optimal temperature(s)

Table 2: Temperature tolerance and temperature optima of microalgae isolated from different habitats (continue).

Species	Origin	Temperature optima (°C)	Temperature tolerance (°C)	μ optima (d ⁻¹)	Reference
Cyanobacterial assemblages	Antarctica	20	0 – 45	-	Fritsen & Priscu (1998)
<i>Phormidium subfuscum</i>	Antarctica	15	5 – 20	0.26	Tang & Vincent (1999)
<i>Phormidium tenue</i>	Arctic	30	10 – 40	0.84	
<i>Oscillatoria</i> spp. (2 isolates)	Antarctic meltwater ponds	8	3 – 18	0.08 – 0.12	Nadeau & Castenholz (2000)
<i>Nannochloropsis oceanica</i>	Temperate	25 – 29	14.5 – 35.7	1.6	Sandnes et al. (2005)
<i>Chaetoceros wighami</i>	Tropical	28	28 – 40	-	Rajadurai et al. (2005)
<i>Amphora coffeaeformis</i>		28 – 33	28 – 40	-	
<i>Micromonas</i> sp.	Arctic	6 – 8	0 – 15	0.55	Lovejoy et al. (2007)
<i>Chlamydomonas</i> sp. ARC	Chukchi sea ice, Alaska	5	-10 – 20	0.41	Eddie et al. (2008)
<i>Amphidinium</i> sp.	Okinawa, Japan	24 – 29	21 – 35	0.022 h ⁻¹	Kitaya et al. (2008)
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. R-06/2	Rupite, Bulgaria	26 – 39	15 – 51	-	Gacheva & Pilarski (2008)

* μ optima: Specific growth rate (s) at optimal temperature(s)

Table 3: Temperature tolerance and temperature optima of microalgae isolated from different habitats (continue).

Species	Origin	Temperature optima (°C)	Temperature tolerance (°C)	μ optima (d ⁻¹)	Reference
<i>Chlorella</i> sp., strain BI	Transitory pond near Bratina Island, Antarctica	10	4 - 20	0.33 – 0.44	Morgan-Kiss et al. (2008)
<i>Chloromonas chenangoensis</i>	Chenango Valley, NY Whiteface Mnt., NY	2.5 – 5.0	0 – 7.5	-	Hoham et al. (2008)
<i>Chloromonas rosae</i> v. <i>psychrophila</i>	White Mnt., AZ Tughill Plateau, NY	4 – 15	0 – 20	-	
<i>Chloromonas rosae</i> v. <i>psychrophila</i>		4 – 15	0 – 20	-	
<i>Chloromonas tughillensis</i>		2.5 – 5.0	0 – 10	-	
<i>Symbiodinium californium</i>	Santa Barbara, California	15 – 28	5 – 30	0.21 – 0.26	McBride et al. (2009)

* μ optima: Specific growth rate (s) at optimal temperature(s)

Table 4: Biochemical composition variation to temperature stress.

Species	Origin	Temperature	Effect	Reference
<i>Chaetoceros calcitrans</i> , <i>Thalassiosira pseudonana</i> , <i>Chaetoceros simplex</i> , <i>Chaetoceros gracilis</i> , <i>Phaeodactylum</i> , <i>Dunaliella tertiolecta</i> , <i>Pavlova lutheri</i> , <i>Isochrysis galbana</i>	Temperate	10, 15, 20 and 25°C	Protein per cell had minimum values at intermediate temperatures; lipid and carbohydrate per cell showed no consistent trends with temperature	Thompson et al. (1992a)
<i>Isochrysis galbana</i> TK1	Temperate (Taiwan)	15 and 30°C	15°C → highest protein and carbohydrate content 30°C → higher lipid content	Zhu et al. (1997)
<i>Spirulina maxima</i> <i>Spirulina platensis</i>	Tropical	20, 25, 30,35 and 40°C	↑ temperature → ↓ protein content; ↑ carbohydrate content	Oliveira et al., (1999)
<i>Chaetoceros</i> sp. (CS256) <i>Rhodomonas</i> sp. (NT15) <i>Cryptomonas</i> sp. (CRFI01) Prymnesiophyte (NT19) <i>Isochrysis</i> sp. (clone T.ISO)	Tropical	25, 27, 30, 33 and 35°C	> 27°C → significantly lower % protein content; no consistent trend in the % carbohydrate content	Renaud et al. (2002)
<i>Thalassiosira pseudonana</i>	Temperate	8, 17 and 25°C	Protein content remain constant across different temperatures	Berges et al. (2002)

Table 5: Biochemical composition variation to temperature stress (continued).

Species	Origin	Temperature	Effect	Reference
<i>Caulerpa</i> spp. (six <i>Caulerpa</i> species)	Temperate (Gulf of Mexico)	Rainy season (30.2°C) Cold season (25.7°C) Dry season (27.6 – 30.3°C)	Dry season: ↑ seawater temperature, ↑ protein content Rainy and cold seasons: ↓ seawater temperature, ↑ carbohydrate content	Robledo & Freile-Pelegrin (2005)
<i>Chaetoceros</i> cf. <i>wighamii</i>	Southern Atlantic Ocean waters, Brazil	20, 25 and 30°C	20 and 25°C → higher lipid and carbohydrate content; protein was unaffected	de Castro Araujo & Garcia (2005)
<i>Nannochloropsis</i> sp.	Qingdao, China	14, 22 and 30°C	High and low temperature (14 and 30°C) → ↑ lipids and protein contents	Hu & Gao (2006)
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i>		25, 30, 35 and 38°C	25 to 30°C → ↓ lipid from 14.71 to 5.90%	Converti et al. (2009)
<i>Nannochloropsis oculata</i>		15, 20 and 25°C	20 to 25°C → ↑ lipid from 7.90 to 13.89%	

Table 6: Effect of temperature on fatty acid composition of selected microalgae reported in the literature.

Microalgae	Origin	Temperature change	Effect	Reference
<i>Spirulina platensis</i> UTEX 1928	Temperate	25 – 38°C	↑ temperature : total fatty acid ↓ from 37% to 19% % 18:3 ↓ Ratio of unsaturated fatty acid: saturated fatty acid ↓ with increasing temperature	Tedesco & Duerr (1989)
<i>Anksitrodesmus convolutes</i> UMACC 101	Tropical	18, 28 and 38°C	↑ temperature : 18:3 ↓ 16:0 and 18:1 ↑	Chu et al. (1994)
<i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> strain SO-26	Antarctica	10 – 20°C	↓ temperature : % 16:0 ↓ % 18:3 ↑ Ratio of unsaturated fatty acid: total fatty acid ↑ from 53.7 to 64.0%.	Nagashima et al. (1995)
<i>Chaetoceros</i> sp. <i>Rhodomonas</i> sp. <i>Cryptomonas</i> sp. Unidentified prymnesiophyte <i>Isochrysis</i> sp.	Tropical	25 – 35°C	Higher growth temperature: % 20:5 and % 22:6 ↓	Renaud et al. (2002)

Table 7: Effect of temperature on fatty acid composition of selected microalgae reported in the literature (continued).

Microalgae	Origin	Temperature change	Effect	Reference
<i>Spirulina platensis</i> <i>Chlorella vulgaris</i> <i>Botryococcus braunii</i>	Temperate	30 – 40°C 20 – 30°C 18 – 32°C	<i>Spirulina platensis</i> : At 30 °C, 16:0 was higher At 40 °C, 16:1, 18:2 ω 6 and 18:1 ω 3 was lower	Sushchik et al. (2003)
<i>Navicula</i> UMACC 231	Antarctic	4 – 30°C	↑ temperature: PUFA ↓	Teoh et al. (2004)
<i>Pheodactylum tricornutum</i>	Temperate	10 – 25°C	↓ temperature : Yields of PUFA and EPA ↑ by 120% % EPA ↑ by 85% % 16:0 ↓ by 30% % 16:1 ↓ by 20%	Jiang & Gao (2004)
35 <i>Arthrospira</i> strains	Temperate	20 – 30°C	↓ temperature: % 18:2 and 18:3 ↑ % 16:0 ↓	Muhling et al. (2005)
<i>Nannochloropsis</i> sp.	Temperate	14 – 30°C	↑ temperature: % 16:0 ↑ % 20:5 ↓	Hu & Gao (2006)
<i>Spirulina platensis</i> C1	Tropical	35 – 43°C	↑ temperature: % 18:2 ↑ % 18:3 ↓	Chaiklahan et al. (2007)

community which form mats and films across the benthic substrate in many types of lakes, streams, and ponds in the Arctic and Antarctica (Tang et al., 1997a, b; Fritsen & Priscu, 1998; Nadeau & Castenholz, 2000; Chevalier et al., 2000; Sutherland, 2009).

A study on 27 isolates of high-latitude mat-forming cyanobacteria from the polar (Arctic, sub-Arctic and Antarctic) freshwater ecosystems, Tang et al. (1997a) found that the temperature optimum for growth ranged from 15 – 35°C, with an average of 19.9°C. The study showed that maximal growth rates of the algae occurred within the upper limit for growth and generally higher than the ambient temperature from which the species were isolated. Similar findings were observed for the cyanobacterial assemblages from several permanent ice covers in Antarctica, where optimum rates of photosynthesis occurred at temperatures > 15°C (Fritsen & Priscu, 1998).

Temperature can impose a significant effect on the specific growth rate of algae. At temperature below optimum for growth, μ increases with increasing temperature but declines markedly at above the optimal temperature. For example, the growth rates of three tropical Australian algae *Cryptomonas* sp., *Rhodomonas* sp. and prymnesiophyte NT19 increase with temperature within 25 to 30°C, but decline at temperatures above 30°C (Renaud et al., 2002).

Similarly, *Nannochloropsis oceanica* showed increasing μ as a function of temperature, from 14.5°C, with a peak at 25 – 29°C. Above 30°C the cultures showed dramatic reduction in μ , with no cultures growing at temperatures over 35°C (Sandnes et al., 2005). In the marine diatom *Chaetoceros calcitrans*, the growth rates increased with temperature from 0.3 d⁻¹ at 6°C to 1.0 d⁻¹ at 15°C, and 1.4 d⁻¹ at 25°C (Anning et al., 2001). Similar trends were observed in two mesophilic microalgae, *Microcystis aeruginosa* and *Scenedesmus acutus* (Staehr & Birkeland, 2006), an Arctic cyanobacterium, *Schizothrix calcicola* (Tang & Vincent, 2000) and *Phormidium* sp. from a high Arctic lake (Tang et al., 1997b) where μ increased with increasing temperature from 5 to 25°C.

Biochemical Composition

There have been intensive studies on the biochemical composition of algae as they are the primary producers in the food chain. Information on the nutritional properties of algae such as protein, carbohydrate and lipid content is crucial

and could be a useful prediction to account for the efficiency of biomass transfer between the trophic levels (Thompson et al., 1992a; Gatenby et al., 2003; de Castro Araujo & Garcia, 2005). In nature, changes in phytoplankton community can modify both the quality and quantity of food in the food chain (Butler, 1994; Maazouzi et al., 2008; Whitehouse et al., 2008; Montes-Hugo et al., 2009).

The biochemical composition of algal species can vary significantly in their nutritional value. Clearly, environmental factors, particularly light, temperature, nutrient status, growth stage and salinity will affect the pathway and activity of cellular metabolism, as well as the cell composition (Shamsudin, 1992; Thompson et al., 1992a; Zhu et al., 1997; Renaud et al., 1994, 1995, 1999; Gatenby et al., 2003; Chen et al., 2008; Converti et al., 2009). Of all these factors, temperature is known to play major role in influencing the biochemical composition of algae (Goldman & Mann, 1980; Thompson et al., 1992a; de Castro Araujo & Garcia, 2005; Chen et al., 2008; Converti et al., 2009) as shown in Table 2. It seems most of the previous temperature studies documented only variation in carbon, nitrogen, and chlorophyll-a (Thompson et al., 1992a; Anning et al., 2001; Berges et al., 2002).

Growth temperature has strong influence on the changes of biochemical composition in algae. Overall, high growth temperature has been related to significant decrease in protein content, together with increases in lipid and carbohydrates (Tomaselli et al., 1988; Oliveira et al., 1999). For instance, Tomaselli et al. (1988) studied the influence of high temperature (40°C) on *Spirulina platensis* M2 cultivated continuously and observed a significant decrease in protein content (22%), together with a remarkable increase in lipids (43%) and carbohydrate contents (30%). However, opposite trend was found by other studies where high growth temperature has been associated with increases in protein content and decreases in carbohydrate (Thompson et al., 1992a), and lipid (Thompson et al., 1992a; Renaud et al., 1995) in some species.

It seems there is no consistent trend in proximate biochemical composition as a function of temperature. The response of biochemical composition to temperature variations was found to be species specific. For example, de Castro Araujo & Garcia (2005) found that higher lipid and carbohydrate content were obtained at lower temperatures (20 and 25°C) compared to high temperature (30°C) in diatom *Chaetoceros* cf.

wighamii, while protein content was unaffected. Another study on *Chaetoceros* sp. (Clone CS256) grown at 25°C contained higher lipid content, while for other species such as *Rhodomonas* sp., *Cryptomonas* sp. and *Isochrysis* sp. higher concentrations were observed at higher temperatures between 27 and 30°C (Renaud et al., 2002). All four tropical Australian species tested showed significantly lower percentage of protein content when cells were grown at temperatures above 27°C and there was no consistent trend in the percentage of carbohydrate as a function of temperature (Renaud et al., 2002). At lower temperature (< 15°C), all eight species of marine phytoplankton increased their protein per cell but there is no consistent pattern in lipid and carbohydrate per cell as a function of temperature.

Two of the *Chaetoceros* species (*C. simplex* and *C. gracilis*) showed steady declines in lipid per cells as temperature increased from 10 to 25°C. *Thalassiosira pseudonana*, *Phaeodactylum tricornutum*, and *Pavlova lutheri* all had minimums in lipid per cell at intermediate temperatures (15°C) (Thompson et al., 1992a). In *Dunaliella tertiolecta* and *Isochrysis galbana*, protein content increases markedly when grown at temperatures higher than 15 °C (Thompson et al., 1992a).

According to Zhu et al. (1997), the biochemical composition of the haptophyte *Isochrysis galbana* TK1 grown at 15 and 30°C varied at the two culture temperatures. The highest protein and carbohydrate contents were found at 15°C, while lipid content was higher at 30°C than at 15°C. In another study, it was found that the lipid content of *Nannochloropsis oculata* almost doubled when an increase in temperature from 20 to 25°C. However, an increase from 25 to 30°C caused a decrease of the lipid content of *Chlorella vulgaris* from 14.71 to 5.90% (Converti et al., 2009).

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated here, temperature plays an important role in controlling the physiological and biochemical processes in algae. The basic understanding on how algae respond and adapt to temperature change is crucial. However, most authors found that the response of algae to temperature changes varied with species. Temperature changes also determine species abundance and distribution of algae. As all organisms in the food chain are closely linked, it is of great significance to study the impact of algae at species level and relate the findings to the ecosystem.

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