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Bioaccumulation and Toxicity Studies of Heavy Metals in Selected Malaysian Seaweeds

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Abstract

Seven seaweed species of Malaysia; *Chaetomorpha linum*, *Padina tetrastomatica*, *Sargassum baccularia*, *S. siliquosum*, *Gracilaria changii*, *G.edulis* and *G.salicornia*, were used in 24 h single metal exposure static studies to characterise the heavy metal (Cu, Zn, Mn and Cd) accumulation patterns in the seaweeds. This was done by incubating the seaweeds in a range of metal concentrations in sea water and by determining the metal content, at fixed time intervals, in the seaweeds and seawater over a 24 h exposure period. Five metal accumulation patterns were observed in this study; Pattern 1 : An initial rapid uptake, followed by a gradual accumulation till 24 h; Pattern 2 : A continuous gradual accumulation pattern for the entire 24 h; Pattern 3 : An initial rapid uptake, followed by a release-uptake pattern before a maintenance pattern or gradual accumulation continued till 24 h; Pattern 4 : An alternating uptake-release or vice-versa pattern throughout the 24 h; Pattern 5 : An initial net accumulative pattern, followed by a continuous regulatory discharge till 24 h.

Based on the three criteria; i) seaweed should possess net accumulation pattern; ii) seaweed should have strong positive correlation between metal accumulated in tissues and

time of exposure; iii) seaweed should have strong positive correlation between metal accumulated in tissues and available metal concentration in seawater; which characterise organisms as potential bioaccumulative indicators of selected heavy metals, the Phaeophytes were most suitable, followed by the Chlorophyte *C. linum* and then the Rhodophytes, the *Gracilaria* species.

Exposing three seaweed species, *C. linum*, *S. siliquosum* and *G. changii* to a single metal concentration of 1 mgL^{-1} (Cu, Zn, Mn and Cd) for 2 h, respectively at differing salinities of 20, 25, 30 and 35 ppt concentration, showed that decreasing salinity levels correlated ($p < 0.05$) with increased accumulation of metals in seaweeds.

Exposure of the same three seaweed species to a single metal concentration of 1 mgL^{-1} at differing pH (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) did not show any corresponding trend for the effect of pH on metal accumulation in seaweeds for the 2 h exposure. However, pH above 4 produced significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher accumulation generally.

Toxicity studies showed that IC_{50} values using growth parameters (Chlorophyll-a content and dry weight) , can vary greatly, depending on the incubation time used. *G. changii* was the most sensitive species to Cd exposure. In the range

finding test, there was 50% inhibition in dry weight after 96 hours in *G. changii*. Toxicity results for Cd exposure in 96 h definitive test conducted on *G. changii* : $IC_{50} = 31.071 \text{ mgCdL}^{-1}$, $LOEC = 15 \text{ mgCdL}^{-1}$ and $NOEC < 15 \text{ mgCdL}^{-1}$. In contrast, exposure of *C. linum* and *S. bacularia* to Cd in 96 h range finding test did not produce 50% inhibition in chlorophyll-a content and dry weight respectively. Further exposure to Cd for 7 and 10 days in the definitive tests showed that *G. changii* was still the most sensitive species. However, the inhibitory concentrations decreased with the incubation time used. The order of decreasing sensitivity to Cd exposure according to species is as follows : *G. changii* > *S. bacularia* > *C. linum*.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.	ii
Abstract.	iv
Table of Content.	vii
List of Tables.	xv
List of Figures.	xxii
List of Plates.	xxvii
List of Appendices.	xxviii
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Bioindication and biomonitoring of marine pollution.	2
1.2 Aquatic organisms as bioindicators or biomonitors of marine pollution.	4
1.3 Bioaccumulation attribute of a biomonitor.	5
1.4 Marine pollution in Malaysia.	6
1.5 Heavy metal pollution in coastal waters and sediments of Malaysia.	8
1.6 Biomonitoring of heavy metal pollution in marine waters.	12
1.7 Seaweeds as biomonitors of heavy metal pollution.	13
1.8 Heavy metal contents in marine organisms in Malaysia.	15
1.9 Objectives of study.	22

2.0 Literature Review	25
2.1 Heavy metals in the marine environment.	25
2.2 Pollution sources.	26
2.3 Monitors of metal loads.	27
2.4 Characteristics of seaweeds as good biological monitors.	33
2.5 Metal accumulation strategies in marine organisms.	35
2.6 Characteristics of metal accumulation by seaweeds.	39
2.7 Heavy metal contents in seaweeds.	40
2.8 Uptake and elimination studies of heavy metals in seaweeds.	41
2.9 Metal uptake mechanisms and distribution in seaweeds.	51
2.10 Mechanisms of algal resistance to toxic metals.	56
2.10.1 Extracellular resistance mechanisms.	57
2.10.2 Intracellular resistance mechanisms.	57
2.11 Metal regulation in seaweeds.	59
2.12 Factors affecting metal accumulation in seaweeds.	60
2.13 Toxicity tests.	68
2.14 Seaweeds as test species for heavy metals.	69

3.0 Materials and Methods	72
3.1 Bioaccumulation studies.	72
3.1.1 Seaweed species.	72
3.1.2 Methods of seaweed sampling and storage.	73
3.1.3 Preparation of seaweeds and seawater for experiments.	78
3.1.4 Cleaning of apparatus.	78
3.2 Metal range determination studies.	79
3.2.1 Seaweed species.	79
3.2.2 Metal tested.	79
3.2.3 Range of metal concentrations.	79
3.2.4 Type of test.	80
3.2.5 Duration of test.	80
3.3.6 Experimental procedure.	80
3.2.7 End point measurements in seaweeds.	82
3.2.7.1 Determination of Chlorophyll-a content.	82
3.2.7.2 Determination of dry weight.	83
3.2.7.3 Calculation of % inhibition after 24 h.	84
3.3 Effect of initial heavy metal concentration on bioaccumulation in 24 h exposure experiment.	84
3.3.1 Seaweed species and metal tested.	84
3.3.2 Test solution.	84
3.3.3 Acidification.	85

3.3.4 Adjustment of pH of test solutions.	85
3.3.5 Experimental procedure.	86
3.3.6 Sampling of seaweeds and seawater.	88
3.3.7 Analytical procedure.	90
3.3.8 Quality assurance procedures.	91
3.3.8.1 Analysis of the NIES No. 9 <i>Sargasso</i> .	91
3.3.8.2 Standard addition test for seawater analysis.	92
3.4 Effect of salinity on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	92
3.4.1 Seaweed species.	92
3.4.2 Test solutions.	93
3.4.3 Acidification.	93
3.4.4 Adjustment of pH of test solutions.	93
3.4.5 Experimental procedure.	94
3.4.6 Sampling of seaweeds and seawater.	95
3.5 Effect of pH on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	96
3.5.1 Seaweed species and metal tested.	96
3.5.2 Test solutions.	96
3.5.3 Range of pH tested.	96
3.5.4 Experimental procedure.	96
3.6 Statistical analysis.	97

3.7 Instrument operation for the determination of metal levels.	97
3.8 Toxicity testing of heavy metals with seaweeds.	99
3.8.1 Test organism and test material.	100
3.8.2 Toxicity test facilities.	100
3.8.3 Dilution water.	101
3.9 Range finding test.	101
3.9.1 Test organism.	101
3.9.2 Test concentrations/medium.	101
3.9.3 Type of test.	102
3.9.4 Duration of test.	102
3.9.5 Biological data.	102
3.9.6 Experimental procedure.	102
3.9.7 Other measurements.	103
3.9.8 Calculation of toxicity.	103
3.10 Definitive tests.	104
3.10.1 Test concentrations/medium.	104
3.10.2 Test medium renewal.	104
3.10.2 Duration of test.	104
3.10.3 Calculation of toxicity.	104
3.10.4 Other measurements.	105

4.0 Results	107
4.1 Metal range determination studies.	107
4.2 Effect of initial metal concentration on bioaccumulation in 24 h exposure experiment.	107
4.2.1 Metal bioaccumulation patterns.	115
4.2.2 Seawater metal concentration.	126
4.2.3 Net accumulation of metal in seaweed species after 24 h.	133
4.2.4 Correlation between initial metal concentration in seawater and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 24 h ($p < 0.05$).	139
4.2.5 Correlation between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 24 h ($p < 0.05$).	140
4.2.6 Correlation between metal content in seaweeds and time of exposure over the range of initial metal concentrations ($p < 0.05$).	140
4.3 Effect of salinity on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	148
4.3.1 Net accumulation of metal in seaweed species after 2 h.	148
4.3.2 Correlation between salinity and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 2 h ($p < 0.05$).	154
4.3.3 Correlation between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 2 h ($p < 0.05$).	154

4.3.4 Correlation between metal content in seaweeds and time of exposure over the salinity range ($p < 0.05$).	154
4.4 Effect of pH on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	161
4.4.1 Net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h.	161
4.4.2 Correlation between pH and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 2 h ($p < 0.05$).	161
4.4.3 Correlation between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 2 h ($p < 0.05$).	168
4.4.4 Correlation between metal content in seaweeds and time of exposure over the pH range ($p < 0.05$).	168
4.5 Toxicity testing of heavy metals using seaweeds as test species.	172
4.5.1 Results of the range finding tests.	172
4.5.2 Results of the definitive tests.	177
5.0 Discussion	194
5.1 Effect of initial metal concentration on bioaccumulation in 24 h exposure experiment.	194
5.1.1 Metal accumulation patterns.	194
5.1.2 Metal accumulation mechanisms.	195
5.2 Heavy metal accumulation patterns in individual species.	199
5.2.1 <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> .	199

5.2.2 <i>Padina tetrastomatica</i> .	201
5.2.3 <i>Sargassum</i> species.	202
5.2.4 <i>Gracilaria</i> species.	204
5.3 Comparison between species.	206
5.4 Effect of salinity on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	212
5.5 Effect of pH on bioaccumulation in 2 h exposure experiment.	214
5.6 Toxicity testing of heavy metals using seaweeds as test species.	218
5.7 Linking bioavailability of metals in seawater with bioaccumulation of metals in seaweeds and toxicity.	227
5.8 Appraisal of study and areas for future research.	231
6.0 Conclusion	235
References	238
Appendices	255

List of Tables

Table 1.1 : Biomonitoring of aquatic pollution in the temperate regions.	4
Table 1.2 : Heavy metal concentration in marine waters of Malaysia, 1995 (DOE, 1996).	10
Table 1.3 : Interim Water Quality Standards Proposed for Malaysia.	11
Table 1.4 : Studies of heavy metal contents in marine organism of Malaysia.	16
Table 1.5 : Heavy metal content of selected seaweed species of Malaysia.	17
Table 2.1 : Concentrations of heavy metals in oceanic, coastal and estuarine water.	28
Table 2.2 : Water, sediment and organisms as indicators of heavy metal pollution.	31
Table 2.3 : Compliance of marine species with Phillips (1977 and 1980) criteria for biomonitoring.	32
Table 2.4 : Concentration factors of selected metals in seaweeds (thousands, dry weight basis).	42
Table 2.5 : Compilation of published studies of heavy metal content of selected tropical and subtropical seaweed species.	44
Table 2.6 : Correlation Coefficient of metal between seaweed and seawater at $p < 0.05$.	49
Table 2.7 : Mean As content and chemical speciation in seaweed.	58
Table 3.1 : Seaweed species, collection sites and habitats.	73
Table 3.2 : pH of test solutions at the initial hour (0 h).	80

Table 3.3 : pH of test solutions after 24 h.	82
Table 3.4 : Endpoint measurement of the respective seaweed species.	82
Table 3.5 : pH of test solutions after addition of acid.	85
Table 3.6 : pH of test solutions in bioaccumulation studies.	86
Table 3.7 : pH of test solutions after 24 h.	89
Table 3.8 : Analysis of the NIES No. 9 <i>Sargasso</i> .	91
Table 3.9 : Efficiency of trace metal solvent extraction technique for seawater using the standard addition test.	92
Table 3.10 : pH of test solutions after addition of acid.	93
Table 3.11 : pH of test solutions prior to experiment.	94
Table 3.12 : pH of test solutions after 2 h.	95
Table 3.13 : pH of test solutions after 2 h.	97
Table 3.14 : List of seaweed species, metals and endpoint measurement used in the toxicity tests.	100
Table 3.15 : pH of test solutions prior to toxicity test.	102
Table 3.16 : Series of concentration used for the definitive tests.	106
Table 4.1a : Chlorophyll-a content (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>C. linum</i> after 24 h (n=3).	108
Table 4.1b : Inhibition in growth of <i>C. linum</i> after 24 h.	108

Table 4.2a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> after 24 h (n=3).	109
Table 4.2b : Inhibition in growth of <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> after 24 h.	109
Table 4.3a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 24 h (n=3).	110
Table 4.3b : Inhibition in growth of <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 24 h.	110
Table 4.4a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>S. baccularia</i> after 24 h (n=3).	111
Table 4.4b : Inhibition in growth of <i>S. baccularia</i> after 24 h.	111
Table 4.5a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>G. changii</i> after 24 h (n=3).	112
Table 4.5b : Inhibition in growth of <i>G. changii</i> after 24 h.	112
Table 4.6a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>G. edulis</i> after 24 h (n=3).	113
Table 4.6b : Inhibition in growth of <i>G. edulis</i> after 24 h.	113
Table 4.7a : Dry weight (mean \pm S.D.) of <i>G. salicornia</i> after 24 h (n=3).	114
Table 4.7b : Inhibition in growth of <i>G. salicornia</i> after 24h.	114
Table 4.8 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between initial metal concentration in seawater and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 24 h.	141
Table 4.9 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 24 h.	142

Table 4.10 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal content in seaweeds and time of exposure over the range of initial metal concentrations.	143
Table 4.11 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between salinity and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 2 h.	157
Table 4.12 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 2 h.	157
Table 4.13 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal accumulated in seaweeds and time of exposure over the salinity range.	159
Table 4.14 : Order of different pH towards increasing net metal accumulation after 2 h exposure.	161
Table 4.15 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between pH and metal accumulated in seaweeds after 2 h.	169
Table 4.16 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal accumulated in seaweeds and final metal concentration in seawater after 2 h.	169
Table 4.17 : Correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$) between metal accumulated in seaweeds and time of exposure over the pH range.	170
Table 4.18a : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cd concentrations.	173
Table 4.18b : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cu concentrations.	174
Table 4.19a : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Cd concentrations.	174

Table 4.19b : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Zn concentrations.	175
Table 4.20a : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd concentrations.	176
Table 4.20b : Inhibition of mean growth (%) in <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Mn concentrations.	176
Table 4.21a : Chlorophyll-a content (mg g^{-1}) of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	178
Table 4.21b : Definitive test of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	178
Table 4.22a : Chlorophyll-a content (mg g^{-1}) of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	179
Table 4.22b : Definitive test of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	179
Table 4.23a : Chlorophyll-a content (mg g^{-1}) of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cu for 7 days.	180
Table 4.23b : Definitive test of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cu for 7 days.	180
Table 4.24a : Chlorophyll-a content (mg g^{-1}) of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cu for 10 days.	181
Table 4.24b : Definitive test of <i>Chaetomorpha linum</i> exposed to Cu for 10 days.	181
Table 4.25a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	183
Table 4.25b : Definitive test of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	183

Table 4.26a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	184
Table 4.26b : Definitive test of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	184
Table 4.27a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Zn for 7 days.	185
Table 4.27b : Definitive test of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Zn for 7 days.	185
Table 4.28a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Zn for 10 days.	186
Table 4.28b : Definitive test of <i>Sargassum baccularia</i> exposed to Zn for 10 days.	186
Table 4.29a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 96 hours.	188
Table 4.29b : Definitive test of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 96 hours.	188
Table 4.30a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	189
Table 4.30b : Definitive test of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 7 days.	189
Table 4.31a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	190
Table 4.31b : Definitive test of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Cd for 10 days.	190
Table 4.32a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Mn for 7 days.	191
Table 4.32b : Definitive test of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Mn for 7 days.	191
Table 4.33a : Dry weight (g) of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Mn for 10 days.	192

Table 4.33b : Definitive test of <i>Gracilaria changii</i> exposed to Mn for 10 days.	192
Table 4.34 : Summary of IC ₅₀ , LOEC and NOEC obtained for the definitive tests.	193
Table 5.1 : Summary of the results of the 28 sets of experiment conducted in the study.	196
Table 5.2 : Summary of results of the bioaccumulation study by varying the external initial metal concentration.	209
Table 5.3 : Summary of the LSD multiple range analysis conducted for the effect of pH in correspond to net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h of exposure.	216
Table 5.4 : Growth inhibition of <i>Gracilaria tenuistipitata</i> by different metals at varying salinities in a 96 h static test regime (Haglund et al., 1996).	221
Table 5.5 : Comparison between results obtained by Stromgren (1980a&b) with the present study by means of using maturing seaweed plants.	222
Table 5.6 : EC ₅₀ values for single compounds using the reproduction test method with <i>Ceramium strictum</i> (Eklund, 1995).	225

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 :	Malaysia : Status of Marine Water Quality, 1994 and 1995 (DOE, 1995 & 1996).	7
Figure 4.1a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>C. linum</i> as a function of time.	116
Figure 4.1b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>C. linum</i> as a function of time.	116
Figure 4.1c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>C. linum</i> as a function of time.	117
Figure 4.1d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>C. linum</i> as a function of time.	117
Figure 4.2a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> as a function of time.	119
Figure 4.2b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> as a function of time.	119
Figure 4.2c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> as a function of time.	120
Figure 4.2d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>P. tetrastomatica</i> as a function of time.	120
Figure 4.3a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>S. siliquosum</i> as a function of time.	122
Figure 4.3b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>S. siliquosum</i> as a function of time.	122
Figure 4.3c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>S. siliquosum</i> as a function of time.	123
Figure 4.3d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>S. siliquosum</i> as a function of time.	123

Figure 4.4a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>S. baccularia</i> as a function of time.	124
Figure 4.4b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>S. baccularia</i> as a function of time.	124
Figure 4.4c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>S. baccularia</i> as a function of time.	125
Figure 4.4d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>S. baccularia</i> as a function of time.	125
Figure 4.5a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>G. changii</i> as a function of time.	127
Figure 4.5b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>G. changii</i> as a function of time.	127
Figure 4.5c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>G. changii</i> as a function of time.	128
Figure 4.5d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>G. changii</i> as a function of time.	128
Figure 4.6a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>G. edulis</i> as a function of time.	129
Figure 4.6b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>G. edulis</i> as a function of time.	129
Figure 4.6c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>G. edulis</i> as a function of time.	130
Figure 4.6d :	Changes of Cd content in <i>G. edulis</i> as a function of time.	130
Figure 4.7a :	Changes of Cu content in <i>G. salicornia</i> as a function of time.	131
Figure 4.7b :	Changes of Zn content in <i>G. salicornia</i> as a function of time.	131
Figure 4.7c :	Changes of Mn content in <i>G. salicornia</i> as a function of time.	132

Figure 4.7d : Changes of Cd content in <i>G. salicornia</i> as a function of time.	132
Figure 4.8a : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>C. linum</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	134
Figure 4.8b : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>P. tetrastratica</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	134
Figure 4.8c : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>S. siliculosum</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	135
Figure 4.8d : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>S. baccularia</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	135
Figure 4.8e : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>G. changii</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	137
Figure 4.8f : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>G. edulis</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	137
Figure 4.8g : Mean net accumulation of metal in <i>G. salicornia</i> after 24 h of exposure to metal solution.	138
Figure 4.9a : Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial salinity.	149
Figure 4.9b : Mean net accumulation of Zn in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Zn at different initial salinity.	149
Figure 4.9c : Mean net accumulation of Mn in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Mn at different initial salinity.	150

Figure 4.9d : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial salinity.	150
Figure 4.9e : Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial salinity.	151
Figure 4.9f : Mean net accumulation of Zn in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Zn at different initial salinity.	151
Figure 4.9g : Mean net accumulation of Mn in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Mn at different initial salinity.	152
Figure 4.9h : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial salinity.	152
Figure 4.9i : Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial salinity.	155
Figure 4.9j : Mean net accumulation of Zn in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Zn at different initial salinity.	155
Figure 4.9k : Mean net accumulation of Mn in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Mn at different initial salinity.	156
Figure 4.9l : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial salinity.	156

Figure 4.10a : Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial pH.	162
Figure 4.10b : Mean net accumulation of Zn in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Zn at different initial pH.	162
Figure 4.10c : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>C. linum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial pH.	163
Figure 4.10d : Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial pH.	164
Figure 4.10e : Mean net accumulation of Zn in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Zn at different initial pH.	164
Figure 4.10f : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>S. siliquosum</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial pH.	165
Figure 4.10g: Mean net accumulation of Cu in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cu at different initial pH.	166
Figure 4.10h : Mean net accumulation of Mn in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Mn at different initial pH.	166
Figure 4.10i : Mean net accumulation of Cd in <i>G. changii</i> after 2 h of exposure to Cd at different initial pH.	167

List of plates

Plate 1 :	<i>Chaetomorpha linum</i>	74
Plate 2 :	<i>Padina tetrastomatica</i>	74
Plate 3 :	<i>Sargassum siliquosum</i>	75
Plate 4 :	<i>Sargassum baccularia</i>	75
Plate 5 :	<i>Gracilaria changii</i>	76
Plate 6 :	<i>Gracilaria edulis</i>	76
Plate 7 :	<i>Gracilaria salicornia</i>	77

List of Appendices

- Appendix I : Preparation of experimental concentration series of Cu, Zn and Mn for laboratory studies.
- Appendix II : Solvent extraction techniques for metal from seawater.
- Appendix III : Standard addition test for seawater analysis.
- Appendix IV : Preparation of standards for the determination of metal concentration in ICP-AES.
- Appendix V : Other environmental parameter data for the toxicity range finding and definitive tests.
- Appendix VI : Changes of mean metal content in seaweed as a function of time.
- Appendix VII : Changes of mean metal concentration in seawater exposed to seaweed as a function of time.
- Appendix VIII : Mean net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 24 h of exposure at varying initial metal concentrations.
- Appendix IX : Mean net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h of exposure to 1 mgL^{-1} metal solution at varying initial salinity.
- Appendix X : Changes of metal content/concentration in seaweed/seawater exposed to control/metal solution/seaweed at varying salinities as a function of time.

- Appendix XI : Mean net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h of exposure to 1 mgL^{-1} metal solution at varying initial pH.
- Appendix XII : Changes of metal content/concentration in seaweed/seawater exposed to control/metal solution/seaweed at varying pH as a function of time.
- Appendix XIII : Summary tables of ANOVA for the effect of external metal concentrations in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 24 h.
- Appendix XIV : Summary tables of the multiple range analysis for the effect of external metal concentrations in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 24 h.
- Appendix XV : Summary table of ANOVA for the effect of salinity in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h.
- Appendix XVI : Summary tables of the multiple range analysis for the effect of salinity in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h.
- Appendix XVII : Summary table of ANOVA for the effect of pH in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h.
- Appendix XVIII : Summary of tables of the multiple range analysis for the effect of pH in correspond to the net accumulation of metal in seaweeds after 2 h.

- Appendix XIX : Schematic diagram of calculating toxicity using the Toxstat Version 3.2 and Linear Interpolation Method for Sublethal Toxicity : The inhibition concentration (ICp) approach (Version 2.0) by Norberg-King (1993).
- Appendix XX : Summary tables of ANOVA for the effect of metal concentrations in correspond to the inhibition of Chlorophyll-a content in *C.linum*.
- Appendix XXI : Summary tables of ANOVA for the effect of metal concentrations in correspond to the inhibition of dry weight in *S. baccularia*.
- Appendix XXII : Summary tables of ANOVA for the effect of metal concentrations in correspond to the inhibition of dry weight in *G. changii*.
- Appendix XXIII : Graphic demonstration of dose-response curve for seaweeds exposed to metal concentrations at various time of exposure.
- Appendix XXIV : The concentration of the selected trace metals present naturally in the seawater used for the experiments