

STUDY ON ELECTROCHEMICAL REDUCTION OF CARBON DIOXIDE TO SYNGAS

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JUNE 2021

STUDY ON ELECTROCHEMICAL REDUCTION OF CARBON DIOXIDE TO SYNGAS

by

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Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
to the



Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

June 2021

STATEMENT

I do hereby declare that this Ph.D. thesis entitled “**STUDY ON ELECTROCHEMICAL REDUCTION OF CARBON DIOXIDE TO SYNGAS**” is an original work carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Anil Verma in the Department of Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Hauz Khas, New Delhi, India and is submitted to Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Hauz Khas, New Delhi, India, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The interpretations put forth are based on my readings and understandings of the original text and are not submitted, in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma. I also certify that the details and information taken from the works of other investigators, articles and websites which I have made use of are acknowledged at the respective place in this thesis.

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Date: 18th June 2021

IIT Delhi

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work contained in this thesis entitled **“STUDY ON ELECTROCHEMICAL REDUCTION OF CARBON DIOXIDE TO SYNGAS”** submitted by Mr. Karan Malik to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Chemical Engineering is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him. I certify that he has carried out this work under my supervision. The research work is original, and this work has not been submitted elsewhere in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma. Also, the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

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Acknowledgements

“Success is an acknowledgement honoured by a group, who values your actions in the specificity of the venture they cherish - Nothing More.”.

The work presented in this thesis would not have been possible without my close association with many people. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation to all those who have made my Ph.D. thesis possible.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Anil Verma for introducing me to this exciting field of science, for creating an environment of humour around this whole ordeal and for his dedicated help, advice, inspiration, encouragement, creative scientific ideas, and continuous support throughout my Ph.D. He has not only supported me in my research work, but he has also shown me a great deal of personal support, care, and motivation. His fruitful discussions and insightful suggestions have been a crucial formative influence on my research. His enthusiasm, integral view on research, his mission for providing high-quality work and supportive nature has made a deep impression on me. I have learned extensively from him including how to raise new possibilities, how to regard an old question from a new perspective, how to approach a problem from systematic thinking and to exploit serendipity. I owe him my sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation for having me shown this way of research. From the many things that I have learned from him, his continuous support and patience with me have influenced me the most. Furthermore, it has been a memorable and enjoyable experience for me to work under his guidance.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all my Student Research Committee members Prof. Suddhasatwa Basu, Prof. Kamal Kishore Pant, Dr. Divesh Bhatia and Prof. Vamsi Krishna

Komarala for their immense support, constant guidance, cooperation, invaluable suggestions, and intuitive review of my work. I would like to thank all the faculty members of the Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Delhi, for their cooperation, invaluable suggestions, motivation and support. I would like to thank IIT Delhi for providing me all the facilities to carry out my research work smoothly.

I want to give a special mention of acknowledgments to Dr. Rajeev Gautam and Dr. Biju Mani Rajbongshi for mentoring me not only in my research work but also in my personal life. Over the years, I have developed a very deep friendship with Dr. Rajeev Gautam, Dr. Biju Mani Rajbongshi, and Dr. Rajbala which cannot be expressed in words. I want to thank them for their constant support, cooperation, and sharing their thoughts and views with me during my work. Their timely help and friendship shall always be remembered. I would also like to thank Dr. Leela Manohar Aeshala for his keen experimental insights that he shared with me.

I extend my sincere thanks to all my SERL lab mates Dr. Rajeev Gautam, Dr. Biju Mani Rajbongshi, Dr. Thakur Sudesh Kumar Raunija, Dr. Jay Pandey, Dr. Surya Singh, Mr. Divyanshu Arya, Mr. Manshu Kapoor, Mr. Udit Behl, Mr. Utsav Dalal, Mr. Nishant Bhariwal, Mrs. Rini Kapoor, Mrs. Aditi Tiwari, Mr. Nardev Kumar Bajaj, and Mr. Manav Bhati for creating a pleasant atmosphere in the lab and for their moral support. My heartfelt thanks to all my other fellow researchers in the Department of Chemical Engineering for their friendly nature and help. I will always cherish the warmth shown by them. I want to thank Prof J.P. Singh, Prof. Saswata Bhattacharya, Mrs. Pinki Devi, and Mrs. Ekta Arora and other researchers with whom I have done collaborative research work for their support.

A special thanks to my dear friends and batchmates Mr. Sonit Balyan, Mr. Jashwant Kumar, Mr. Vaibhav Kumar, Mr. Vishwanath Hebhi, Dr. Rupesh Tamgadge, Mr. Kaushal Parmar, Mr. Saurabh Mishra, Mr. Divakar Reddy and my many other friends for their memorable

company whenever I needed in both my good and bad times. I would also like to thank all other research scholars at the chemical engineering department and all my IITD friends for sharing the joyful moments with me and their kind support.

I gratefully acknowledge the IIT Delhi for providing me the platform and resources to carry out my research. I also acknowledge Department of Science and Technology for providing the research funding.

I want to dedicate all my achievements and accomplishments to my father (Late. Sri. Mohinder Pal Malik), my mother (Smt. Krishna Malik) for their endless love, unending support and tolerance, my elder brother Mr. Paras Malik for guiding me in the right path, my elder sisters Ms. Ashu Malik and Ms. Shalu Malik, for their immense love and affection, and my wife (Mrs. Arkadeepa Bayal) for giving me continuous support and understanding me and staying by my side for the good and bad times. Their infallible love and support have always been my strengths and making me who I am today.

“Appreciation has the amazing habit of bringing more reasons to be grateful for.” As always, it is impossible to mention everybody who had an impact on this work, so my sincere apology goes to all those to whom I forgot to mention but helped me in any part of the research work.

(Karan Malik)

Abstract

Over the past few years, electrochemical reduction of CO₂ (ERC) has attracted a lot of interest among researchers to convert CO₂ into value added products using renewable energy. Through ERC, CO₂ and water using renewable energy, can be co-electrolyzed to produce many chemicals such as CH₄, C₂H₄, C₂H₆, HCOOH, CH₃OH, and syngas (CO + H₂), which are important industrial chemicals. However, CO₂ is a very stable molecule and thus it is very difficult to reduce it. Therefore, primary focus of research throughout the world has been on developing an electrocatalyst selective to CO₂ reduction. ERC is carried out in presence of water. Thermodynamically, the reduction potentials of ERC and hydrogen evolution reaction (HER) potential are close to each other. Moreover, HER has fast kinetics as compared to ERC. Thus, the electrical charge spent during ERC is used by the facile HER instead of ERC. Thus suppression of HER possess a huge challenge.

ERC can lead to many products i.e., CO, CH₄, C₂H₄, C₂H₆, HCOOH, and CH₃OH etc.; depending upon the electrode potential, electrolyte, electrocatalyst, and reaction conditions. Sixteen different products can be formed using Cu as electrocatalyst. However, it requires high overpotential (~1.0 V), have poor selectivity, and fast deactivation are biggest challenges. The research work in this thesis is focused on selective formation of syngas using Zn and Cu based electrocatalysts. Effect of nature of electrocatalyst layer on the ERC selectivity has been studied. It was found that degree of gas entrapped in different types of layers was different, leading to different selectivity. The role of addition of Cu into the ZnO has also been studied for the synthesis of syngas. On varying the concentration of Cu into the ZnO, it was found that at certain fraction of Cu into the ZnO, charge transfer resistance towards ERC is reduced which ultimately reduces the overpotential requirements. Role of pressure in gas phase ERC was also investigated. It was found that mild increase in pressure

leads to shift in Zn/Cu selectivity towards syngas formation. The knowledge gathered by the research work was disseminated through various research papers and presentations in various conferences.

Keywords: Electrochemical reduction of CO₂, Zn/Cu nanocomposite, Gas phase ERC, Elevated pressure.

सारांश

पिछले कुछ वर्षों में, कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड के विद्युत् रासायनिक परिवर्तन (ईआरसी) ने बहुत सारे शोधकर्ताओं में इस रुचि को जगाया है की वह अक्षय ऊर्जा का उपयोग करके कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड को मूल्य वर्धित उत्पादों में बदले। ईआरसी के द्वारा अक्षय ऊर्जा का उपयोग करते हुए कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड और जल को सह-इलेक्ट्रोलाइज करके अनेक रसायनों का उत्पादन किया जा सकता है। उदाहरण के लिए जैसे CH_4 , C_2H_4 , C_2H_6 , HCOOH , CH_3OH , और सिंगैस ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$)। यह सभी रसायन उद्योग-प्रधान के लिये बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। लेकिन कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड एक बहुत ही स्थिर अणु है जिसके करन कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड का विद्युत् रासायनिक परिवर्तन करना बहुत ही कठिन कार्य है। इसलिए दुनिया भर में हो रही शोध का प्राथमिक लक्ष्य एक ऐसे इलेक्ट्रोकेटलिस्ट को बनाने में है जोकि चयनित तरीके से ईआरसी कर सके। ईआरसी को हमेशा जल की उपस्थिति में ही किया जाता है। थर्मोडायनामिक रूप से ईआरसी का रीडक्शन पोटेंशियल और हयड्रोजन उत्पादन प्रतिक्रिया (अचईअर) के रीडक्शन पोटेंशियल एक दुसरे के बहुत ही नज़दीक है। इसके अलावा ईआरसी के तुलनात्मक अचईअर के कैनेटीक्स बहुत ही तेज है। जिसके कारन, ईआरसी के दौरान खर्च किए गए विद्युत आवेश का उपयोग ईआरसी के बजाय सरल HER द्वारा किया जाता है। इस प्रकार ईआरसी का दमन एक बड़ी चुनौती है।

इलेक्ट्रोड क्षमता, इलेक्ट्रोलाइट, इलेक्ट्रोकेटलिस्ट और प्रतिक्रिया स्थितियों के आधार पर ईआरसी से कई उत्पाद जैसे CO , CH_4 , C_2H_4 , C_2H_6 , HCOOH , और CH_3OH आदि बन सकते हैं। Cu का विद्युत उत्प्रेरक के रूप में उपयोग करके सोलह विभिन्न उत्पाद बनाए जा सकते हैं। हालाँकि, इसके लिए जरूरी उच्च विद्युत् क्षमता ($\sim 1.0 \text{ V}$) की आवश्यकता, खराब चयनशीलता और इसकी तेजी से निष्क्रियता सबसे बड़ी चुनौतियाँ होती हैं। इस थीसिस में शोध कार्य Zn और Cu आधारित

इलेक्ट्रोकेटेलिस का उपयोग करके सिंगैस के चयनात्मक गठन पर केंद्रित है । ईआरसी की चयनशीलता पर इलेक्ट्रोकेटेलिस्ट की परत की प्रकृति के प्रभाव का अध्ययन किया गया है। यह पाया गया कि विभिन्न प्रकार की परतों में फंसी गैस की मात्रा अलग थी, जिससे अलग अलग चयनशीलता होती है । सिंगैस के संश्लेषण के लिए Cu को Zn में जोड़ने की भूमिका का भी अध्ययन किया गया है। Zn में Cu की एकाग्रता को अलग करने पर, यह पाया गया कि Zn में Cu के कुछ अंश पर, ईआरसी के प्रति चार्ज ट्रांसफर प्रतिरोध कम हो जाता है जो अंततः अतिपौतापूर्ण आवश्यकताओं को कम करता है। गैस फेज ईआरसी में दबाव की भूमिका की भी अध्ययन किया गया है । इस दौरान यह पाया गया कि दबाव में हल्की वृद्धि से Zn/Cu की चयनता सिंगैस के गठन की दिशा में बढ़ती है । शोध कार्य से एकत्रित ज्ञान को विभिन्न सम्मेलनों में विभिन्न शोध पत्रों व प्रस्तुतियों के माध्यम से प्रसारित किया गया।

कीवर्ड: कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड के विद्युत् रासायनिक परिवर्तन, Zn/Cu नैनोकंपोसाइट, गैस चरण ईआरसी, उच्च दबाव ।

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List of Abbreviations

ACL	Anode catalyst layer
AEM	Anion exchange membrane
AGDL	Anode gas diffusion layer
BET	Brunauer–Emmett–Teller
BMT	Billion metric ton
BP	British petroleum
CCL	Cathode catalyst layer
CEA	Central electricity authority
CGDL	Cathode gas diffusion layer
CF	Carbon fibre
CL	Catalyst layer
CPE	Constant phase element
CV	Cyclic voltammetry
DFT	Density functional theory
DI	De-ionized
DME	Dimethyl ether
ECSA	Electrochemically active surface area
EDX	Energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy
EIS	Electrochemical Impedance spectroscopy
EPR	Electron paramagnetic resonance
ERC	Electrochemical reduction of CO ₂
FE	Faradaic efficiency
FESEM	Field emission scanning electron microscopy
FID	Flame ionization detector

FTIR	Fourier transform infrared
FWHM	Full-width-at-half-maxima
GA	Glutaraldehyde
GC	Gas chromatography
GCE	Glassy carbon electrode
GDE	Gas diffusion electrode
GDL	Gas diffusion layer
HER	Hydrogen electrode potential
HRTEM	High resolution transmission electron microscopy
IPCC	International panel on climate change
L/D	Length/diameter
LSV	Linear sweep voltammetry
MEA	Membrane electrode assembly
MFC	Mass flow controller
MPL	Micro porous layer
MWCNT	Multiwall carbon nano tubes
NHE	Normal hydrogen electrode
OCP	Open circuit potential
OELM	Online electrochemical mass spectroscopy
PEI	Polyethyleneimine
PL	Photoluminescence
PPM	Parts per million
PTFE	Poly-tetrafluoroethylene
PVA	Poly-vinyl alcohol
QPEI	Quaternized polyethyleneimine
RDS	Rate determining step

Rh	Relative humidity
RHE	Reversible hydrogen electrode
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
SIFT-MS	Selected ion flow tube mass spectrometry
SOFC	Solid oxide fuel cell
SPE	Solid polymer electrolyte
STP	Standard temperature and pressure
TCD	Thermal conductivity detector
TEM	Transmission electron microscopy
XRD	X-ray diffraction
XPS	X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy

List of Nomenclatures

b	Width of the channel (m)
β	Ratio of the CO ₂ left after the CO ₂ -H ₂ O and CO ₂ -OH ⁻ reactions to the total dissolved CO ₂ (-)
β_1	Ratio of the CO ₂ flux onto the electrocatalyst surface to the total CO ₂ flux through the CGDL (-)
$C_{\text{CO}_2,\text{ch}}$	CO ₂ concentration in channel (M)
$C_{\text{H}_2\text{O},\text{ch}}$	H ₂ O concentration in the channel (M)
d	Spacing between two crystal planes (nm)
$D_{\text{A-aq}}$	Diffusivity coefficient of species 'A' diffusing in liquid phase (m ² /s)
D_{AB}	Diffusivity coefficient of species 'A' diffusing through species 'B' in in gas phase (m ² /s)
$D_{\text{AB}}^{\text{eff}}$	Effective diffusivity coefficient of species 'A' diffusing through species 'B' in gas phase (m ² /s)
E°	Standard reduction potential (V)
$\epsilon_{\text{A}}, \epsilon_{\text{B}}$	Gas force constant (-)
ΔG_f°	Change in Gibbs free energy of formation at STP (kJ/mol)
$\Delta G_{\text{rxn}}^\circ$	Change in Gibbs free energy of reaction at STP (kJ/mol)
F	Faraday constant (C/mol)
FE_{CO}	CO Faradaic efficiency (%)
FE_{H_2}	H ₂ Faradaic efficiency (%)
FE_{CH_4}	Methane Faradaic efficiency (%)
$\text{FE}_{\text{C}_2\text{H}_4}$	Ethene Faradaic efficiency (%)
$\text{FE}_{\text{C}_2\text{H}_6}$	Ethane Faradaic efficiency (%)
$\text{FE}_{\text{CH}_3\text{OH}}$	Methanol Faradaic efficiency (%)
$\text{FE}_{\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}}$	Ethanol Faradaic efficiency (%)
$H_{\text{CO}_2,\text{aq}}$	Henry's constant for CO ₂ (atm/M)

J_{CO}	CO partial current density (mA/cm ²)
J_0	Exchange current density (mA/cm ²)
L	Channel length (m)
L_g	Diffusion length in the GDL (μm)
L_l	Diffusion length in the liquid layer (μm)
M_A	Molecular weight of the species 'A' (kg/mol)
M_B	Molecular weight of the species 'B' (kg/mol)
n	Number of moles of electrons required to form 1 mole of reaction product (-)
$N_{GDL}^{CO_2}$	CO ₂ flux through CGDL (mol/cm ² -s)
N_{cl}^i	Flux of species 'i' through the CCL (mol/cm ² -s)
p_t	Absolute pressure (N/m ²)
Q_{tot}	Total charge passed (C)
R_{ct}	Charge transfer resistance (Ω)
R_e	Electrolyte resistance (Ω)
θ	Bragg's angle (°)
λ	Wavelength of the incident X-rays (Å)
η_{act}	Activation overpotential (V)
η_{nerst}	Concentration overpotential (V)
$\emptyset$	GDL porosity (-)
V_{ch}	Average velocity in the channel (m/s)
z	Moles of a particular product formed (mol)
ϑ_A	Solute molar volume at the normal boiling point (m ³ /kmol)
φ	Association factor for solvent (-)
μ	Viscosity (kg/m-s)