



## Photocatalysis

## An Amine-Functionalized Titanium Metal-Organic Framework Photocatalyst with Visible-Light-Induced Activity for CO<sub>2</sub> Reduction\*\*

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The capture and efficient use of CO2 is an important issue because CO2 released by burning fossil fuels is a primary cause of global warming. One of the best solutions is to convert CO2 into valuable organic products by means of solar energy. Thus many research efforts have been made to develop efficient heterogeneous photocatalysts for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>. The examined photocatalysts range from semiconducting materials, such as TiO2, CdS, ZnGa2O4, and Zn<sub>2</sub>GeO<sub>4</sub>, to metal-incorporated zeolites including Ti-βzeolite, Ti-MCM-41, Ti-MCM-48, and ZrCu(I)-MCM-41. [1,2] The fact that the Ti-immobilized zeolites show even much higher efficiency for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> over TiO<sub>2</sub> indicates that the incorporation of Ti into porous materials will be a promising strategy, although almost all currently developed photocatalysts are only active in the region of UV light and their efficiency for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> is still quite low.

Metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) are a class of crystal-line micro-mesoporous hybrid materials with an extended 3D network which have shown a variety of potential applications. [3-9] Especially, MOFs are used for the development of heterogeneous catalysts. In fact, a variety of heterogeneous MOF catalysts has been realized over the past decade by introducing different types of catalytic sites into a porous MOF matrix. [9] Photocatalysis is a unique kind of heterogeneous catalysis which involves the use of a light source. Theoretically, it is also feasible to develop MOF photocatalysts by immobilizing photoactive catalytic sites in MOF materials. The effective use of solar light can be facilely achieved by modifications on the metal ions or the organic ligands in the MOFs. [10] Although theoretically established, a successful tuning of the absorption of the MOFs for their

application in visible light photocatalysis has not yet been realized experimentally. Besides this matter, only a couple of MOFs have been reported to show photocatalytic activities for dye degradation and water splitting.[11] Motivated by the above-mentioned discoveries on the Ti-incorporated zeolite photocatalysts, we initiated a research program to develop photoactive MOF photocatalysts for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> after a Ti-based MOF Ti<sub>8</sub>O<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>4</sub>(bdc)<sub>6</sub> (MIL-125(Ti)) had been reported (BDC = benzene-1,4-dicarboxylate). [12] This type of MOF material cannot only introduce high density of the immobilized Ti sites within porous MOFs, but it can also lead to isostructural MOFs, the photocatalytic properties of which can simply be tuned by incorporation of BDC derivatives. Indeed, the introduction of NH<sub>2</sub> groups in BDC in the MIL-125(Ti) material to prepare isostructural NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption was recently reported by Zlotea et al.[13] Herein we report for the first time a targeted photoactive catalyst Ti<sub>8</sub>O<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>4</sub>(bdc-NH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>6</sub> (NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti)), which reduces CO<sub>2</sub> even under visible light irradi- $(BDC-NH_2 = 2-amino-benzene-1, 4-dicarboxylate;$ ATA = 2-aminoterephthalate).

NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) was synthesized using H<sub>2</sub>ATA as a linker. The preparation procedure is described in the Supporting Information. The activated sample was prepared by exchanging the guest solvent in the as-synthesized MOF with anhydrous methanol, followed by evacuation at 200°C. The good agreement between the XRD patterns of MIL-125(Ti) and NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) indicates the formation of the NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) phase. The presence of NH<sub>2</sub> groups in the organic linkers does not influence the structure of MIL-125(Ti) (Figure 1). A schematic drawing of the structure of NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) is shown in Figure S1 in the Supporting

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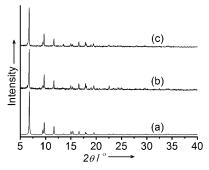


Figure 1. XRD patterns of a) calculated MIL-125(Ti), b) experimental MIL-125(Ti), and c) experimental NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti).



Information. Diffuse-reflectance infrared spectroscopy (DRIFTS) analysis of the evacuated sample shows bands corresponding to the symmetric and asymmetric stretching of primary amines (3388 and 3512 cm<sup>-1</sup>; Figure S2 in the Supporting Information), confirming that the NH<sub>2</sub> groups are free without coordination. The architectural stability and permanent porosity of NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) can be confirmed by the N<sub>2</sub> adsorption/desorption isotherms of the guest-free NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti). The BET and Langmuir surface area are determined to be 1302 and 1719 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively (Figure S3 in the Supporting Information). The BET specific surface area of the as-prepared NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) is slightly higher than that reported previously (1203 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>), but it is lower than the theoretical one determined based on the parent MIL-125(Ti) (close to  $2140 \text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ ).[12,13] The lower BET surface area value may be attributed to a partial blocking of the pores by the free ligand as evidenced from thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), IR and Raman spectra (Figure S4–S6 in the Supporting Information). A significant change in NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) induced by the amino functionality is its optical absorption. MIL-125(Ti) shows an absorption edge to 350 nm, whereas NH2-MIL-125(Ti) shows an extra absorption band in the visible light region with the absorption edge extending to around 550 nm, in agreement with the bright yellow color (Figure 2 and inset). The

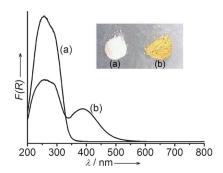


Figure 2. UV/Vis spectra of a) MIL-125(Ti) and b)  $\rm NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti). The inset shows the samples.

absorption in  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) is induced by O to Ti charge transfer (LMCT=ligand-to-metal charge transfer) in  $TiO_5(OH)$  inorganic clusters. However, the linker ATA influences the charge transfer in these  $TiO_5(OH)$  clusters. The formation of a MOF with absorption in the visible light region by substituting the organic linker  $H_2BDC$  by  $H_2ATA$  was also observed over a Zr-based MOF  $NH_2$ -UiO-66. [11c]

Another change in  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) induced by the amino functionality is its adsorption capability toward  $CO_2$ . The comparison of  $CO_2$  adsorption isotherms over these two MOFs shows that  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) has a higher adsorption capability toward  $CO_2$  than MIL-125(Ti) (Figure 3). At 1 atm and 273 K, the maximum  $CO_2$  uptake for  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) is 132.2 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, whereas the parent MIL-125(Ti) takes up 98.6 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>. The observation of an increase of adsorption capability toward  $CO_2$  over  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) as compared to the parent MIL-125(Ti) is within expectation because aromatic molecules functionalized with some polar substituent

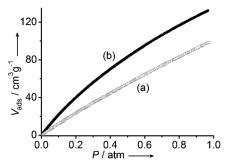


Figure 3.  $CO_2$  adsorption isotherms (1 atm, 273 K) of a) MIL-125(Ti) ( $\square$ ) and b) NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) ( $\blacksquare$ ).

groups like -OH, -COOH or -NH $_2$  enhance the interactions of  $CO_2$  with the functionalized aromatic molecules. The experimental evidences of the enhancement of  $CO_2$  adsorption over some -OH or NH $_2$ -functionalized MOFs have also been well reported in the literature.

The photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> was performed in acetonitrile (MeCN) with triethanolamine (TEOA) as sacrificial agent under visible light irradiation. NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) was pre-treated in vacuum before it was purged with CO<sub>2</sub>. MeCN and TEOA were degassed with CO2 to remove the dissolved O<sub>2</sub>. The formation of the formate anion HCOO<sup>-</sup> in the liquid phase was detected by ion chromatograph (Figure S7 in the Supporting Information). The reaction was shown to be photocatalytic because no HCOO- was generated in the dark. The inactivity of the parent MIL-125(Ti) under otherwise similar conditions confirms that the visible light photocatalytic activity for CO2 reduction over NH2-MIL-125(Ti) is actually induced by the amino functionality. A temporal concentration change of HCOO- with the time of irradiation shows that the amount of HCOO- formed reached 8.14 µmol in 10 h (Figure 4). XRD, BET, and TGA data, as well as IR and Raman spectra of NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) after the photocatalytic reaction showed that NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) is stable during the photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> (Figures S8-S12 in the Supporting Information). The comparison of the photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> over NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) and the parent MIL-125(Ti) under 365 nm UV irradiation

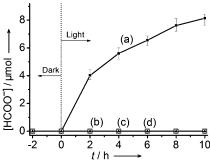


Figure 4. The amount of HCOO $^-$  produced as a function of the time of irradiation over a) NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) (■), b) MIL-125(Ti) (□), c) a mixture of TiO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>ATA (19 mg + 32 mg) (○), and d) visible light irradiation without a sample (▲). The solutions were irradiated using a Xe lamp with filters producing light in the range of 420–800 nm. Photocatalysts: 50 mg, MeCN/TEOA (5:1), solution volume: 60 mL.



revealed that NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) shows a slightly higher activity, probably because of its higher CO<sub>2</sub> uptake compared to MIL-125(Ti) (Figure S13 in the Supporting Information).

To study the origin of HCOO<sup>-</sup>, isotopic <sup>13</sup>CO<sub>2</sub> was used for the photocatalytic reaction and the obtained product was identified by <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectroscopy. The <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum of the product obtained from the reaction with <sup>12</sup>CO<sub>2</sub> (Figure S14a in the Supporting Information) shows only peaks corresponding to CD<sub>3</sub>CN and TEOA, whereas three additional peaks at 125.8, 159.57, and 165.30 ppm, which can be assigned to dissolved CO<sub>2</sub>, HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>, and HCOO<sup>-</sup>, respectively, were observed for the product obtained from the reaction with <sup>13</sup>CO<sub>2</sub> (Figure S14b in the Supporting Information). The isotopic <sup>13</sup>CO<sub>2</sub> reaction confirms that the produced HCOO<sup>-</sup> originates from CO<sub>2</sub>.

A recent study by Feng et al. has shown that impurity nanoparticles of ZnO were present in MOF-5.[16] To exclude the possibility of a minority of N-doped TiO2 and the production of HCOO- by the N-doped TiO<sub>2</sub> impurity in the obtained NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti), UV/Vis diffuse-reflectance spectra (DRS) of the prepared NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) and N-doped TiO<sub>2</sub> were compared (Figure S15 in the Supporting Information). A control experiment using N-doped TiO2 as photocatalyst was also performed (Figure S16 in the Supporting Information). The significant difference in the light absorption profiles of the N-doped TiO<sub>2</sub> and the as-prepared NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) implies the absence of N-doped TiO<sub>2</sub> in the product. The control experiment at wavelengths longer than 450 nm shows that 3.83 µmol of HCOO<sup>-</sup> was formed over the prepared NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) after 10 h of irradiation, whereas no HCOO- was formed over N-doped TiO2 because this material does not absorb at wavelengths longer than 450 nm. This result clearly indicates that the photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to HCOO<sup>-</sup> takes place over NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti).

An interesting photochromic phenomenon was observed over  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) during the photocatalytic reaction. When the suspension of  $NH_2$ -MIL-125(Ti) and TEOA in MeCN was irradiated with visible light in the presence of  $N_2$ , the color of the reaction suspension changed from the original bright yellow to green. However, when  $CO_2$  or  $O_2$  was introduced into the reaction system, the green color of the suspension changed gradually back to the original bright yellow (Figure 5). A color change from white to gray-blue in the presence of alcohols was previously reported for the parent MIL-125(Ti) photocatalyst except that this change

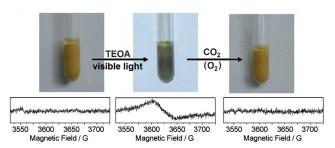
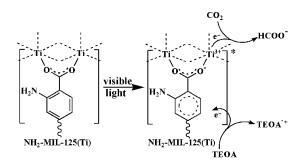


Figure 5. Photos and corresponding ESR spectra of  $NH_2$ -MIL-125 (Ti) under different conditions: a) fresh  $NH_2$ -MIL-125 (Ti), b) TEOA, visible light, and  $N_2$  and c) after the introduction of  $CO_2$  (or  $O_2$ ).

occurred upon UV irradiation. The studies on MIL-125(Ti) show that the photochromic phenomenon is ascribed to the presence of the intervalence electron transfer from the optically induced hopping of electrons from Ti(III) to Ti(IV) sites in the titanium oxo-clusters.<sup>[12]</sup> In our experiment, the ESR spectrum of the solid with green color shows a broad signal corresponding to Ti<sup>3+</sup> (Figure S17 in the Supporting Information). The UV/Vis spectrum of the solid with green color also shows intensive absorption in the visible light region, because of Ti<sup>3+</sup>-Ti<sup>4+</sup> intervalence charge transfer in titanium oxo-clusters (Figure S18 in the Supporting Information).

These experimental observations help to shed some light on the deduction of the mechanism of the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> over NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) (Scheme 1). Upon light absorption in



**Scheme 1.** Proposed mechanism for the photocatalytic CO<sub>2</sub> reduction over NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125 (Ti) under visible light irradiation.

the LMCT band, a long-lived excited charge separation state occurs by transferring an electron from an organic ligand to Ti<sup>4+</sup>. This process is similar to the generation of electrons and holes over photoexcited metal oxide semiconductors. Ti<sup>4+</sup> is thus reduced to Ti<sup>3+</sup> whereas TEOA acts as an electron donor. The existence of Ti<sup>3+</sup> in the titanium oxo-clusters of NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) explains the color change from the bright yellow to green in the presence of N<sub>2</sub> upon visible light irradiation and is confirmed by ESR and UV-DR spectra. When CO<sub>2</sub> is introduced into the suspension, the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> by Ti<sup>3+</sup> to HCOO- occurs. This can explain the observation of a gradual color change of the suspension from green to original bright yellow when CO<sub>2</sub> is introduced to the reaction system. Therefore, a complete photocatalytic cycle can be achieved by reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to HCOO<sup>-</sup> by Ti<sup>3+</sup> in the presence of TEOA as electron donor. The introduction of O<sub>2</sub> can have a similar effect as CO2 because O2 can also be reduced by Ti<sup>3+</sup>.

When the photocatalytic study was carried out using benzyl alcohol as electron donor upon visible light irradiation, no HCOO $^-$  was detected and the introduction of  $CO_2$  into the reaction system did not change the green color back to yellow, although a similar color change from bright yellow to green was observed. Apparently, in addition to acting as an electron donor, TEOA can facilitate the photocatalytic  $CO_2$  reduction because of its more basic nature. A previous study also showed that the presence of a base in the reaction system supports the hydrogenation of  $CO_2$  to formate.  $^{[17]}$ 

In conclusion, the photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to HCOO- under visible light irradiation is for the first time realized over a photoactive Ti-containing MOF, NH2-MIL-125(Ti), which is fabricated by a facile substitution of ligands in the UV-responsive MIL-125(Ti) material. This work highlights the potential of MOFs as photocatalysts for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>. Although the activity for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> over the current NH<sub>2</sub>-MIL-125(Ti) catalyst is still low, considering the versatile coordination chemistry of the metal cations, the availability of different organic linkers, and the possibility to modulate the composition, structure, and properties of the MOFs, we believe that high-efficient MOF-based photocatalysts for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> can be obtained. A limitation in the current photocatalytic system is that TEOA has to be used as the sacrificial electron donor, which is not economic and environmentally friendly. A recent report suggests a solution to this problem by recycling the sacrificial amine by coupling the photochemical reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to a photochemical water splitting reaction. [18] Although most of the reported MOFs cannot sustain the water oxidation process, some are fairly stable in water. Thus, the photocatalytic cycle is complete and the MOF-based photocatalysts reduce CO<sub>2</sub> in the presence of a recyclable amine as electron donor under solar irradiation. We believe that the present study will stimulate intensive research in MOF-based photocatalysis and will open new perspectives for the development of photocatalysts for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>.

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