

Direct Decomposition of NO into N₂ and O₂ on C-type Cubic Y₂O₃–ZrO₂ and Y₂O₃–ZrO₂–BaO

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Catalytic activities for direct NO decomposition were investigated on C-type cubic Y₂O₃–ZrO₂ and Y₂O₃–ZrO₂–BaO prepared by coprecipitation. Introduction of excess oxide anions in the Y₂O₃ lattice was achieved by partial substitution of the Y³⁺ sites with Zr⁴⁺, and high NO decomposition activity was obtained for the (Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})₂O_{3.03} catalyst. In addition, the catalytic activity was further enhanced by partial substitution of the Y³⁺ sites in the Y₂O₃–ZrO₂ solid solution with Ba²⁺, and the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst exhibited the highest NO decomposition activity among the samples prepared; NO conversion to N₂ reached 90% at 1173 K in the absence of O₂ (NO/He atmosphere), and a relatively high conversion ratio was observed even in the presence of O₂, H₂O, or CO₂, compared with the activities of conventional direct NO decomposition catalysts. These results indicate that the C-type cubic Y₂O₃–ZrO₂–BaO catalyst is a new potential candidate for direct NO decomposition.

Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are not only harmful to human beings, but are also responsible for photochemical smog and acid rain when they are formed in relatively large quantities in the atmosphere. NO_x is a generic term that includes nitrogen monoxide (NO) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which are mainly produced by the combustion of fossil fuels such as petroleum in the diesel engines of vehicles and ships, or coke in large-size boilers used in factories. NO_x species in exhaust gases emitted at high temperatures are composed principally of thermodynamically stable NO and a negligible amount of NO₂. Accordingly, research should be focused on NO with respect to catalytic NO_x decomposition.

Several NO reduction processes have been proposed for NO_x removal, of which selective catalytic reduction processes employing ammonia or urea have been extensively studied, and have already been practically applied in diesel engines and large-scale boilers.¹ In these processes, high efficiency for NO decomposition has been realized under various conditions and the reaction process is stable at high temperatures. However, separate specialized equipment is necessary to supply the reducing agents and secure control is necessary, due to the toxicity of ammonia.

In contrast to processes employing ammonia or urea, direct catalytic decomposition of NO into N₂ and O₂ (2NO → N₂ + O₂) is the most ideal route for NO_x removal, because no reductants are required and no special equipment is necessary. A number of materials, such as zeolites,² perovskites,^{3–5} and other mixed-oxides,^{6–14} have been reported as active catalysts for direct NO decomposition. However, the NO decomposition activity of these conventional catalysts is significantly decreased in the presence of O₂, due to the strong adsorption of O₂ on the surface of the catalysts.

In contrast, we have elucidated that a catalyst based on C-type cubic rare earth oxide can exhibit higher activity for direct NO decomposition than that of conventional perovskite-

type catalysts in the presence of O₂.^{14–16} Rare earth oxides can form three types of crystal structures, A- (hexagonal), B- (monoclinic), and C-type (cubic), according to the ionic size of the respective rare earth element.¹⁷ Among these, the lattice volume of individual rare earth oxides increase in the order of A-type < B-type < C-type, and the C-type cubic structure has the largest interstitial open space. It has been generally accepted that large open spaces in a catalyst play an important role in the direct NO decomposition, and for this reason the C-type cubic rare earth oxide is suitable as a direct NO removal catalyst. Furthermore, in our previous work, we found that incorporation of excess oxide anions into the C-type cubic lattice is also effective for enhancing direct NO decomposition.¹³ Accordingly, the control of lattice defects is carried out by partial substitution of trivalent rare earth cations with Zr⁴⁺ ions.

In some conventional NO_x storage catalysts, it has been reported that alkaline and alkaline earth metal ions have high NO_x storage properties, of which Ba²⁺ is a well known NO_x storage species.¹⁸ Accordingly, the additional introduction of Ba²⁺ into the C-type cubic lattice of the catalyst should accelerate NO adsorption on the surface and promote activity for NO decomposition.

In the present study, Y₂O₃, which is a thermally and chemically stable C-type cubic oxide, was selected as the fundamental material, and a fraction of the Y³⁺ sites were substituted with Zr⁴⁺ and Ba²⁺ to optimize the amount of oxide anion vacancies in the lattice for effective direct NO decomposition.

Experimental

The C-type cubic Y₂O₃–ZrO₂ and Y₂O₃–ZrO₂–BaO catalysts were synthesized by coprecipitation. A stoichiometric mixture of 1 mol dm^{−3} Y(NO₃)₃, 0.1 mol dm^{−3} ZrO(NO₃)₂, and 0.1 mol dm^{−3} Ba(NO₃)₂ aqueous solutions was added to a 1.0

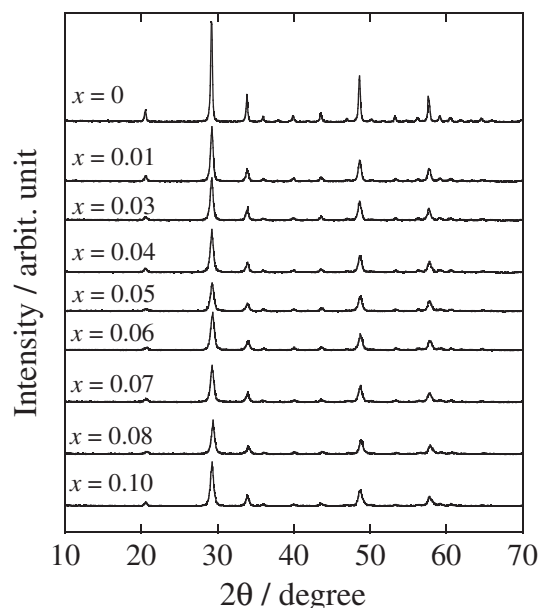


Figure 1. XRD patterns of the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ ($0 \leq x \leq 0.10$) catalysts.

mol dm^{-3} ammonium carbonate solution cooled by an ice bath with stirring, and the total amount of cations was adjusted to be 10 mmol. The pH of the mixture was adjusted to 10 by the dropwise addition of ammonia solution. After stirring for 6 h, the resulting precipitate was collected by filtration, washed several times with deionized water, and then dried at 353 K for 6 h. The powder was then ground in an agate mortar and finally calcined at 1173 K in air for 2 h.

The catalysts were characterized using X-ray powder diffraction (XRD; Rigaku Multiflex) with $\text{Cu K}\alpha$ radiation. XRD patterns were recorded in the 2θ range from 10 to 70° . The sample compositions were analyzed by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF; Rigaku, ZSX-100e) and the specific surface area was measured by the BET (Brunauer–Emmett–Teller) method using nitrogen adsorption at 77 K with a Micromeritics Tristar 3000 adsorption analyzer.

The NO decomposition reaction was carried out in a conventional fixed-bed flow reactor with a 10 mm diameter quartz glass tube. A gas mixture of 1.0 vol % NO and He (balance) was fed at a rate of $10 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1}$ over 0.5 g of catalyst. The W/F ratio, where W and F are the catalyst weight and gas flow rate, respectively, was adjusted to be 3.0 g s cm^{-3} . The gas composition was analyzed using a gas chromatograph (Shimadzu GC-8A) with a thermal conductivity detector (TCD), a molecular sieve 5A column for NO, N_2 , and O_2 , and a Polapac-Q column for N_2O separation. The activity of each catalyst was evaluated in terms of NO conversion to N_2 .

The effect of the presence of O_2 , H_2O , or CO_2 was measured by mixing each gas species with the reactant gas. The concentrations of the additional gases and NO were controlled by changing the feed rate of He as the balance gas to maintain a constant total flow rate of reactants at $10 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1}$.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows XRD patterns of the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ catalysts. All the diffraction patterns can be assigned to C-

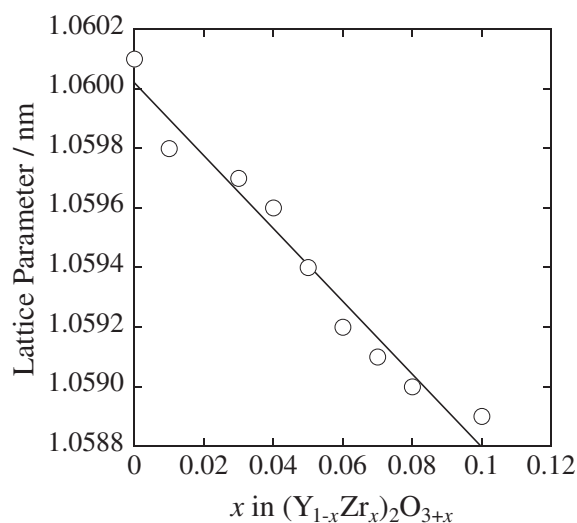


Figure 2. Dependence of the lattice parameter on the concentration of Zr^{4+} in the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ ($0 \leq x \leq 0.10$) system.

Table 1. Composition and BET Surface Area of the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ Catalysts

Sample	BET surface area/ $\text{m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$
Y_2O_3	15.0
$(Y_{0.99}Zr_{0.01})_2O_{3.01}$	31.0
$(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$	32.2
$(Y_{0.96}Zr_{0.04})_2O_{3.04}$	33.2
$(Y_{0.95}Zr_{0.05})_2O_{3.05}$	33.3
$(Y_{0.94}Zr_{0.06})_2O_{3.06}$	32.6
$(Y_{0.93}Zr_{0.07})_2O_{3.07}$	29.9
$(Y_{0.92}Zr_{0.08})_2O_{3.08}$	29.4
$(Y_{0.90}Zr_{0.10})_2O_{3.10}$	28.7

type cubic rare earth oxides, and no crystalline impurities were observed. Figure 2 shows the effect of the Zr^{4+} content on the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ lattice parameters estimated from the diffraction angles. The ionic sizes of Y^{3+} and Zr^{4+} with sixfold coordination are 0.1040¹⁹ and 0.0860 nm,¹⁹ respectively. When the smaller Zr^{4+} occupies the lattice position of Y^{3+} in Y_2O_3 , the lattice parameter decreases monotonically with increasing of Zr^{4+} content. The results indicate that C-type cubic solid solutions were successfully formed for all samples. The catalyst compositions, as determined using XRD, and the BET surface area of the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ catalysts are summarized in Table 1. The BET specific surface area was almost doubled by the introduction of Zr^{4+} into the Y_2O_3 lattice.

The dependence of NO conversion into N_2 at 1173 K on the Zr^{4+} concentration in the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ catalysts is presented in Figure 3. The activity for NO decomposition gradually increased with Zr^{4+} content. However, an excess amount of Zr^{4+} beyond the optimum concentration caused a decrease in the catalytic activity, which was probably due to an excessive reduction in the amount of interstitial open space in the catalyst. As a result, the highest catalytic activity was obtained for the $(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst, on which the N_2 yield attained was 60%.

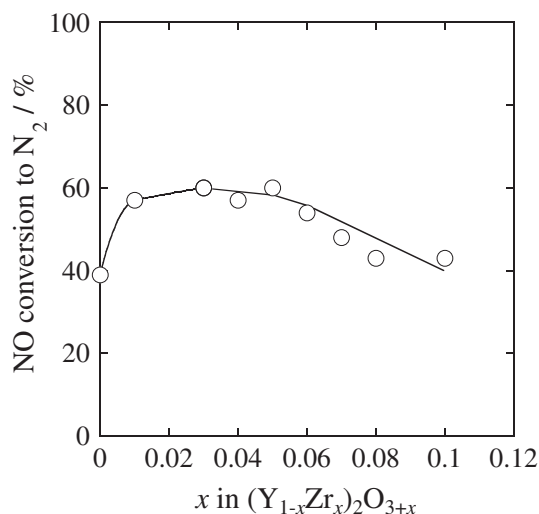


Figure 3. Dependence of NO conversion into N_2 at 1173 K on the Zr^{4+} concentration in the $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ catalysts (NO: 1 vol %, He; balance, $W/F = 3.0 \text{ g s cm}^{-3}$).

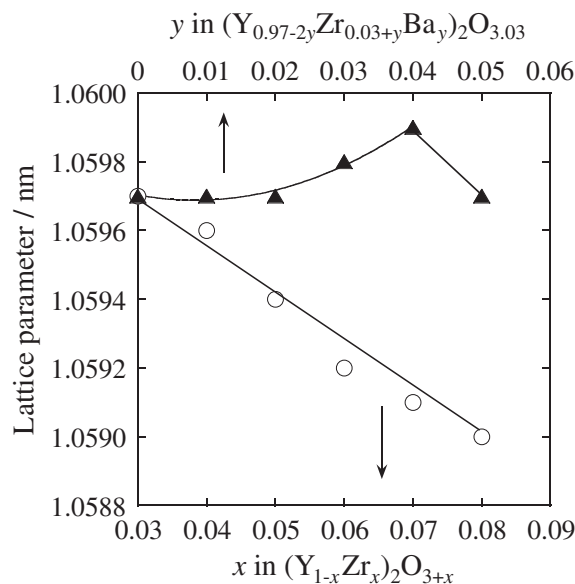


Figure 5. Dependence of the lattice parameter on the concentration of Zr^{4+} in $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ ($0.03 \leq x \leq 0.08$) (\circ), and Ba^{2+} in $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ ($0 \leq y \leq 0.05$) (\blacktriangle).

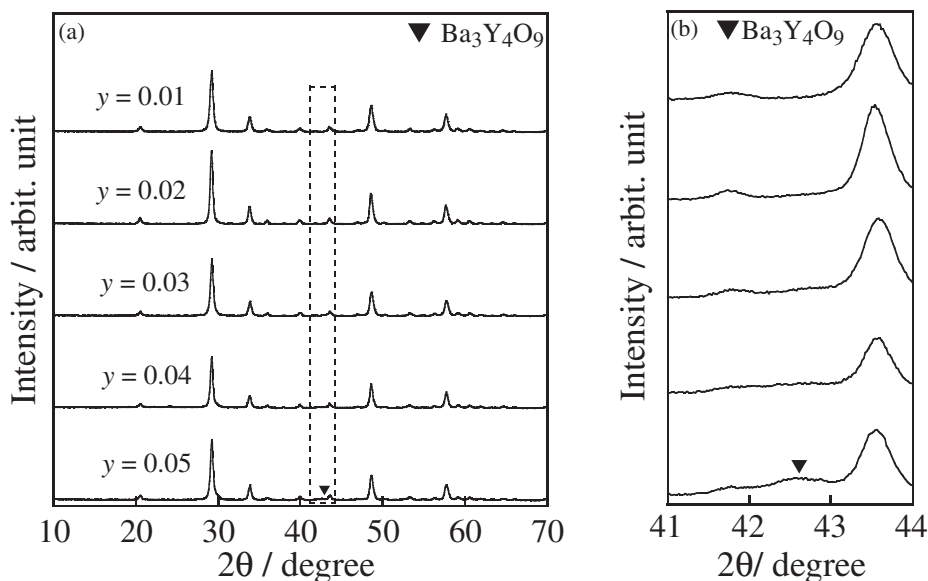


Figure 4. XRD patterns of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts ($0.01 \leq y \leq 0.05$) in the 2θ range from (a) 10 to 70° , and (b) 41 to 44° .

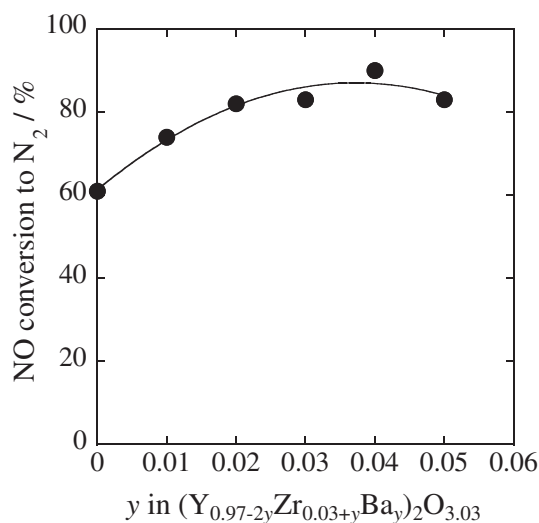
The additional introduction of Ba^{2+} should accelerate direct NO decomposition. However, incorporation of divalent Ba^{2+} ions into the $(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$ lattice produces oxide anion vacancies that counteract the excess oxide anions produced by Zr^{4+} doping. Therefore, additional doping with Ba^{2+} requires further introduction of Zr^{4+} to maintain the optimized open space. In this study, $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts were prepared, in which the same amount of Ba^{2+} and Zr^{4+} was codoped into $(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$ to maintain the amount of oxide anions in the lattice, and their catalytic activities were evaluated.

Figure 4 shows XRD patterns of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts ($0.01 \leq y \leq 0.05$). A single phase of the

C-type cubic rare earth oxide structure was successfully obtained for samples with $0.01 \leq y \leq 0.04$, whereas $Ba_3Y_4O_9$ was observed as a secondary impurity phase for $(Y_{0.87}Zr_{0.08}Ba_{0.05})_2O_{3.03}$. Figure 5 shows the dependence of the lattice constant on the concentration of Zr^{4+} (x) in $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$ ($0.03 \leq x \leq 0.08$) and Ba^{2+} (y) in $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ ($0 \leq y \leq 0.05$). In contrast to the results for $(Y_{1-x}Zr_x)_2O_{3+x}$, the lattice parameter of $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ ($0 \leq y \leq 0.05$) gradually increased with the y value, because the same amount of Zr^{4+} and Ba^{2+} occupied the lattice position of Y^{3+} in the $(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$ lattice, and the ionic size of Ba^{2+} with six coordination number (0.149 nm^{19}) is considerably larger than those of Y^{3+} and Zr^{4+} .

Table 2. Composition and BET Surface Area of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ Catalysts

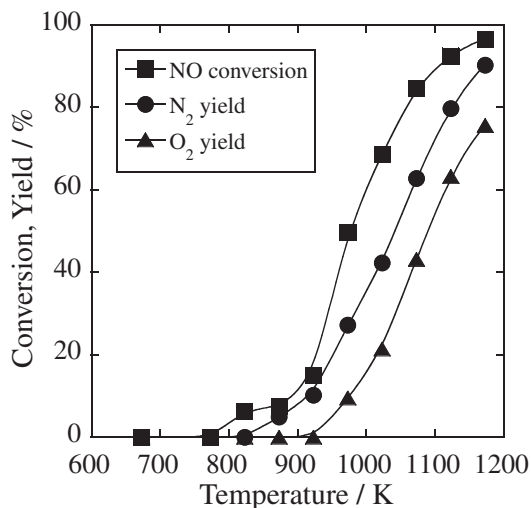
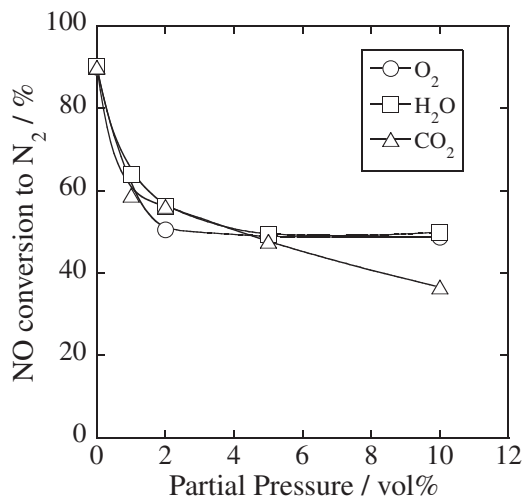
Sample	BET surface area/m ² g ⁻¹
$(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$	32.2
$(Y_{0.95}Zr_{0.04}Ba_{0.01})_2O_{3.03}$	27.2
$(Y_{0.93}Zr_{0.05}Ba_{0.02})_2O_{3.03}$	20.4
$(Y_{0.91}Zr_{0.06}Ba_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$	20.3
$(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$	21.9
$(Y_{0.87}Zr_{0.08}Ba_{0.05})_2O_{3.03}$	19.4

**Figure 6.** Dependence of NO conversion into N_2 at 1173 K on the composition of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts (NO: 1 vol %, He; balance, $W/F = 3.0 \text{ g s cm}^{-3}$).

However, $Ba_3Y_4O_9$ was separated as a secondary phase in $(Y_{0.87}Zr_{0.08}Ba_{0.05})_2O_{3.03}$ and only the Zr^{4+} ions were dissolved into the lattice. As a result, the lattice parameter became smaller than that of $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$. These results indicate that the solubility limit for $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ to form a single phase of C-type cubic structure is $y = 0.04$. The catalyst composition and BET surface area of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts are summarized in Table 2; the BET specific surface area was decreased by the introduction of Ba^{2+} into the $(Y_{0.97}Zr_{0.03})_2O_{3.03}$ lattice.

Figure 6 shows the dependence of NO conversion into N_2 at 1173 K on the composition of the $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$ catalysts. The catalytic activity of the single phase C-type cubic structure ($0 \leq y \leq 0.04$) steadily increased with the y value, and the highest catalytic activity was obtained for the $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$ composition, which is the solid solubility limit for Ba^{2+} in $(Y_{0.97-2y}Zr_{0.03+y}Ba_y)_2O_{3.03}$. The N_2 yield on this catalyst was 90%. In contrast, the catalytic activity of the $(Y_{0.87}Zr_{0.08}Ba_{0.05})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst decreased, due to the appearance of the secondary $Ba_3Y_4O_9$ phase. Although $Ba_3Y_4O_9$ exhibits catalytic activity for direct NO decomposition,²⁰ the activity is less than that of $(Y_{0.93}Zr_{0.05}Ba_{0.02})_2O_{3.03}$.

Figure 7 shows the temperature dependence of NO conversion and the yield of N_2 and O_2 for the $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst. NO decomposition activity appeared from 823 K, and the NO conversion, N_2 yield, and O_2 yield increased monotonically with reaction temperature. The

**Figure 7.** Temperature dependence of NO conversion (■) and yield of N_2 (●) and O_2 (▲) over the $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst (NO: 1 vol %, He; balance, $W/F = 3.0 \text{ g s cm}^{-3}$).**Figure 8.** Effect of the presence of O_2 (○), H_2O (□), or CO_2 (△) on the N_2 yield over the $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst at 1173 K (NO: 1 vol %, He; balance, $W/F = 3.0 \text{ g s cm}^{-3}$).

formation of N_2O was not detected between 400 and 900 °C. When the reaction proceeds stoichiometrically, the N_2 yield should be equivalent to the O_2 yield, however the O_2 yield was lower than that of N_2 . Similar results have been reported in a number of studies,^{4,5,12-14} and the formation of NO_2 was suggested as the cause.

A significant issue of conventional catalysis for direct NO decomposition is that the activity decreases in the presence of O_2 . In addition, not only O_2 but also H_2O and CO_2 appear in exhaust gases from fixed sources. Therefore, the effect of the presence of O_2 , H_2O , or CO_2 on the N_2 yield over the $(Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})_2O_{3.03}$ catalyst at 1173 K was also examined, and the results are presented in Figure 8. In the presence of O_2 , the N_2 yield decreased from 90 to 50% until the content reached 2 vol %, but became almost constant in the range from

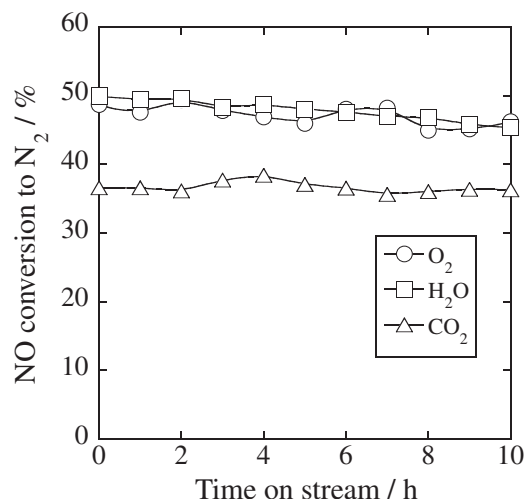


Figure 9. Effect of the presence of 10 vol % O₂ (○), H₂O (□), or CO₂ (△) on the N₂ yield over the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst at 1173 K as a function of time on stream (NO: 1 vol %, He; balance, W/F = 3.0 g s cm⁻³).

2 to 10 vol %. As a result, NO decomposition activity as high as 50% was maintained, even in the presence of 10 vol % O₂. Even at 1073 K, the conversion ratio in the presence of 10 vol % O₂ was 28% on the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst, which is over two times higher than that for La_{0.7}Ba_{0.3}Mn_{0.8}In_{0.2}O₃ (12%).⁴ A similar trend of decreasing NO decomposition activity was also observed in the presence of H₂O. The N₂ yield was decreased to 50% when the concentration of water vapor reached 5 vol % or more.

In contrast, the effect of CO₂ on the NO decomposition activity was relatively larger than that for O₂ and H₂O, and the N₂ yield monotonically decreased with the increase in the partial pressure of CO₂. CO₂ is acidic, so that adsorption of CO₂ on Ba²⁺ sites on the surface of the catalyst will inhibit the adsorption of NO onto the open space sites of the catalyst. However, on the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst, a high N₂ yield was sustained at 47% even in the presence of 5 vol % CO₂, which is significantly higher than that for the Ba_{0.8}La_{0.2}Mn_{0.8}Mg_{0.2}O₃ (20% at 1123 K)²¹ and La_{0.8}Sr_{0.2}CoO₃ (10% at 1073 K) catalysts.²²

Furthermore, the stability of the catalysts for direct NO decomposition activity with time-on-stream was evaluated for the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst in the presence of 10 vol % O₂, H₂O, or CO₂ at 1173 K. As shown in Figure 9, the catalytic activity was not deactivated during the 10 h run in the presence of each interfering gas, suggesting that the present (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst was stable in a long period of operation. In addition, the NO decomposition activity was recovered when the catalytic test was carried out again in the absence of the coexisting gases (1 vol % NO/He), and the XRD pattern of the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst was the same before and after the reactions. These results indicate that the decrease in NO decomposition activity is caused by the adsorption of O₂, H₂O, or CO₂ on the catalyst, and the negative effects of O₂, H₂O, or CO₂ are not permanent.

Conclusion

C-type cubic Y₂O₃-ZrO₂-BaO catalysts, in which the Y³⁺ site is partially substituted with Zr⁴⁺ and Ba²⁺ to control the open interstitial space in the lattice, were found to exhibit high catalytic activity for direct NO decomposition. The catalytic activity was significantly enhanced by the introduction of Zr⁴⁺ and Ba²⁺, and the highest catalytic activity was obtained for (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03}. It is noteworthy that the catalytic activity was maintained with a high conversion ratio even in the presence of O₂, H₂O, or CO₂. Therefore, the (Y_{0.89}Zr_{0.07}Ba_{0.04})₂O_{3.03} catalyst is expected to be a new potential candidate for a direct NO decomposition catalyst.

This research was supported by the Industrial Technology Research Grant Program '08 (Project ID: 08B42001a) from the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) of Japan, and by the Steel Industry Foundation for the Advancement of Environmental Protection Technology (SEPT).

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