



Effect of washcoat modification with metal oxides on the activity of a monolithic Pd-based catalyst for methane combustion

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ABSTRACT

The deposition of Ni, Co, Ce or Fe oxides onto the washcoat surface in the 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst enhances conversion of CH₄. Catalytic activity of the Pd-catalysts containing cobalt oxide depends on the incorporated amount of cobalt oxide and the method of incorporation. The highest activities were those of the 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ and 1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts (cobalt oxide deposited onto the surface of Al₂O₃) and the 0.5%Pd/5%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃ catalyst (mixed washcoat). Total SSA, Pd dispersion and Pd crystallite size in the x%Pd/y%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts depend on the incorporated amount of PdO and cobalt oxide. Pd dispersion in the 1%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst increases from 4% to 20% upon deposition of 14 wt.% Co₃O₄ (by mass Al₂O₃) onto the Al₂O₃ surface (1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃). This increase in Pd dispersion influence the increase in the activity of the 1%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst. On the surface of the 0.5%Pd/5%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃ catalyst Pd occurs mainly in the form of PdO and displays considerable mobility under conditions of temperature variations—cyclically undergoing reduction and oxidation. At 500 °C, in vacuo, the reduction was irreversible and paralleled by the agglomeration of metallic Pd crystallites. At room temperature, cobalt occurred on the catalyst surface in the form of Co⁺² ions (CoAl₂O₄) and was reduced to Co⁰ at 500 °C (in vacuo). Up to 500 °C, the reduction of Co was reversible.

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1. Introduction

A Pd-based catalyst shows a very high activity in the combustion of methane [1–7]. Pd-catalysts are usually supported on Al₂O₃, SiO₂, TiO₂ or MgO. To increase the phase transition temperature of γ-Al₂O₃ and provide for the thermal stability of PdO, it is conventional to incorporate La₂O₃, Li₂O, CaO, Cr₂O₃, MgO, ZrO₂ or BaO [2,3], as well as add some rare earth oxides (Ce, Pr, Nd or Sm) [4,5]. The activity of the Pd-based catalyst for methane combustion can be enhanced by the addition of NiO [6–8], SnO₂ [6] or Co₃O₄ [1,7] into the Al₂O₃. Compared to Pd/Al₂O₃, the Pd/Al₂O₃-Co₃O₄ catalyst displays a higher activity in methane combustion [7–9]. The activity of Pd/Al₂O₃-Co₃O₄ depends strongly on the Co₃O₄ content [7]. Very active in CH₄ combustion are Pt and Au deposited onto Co₃O₄ [10].

In this work we examined the effect of washcoat modification with Co, Ni, Ce, Fe, Cu, Mn, Cr oxides on the activity of monolithic Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst, with emphasis on the effect of cobalt oxide on the physicochemical properties (XPS, BET) and activities in CH₄ combustion. Our study also aimed at comparing the activities of the catalysts in methane combustion when Pd was deposited onto

Al₂O₃ (0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalysts); onto cobalt oxide (0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts), and onto a mixed cobalt oxide–alumina layer (0.5%Pd/x%Co₃O₄-y%Al₂O₃ catalysts).

2. Methods of catalysts preparation and investigation

Monolithic catalysts were prepared on a support made of heat-resisting FeCr20Al5 foils (thickness of 0.05 mm), cylindrically wound (70 mm in length and 26 mm in diameter), with a honeycomb cross-section. The channels of the monolith (112 per square centimetre) were triangular in shape (the side of the triangle being 1.4 mm long). The monolithic support was washcoated with Al₂O₃ or mixed oxides (Al₂O₃ with 5–15% Co₃O₄) by the sol–gel method and calcined at 400 °C for 3 h. The sol was prepared by mixing calculated amounts of Al(OH)₃ (obtained by the hydrolysis of aluminium isopropoxide (Aldrich)), glycerol, distilled water and Co(NO₃)₂·6H₂O (Fluka). Then the sol was treated with a buffer solution until the pH of 7.5 was achieved, and stirred at a rate of 500 rpm at room temperature for 2 h to obtain a stable sol. The monolithic support was immersed in the sol, dried at room temperature for 4 h and thereafter at 110 °C for 3 h, and subsequently calcined at 400 °C for 3 h. The amount of the washcoat was 2.2 ± 0.1 wt.% in relation to the support mass. Catalysts were also prepared with Al₂O₃ washcoats covered with

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Table 1
Characterization of the catalysts and washcoat powders

Catalyst	Composition of washcoat (wt.%)	SSA of washcoat powders (m ² /g)	Total SSA ^a of catalyst (m ² /g _{cat})	Active metal surface area ^a (m ² /g _{cat})	Percent dispersion of Pd ^a (%)	Average size of Pd crystallites ^a (nm)
Al ₂ O ₃ /support	Al ₂ O ₃	349	8.9	–	–	–
0.5%Pd/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃	349	5.6	0.15	14.0	8.0
0.5%Pd/0.2%Co/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃ covered with 13% ^b Co ₃ O ₄	279	4.0	0.14	13.1	8.6
0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃ covered with 17.8% ^b Co ₃ O ₄	248	2.9	0.14	11.3	9.9
0.5%Pd/0.4%Co/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃ covered with 22.7% ^b Co ₃ O ₄	225	5.2	0.19	12.0	9.3
1%Pd/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃	349	1.3	0.01	3.8	29.6
1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al ₂ O ₃	Al ₂ O ₃ covered with 14% ^b Co ₃ O ₄	248	3.3	0.35	20.3	5.5
0.5%Pd/5%Co ₃ O ₄ –Al ₂ O ₃	5% Co ₃ O ₄ , 95% Al ₂ O ₃	370	–	0.14	12.6	8.9
0.5%Pd/10%Co ₃ O ₄ –Al ₂ O ₃	10% Co ₃ O ₄ , 90% Al ₂ O ₃	323	–	0.16	13.9	8.0
0.5%Pd/15%Co ₃ O ₄ –Al ₂ O ₃	15% Co ₃ O ₄ , 85% Al ₂ O ₃	312	–	–	–	–

^a Measurements were performed using samples of washcoated supports covered with palladium.

^b Proportion of Co₃O₄ mass to Al₂O₃ mass in the catalyst.

the nitrates of Co (Fluka), Ni, Ce and Fe (POCH) (0.1% metal by support mass) and calcined at 500 °C for 3 h. Catalyst surfaces were impregnated with Pd(NO₃)₂ to deposit 0.5% Pd or 1% Pd in relation to the support mass, and calcined at 500 °C for 3 h. In those catalysts, Pd content amounted to 4.5 g and 9 g per 1 dm³ of catalyst, at Pd 0.5% and Pd 1%, respectively. The characterization of the catalysts is included in Table 1.

Surface composition was analyzed by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), using a SPECS UHV system equipped with a PHOIBOS 100 spectrometer and SpecLab software. The X-ray source was generated with an Al anode operating at 100 W (survey scan) and 200–300 W (high resolution spectra). The analyzer mode was set at constant pass energy (30 eV, survey scan; 5 eV, narrow scan). The C 1s line (284.6 eV) was taken as a reference to correct electrostatic charging. The residual pressure in the chamber was below 5×10^{-10} mbar with hydrogen as the main component of the gas phase (>90%, vol.). The detection angle was normal to the sample surface (8 mm × 8 mm).

BET specific surface areas (SSA) of washcoat powders were measured from nitrogen sorption by the static volumetric method at liquid nitrogen temperature, using Autosorb-1C Quantachrome (repeatability ±3%). The SSA values of the catalysts with metal supports were determined by the same method, using ASAP 2405N V.101 (repeatability ±4%). Active metal surface area and dispersion of palladium were calculated on the basis of total hydrogen chemisorption at 110 °C, using Autosorb 1CMS Quantachrome (repeatability ±0.92% dispersion). Prior to the estimation of metal dispersion, the samples were made subject to the following pretreatment: heating in hydrogen stream to the temperature of 110 °C (20°/min) and reduction with hydrogen for 1 h, evacuation at 110 °C for 20 min and at 300 °C for 2 h, cooling to 110 °C for 1 min and evacuation for 10 min. The isotherm of hydrogen chemisorption was determined over the pressure range of 20–200 mmHg, at a chemisorption stoichiometry H/Pd = 1 and at cross-section areas of hydrogen and Pd amounting to 10.41 Å and 7.874 Å, respectively. Dispersion (D_{Pd}) was calculated in terms of the formula $D_{Pd} = m_H/n_{Pd}$ (m_H , number of H atoms chemisorbed on 1 g of catalyst; n_{Pd} , number of Pd atoms in 1 g of catalyst), the mean size of Pd crystallites (in nm) being computed in terms of the formula $d_{Pd} = 1.12/D_{Pd}$.

Catalytic activity was tested in the combustion of 1% CH₄ in air, using a flow reactor (i.d., 26 mm; length, 400 mm) placed in a heater (heating ramp, 3 °C/min), gas flow velocity being set to 5800 h^{−1} on the total monolith volume. The reaction of methane combustion was stabilized for 20 min in the temperature required. The methane conversion values obtained are arithmetic means from three measurements. Methane concentrations were measured with a Sniffer methane analyzer (Bacharach, repeatability 5% relative).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. XPS measurements

Calcination of Al₂O₃ impregnated with Co⁺² salts induces the formation of three main Co species: bulk Co₃O₄, Co⁺² ions in tetrahedral sites ('surface-like spinels') and Co⁺² ions in octahedral sites ('surface-like CoO') [11]. The distribution of these species on the surface depends on the cobalt content and calcination temperature – inc calcination temperatures favours the formation of Co⁺² ions in tetrahedral sites, i.e. well-dispersed surface phase, similar to CoAl₂O₄ [12]. XPS analyses of 0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts confirm the findings reported in the literature (Fig. 1). Co 2p scans substantiate primarily the presence of the Co⁺² ions ascribed to the CoAl₂O₄ spinel. For the 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ catalyst, binding energy was estimated at 781.1 eV (as was the case with CoAl₂O₄), although the slight broadening of the Co 2p_{3/2} peak and the shift in the position of Co 2p_{1/2} by approx. 0.2 eV towards lower energies suggest the presence of some Co₃O₄. It is essential to note that a broadening of the peak is also observed on the side of lower energies, which indicates that insignificant amounts of CoO are present (BE 779.7 eV; Fig. 1b).

Palladium was found to occur in the form of PdO on the surfaces of the fresh 0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ and 0.5%Pd/x%Co₃O₄–Al₂O₃ catalysts. The BE values of Pd 3d_{3/2} for these catalysts were assessed to 336.55 ± 0.1 eV; they approached the BE value of 336.7 eV for PdO in Pd/Al₂O₃ (dotted line in Fig. 2). It is well known that the incorporation

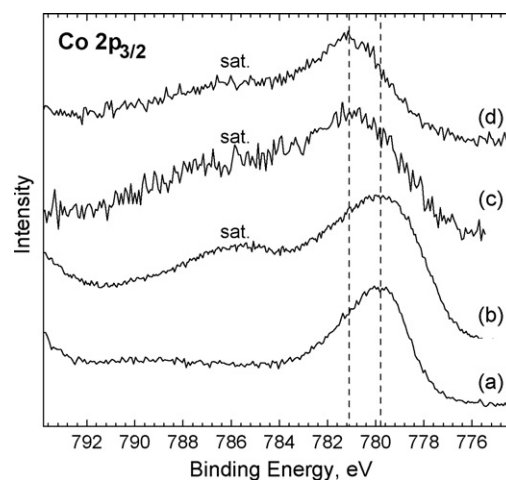


Fig. 1. XPS Co 2p spectra for Co₃O₄ (a), CoO (b), 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ (c), and CoAl₂O₄ (d).

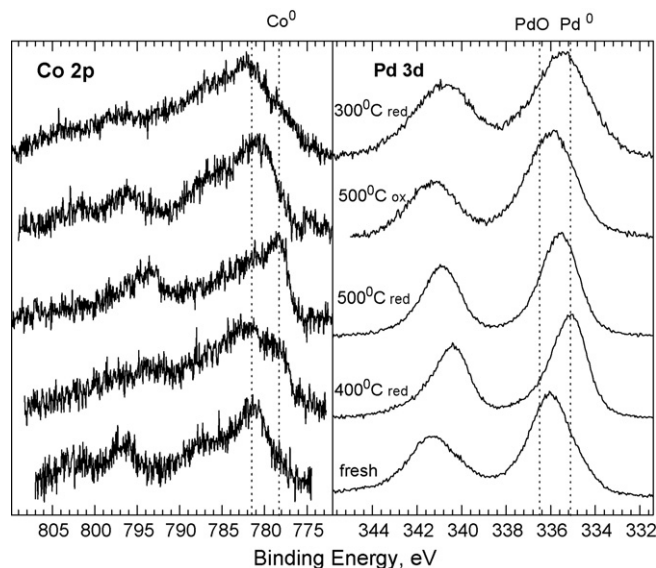


Fig. 2. XPS Co 2p and Pd 3d spectra for 0.5%Pd/5%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃ catalyst at different temperatures (UHV).

of Pd into Co catalysts can considerably affect the reduction of Co oxides [13]. The ability to reduce and re-oxidate Co exerts an influence on the selectivity and activity of the catalyst. Fig. 2 shows the cyclic variations in the extent of cobalt and palladium oxidation at different temperatures under reducible residual gases in the UHV XPS chamber for the 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃-x%Co₃O₄ catalysts. From these plots it can be inferred that cobalt alone is reducible only at high temperatures, not applied here. In the case of Pd on mixed-washcoat (Al₂O₃-Co₃O₄) catalysts, a noticeable reduction of Co⁺²-Co⁰ occurred at 300 °C; at 500 °C, the spectrum revealed the dominance of metallic cobalt. In UHV conditions, PdO reduces at approx. 200 °C [5], and at 400 °C only the Pd⁰ phase has been observed. At higher temperatures, Pd became sintered irreversibly, and formed larger crystallites of metallic Pd covered with a PdO layer (it is to be noted that such UHV conditions corresponded to

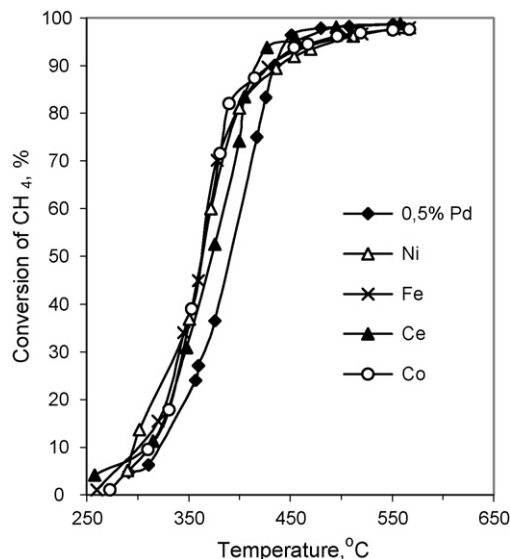


Fig. 3. Conversion of methane over 0.5%Pd/0.1%M/Al₂O₃ (M = Ni, Fe, Ce, Co) catalysts.

those of catalyst ageing). Agglomeration of Pd is substantiated by the decrease in the Pd/Co and Pd/Al ratios with the rise in temperature.

3.2. Catalyst activity testing

We examined the effect of washcoat modification with Ni, Ce, Co, Fe, Cu, Mn, Cr or La oxides (0.1% metal by weight) on the activity of the monolithic Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst. Thus, at temperatures lower than 550 °C, catalytic activity was found to deteriorate when Cu, Mn, Cr or La oxides were added. The activity of the catalysts obtained can be ordered as follows: Pd/Al₂O₃ > Pd/La₂O₃ > Pd/MnO > Pd/CuO > Pd/Cr₂O₃. The addition of Ni, Co, Ce or Fe oxides enhanced the activity of the 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst for CH₄ combustion at temperatures below 400 °C (Fig. 3). When

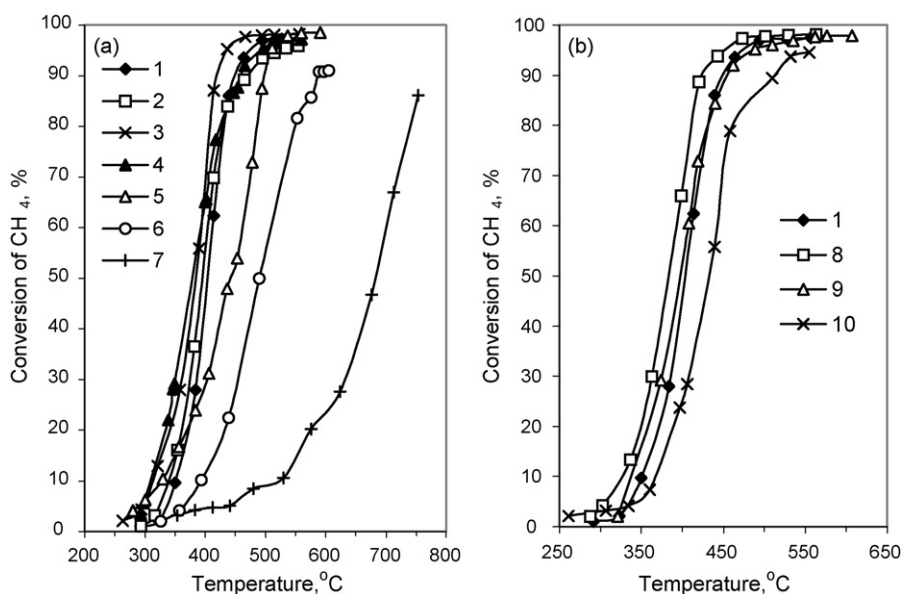


Fig. 4. Catalytic combustion of methane over 0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ (a) and 0.5%Pd/x%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃ (b) catalysts with different cobalt oxide content. Catalyst: 1 – Pd/Al₂O₃; 2 – Pd/0.1%Co/Al₂O₃; (3) Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃; (4) Pd/0.4%Co/Al₂O₃; (5) Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ after ageing for 24 h at 650 °C; (6) Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ after ageing at 750 °C; (7) 0.3%Co/Al₂O₃; (8) Pd/5%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃; (9) Pd/10%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃; (10) Pd/15%Co₃O₄-Al₂O₃.

temperature exceeded 400 °C, the incorporation of Ni, Co or Fe oxides deteriorated the activity of 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃.

The activity of the 0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ catalyst in methane combustion was low (87% conversion at 754 °C) (Fig. 4(a)). The catalysts prepared by depositing 0.5% Pd onto the Al₂O₃ surface covered with a cobalt oxide layer (0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃) displayed a high activity, which depended on the amount of the cobalt oxide added (Fig. 4(a)). The catalytic activity of 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ was higher than that of 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃. When cobalt content was further increased to 0.4 wt.%, a decrease in catalytic activity was observed at temperatures higher than 400 °C (Fig. 4(a)). No CO was formed during CH₄ combustion over these catalysts. In the 0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts, the size of Pd crystallites increased with cobalt oxide content and Pd dispersion slightly decreased from 13.1% to 12% when cobalt oxide content was increased from 0.2% to 0.4% Co (Table 1). The size of Pd crystallites in these catalysts averaged from 8.6 nm to 9.9 nm. When crystallite size in the 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ catalyst was measured by the XRD method, the crystallites of cobalt oxide were approximately 3.5 times the crystallites of PdO deposited onto its surface. We assume that the increase in the content of cobalt oxide is paralleled by the increase in the size of its crystallites, which accounts for the decrease in Pd dispersion in the catalysts. The measured SSA value of the Al₂O₃-washcoated support amounts to 8.9 m²/g and is close to the calculated SSA value (10.1 m²/g). The low SSA value is attributable to the high mass of the metallic monolithic support (21.5 g). Upon deposition of 0.5% Pd onto the cobalt oxide and the washcoat (Al₂O₃), the total SSA of the catalysts decreased, which is due to the increase in the size of the Pd crystallites on the surface of the catalysts (Table 1). In the 0.5%Pd/x%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts Pd has been deposited onto the surface of the cobalt oxide covering the Al₂O₃ layer. In these catalysts the proportion of the cobalt oxide mass to the Al₂O₃ mass varied from 13 wt.% (0.5%Pd/0.2%Co/Al₂O₃) to 22.7 wt.% (0.5%Pd/0.4%Co/Al₂O₃), which is equivalent to the cobalt oxide loading in cobalt-containing catalysts for CH₄ combustion. In these catalysts, in the course of cobalt oxide deposition onto the Al₂O₃ surface, cobalt oxide at least partly deposited inside the pores of Al₂O₃ and thus reduced their volume, e.g. from 4 cm³/g to 3.2 cm³/g for the 0.5%/0.4%Co/Al₂O₃ catalyst. And this accounted for the decrease in the total SSA of the 0.5%/x%Co/Al₂O₃ catalysts (Table 1).

After 180 h of methane combustion over 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃, conversion dropped from 98.7% to 91.3% (at 558 °C). Tests on the thermal resistance of 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ have shown that heating at 650 °C for 24 h fails to reduce catalytic activity at 560 °C (conversion 98.4%). The rise in heating temperature to 750 °C reduced conversion to 81.6% at 553 °C (Fig. 4(a)). Heating at 1000 °C for 24 h notably decreased catalytic activity (41.7% conversion at 554 °C) owing to the reduction of PdO to metallic Pd and to the agglomeration of Pd particles on the catalyst surface (XPS).

The increase in Pd load from 0.5% to 1% in the Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst is paralleled by a considerable decrease in the SSA of the catalyst and in Pd dispersion (the size of Pd crystallites increases) (Table 1), and catalyst activity decreases. The decrease in Pd dispersion with the increase in Pd content has also been reported by other researchers [14]. They observed, for example, that when Pd content increased from 0.4% to 2.12%, Pd dispersion decreased from 5% to 1.5%. The addition of 0.3% Co to 1%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst raises its activity (Fig. 5) due to the rise in Pd dispersion (from 3.8% to 20.3%) and to the decrease in Pd crystallite size (from 29.6 nm to 5.5 nm). The considerable rise in Pd dispersion in the catalyst where 1% Pd has been deposited onto the cobalt oxide layer seems to be attributable to the strong interaction between Pd and cobalt oxide on the catalyst surface.

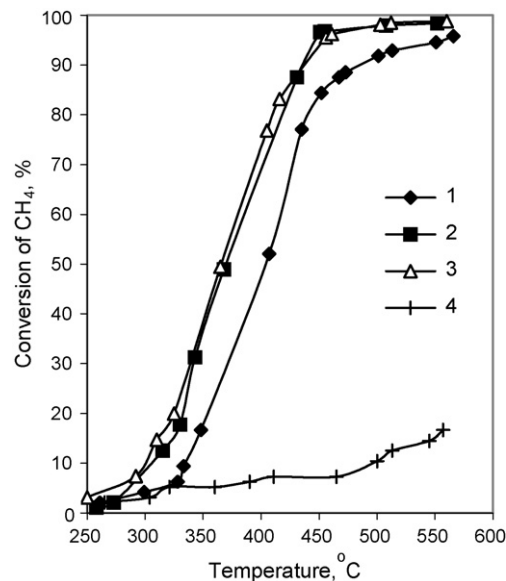


Fig. 5. Comparison of methane conversion over monolithic catalysts. (1) Fresh 1%Pd/Al₂O₃; (2) fresh 1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃; (3) 1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ after 20 h on stream; (4) 1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ after ageing for 24 h at 1000 °C.

This interaction are stronger than the interaction between Pd and Al₂O₃. These strong interactions reduce the surface mobility of Pd, which prevents the agglomeration of Pd crystallites, thus contributing to the rise in Pd dispersion. A similar, noticeable rise in Pd dispersion has been observed by Guzzi et al. [15] with sol-gel silica supported 5 wt.%Pd-Co catalysts containing different amounts of Co. In this catalysts, Pd dispersion measured by the XRD method increased from 7.8% (0% Co) to 16% (33% Co).

The application of a mixed washcoat, 95%Al₂O₃–5%Co₃O₄, to Pd-based catalysts increases the activity of the 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ catalyst (Fig. 4(b)) since the SSA value of the 5%Co₃O₄–95%Al₂O₃ washcoat exceeds that of Al₂O₃ (370 m²/g and 349 m²/g, respectively). On the surface of fresh 0.5%Pd/5%Co₃O₄–95%Al₂O₃, palladium occurs mainly in the form of PdO and displays a notable mobility under variable temperature conditions, undergoing reduction and oxidation in a cyclic mode. Also cobalt underwent cyclic reduction and oxidation: from Co²⁺ at room temperature to the dominant form of Co⁰ at 500 °C (in the UHV XPS chamber). The addition of 10% cobalt oxide into the washcoat failed to enhance the activity of 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ despite a slight decrease in the SSA of the washcoat (Table 1). The increase in cobalt oxide content to 15 wt.% decreased the activity of the catalyst in response to a considerable reduction in the SSA of the washcoat (from 349 m²/g to 312 m²/g).

4. Conclusions

The deposition of Ni, Co, Ce or Fe oxides onto the washcoat surface in 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃ enhances the conversion of methane. When Pd is deposited onto the surface of the cobalt oxide covering Al₂O₃ (Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ catalyst) or onto the surface of the mixed washcoat (5%Co₃O₄–Al₂O₃), the activities of these catalysts are higher than that of 0.5%Pd/Al₂O₃. When the cobalt oxide content in the catalyst is further increased, catalytic activity decreases. The highest activities were those of the 0.5%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃, 1%Pd/0.3%Co/Al₂O₃ and 0.5%Pd/5%Co₃O₄–Al₂O₃ catalysts. Total SSA, Pd dispersion and average size of the Pd crystallites in the catalysts tested depend both on the load of

Pd in the catalyst and on the composition of the washcoat onto which palladium was deposited. In the $x\%Pd/y\%Co/Al_2O_3$ catalysts, they also depend on the cobalt oxide content. The incorporation of 0.3% Co into the $1\%Pd/Al_2O_3$ catalyst notably raised Pd dispersion (from 3.8% to 20.3%) and reduced the average size of Pd crystallites (from 29.6 nm to 5.5 nm), thus enhancing its activity. The increase in the Pd amount of the catalyst (from 0.5% to 1%), as well as the increase in the cobalt oxide quantity (from 0.2% to 0.4%), reduces the SSA from $8.9\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ ($Al_2O_3/\text{support}$) to $2.9\text{--}5.2\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ ($x\%Pd/y\%Co/Al_2O_3/\text{support}$). The SSA of the washcoat powders increases upon the incorporation of 5 wt.% Co_3O_4 (from $349\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ to $370\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$). In these catalysts Pd and Co occurred in the form of PdO and the $CoAl_2O_4$ spinel, respectively (XPS). At increased temperature, under reducible UHV conditions, PdO and Co^{+2} were reduced at 200°C and above 300°C , respectively. At 500°C , in vacuo, Pd agglomerated irreversibly in the form of metallic crystallites. Under the same conditions, the reduction in cobalt was reversible.

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