

Role of Promoters in Hoisting the Catalytic Performance for Enhanced CO Methanation

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Article History

Received: July 21, 2018

Received in revised form: February 12, 2019

Accepted: May 23, 2019

Published Online: June 24, 2019

Abstract

The increasing demand of natural gas and its rising cost have urged some countries to take initiatives to fulfil their energy needs. The production of substituted natural gas (SNG) by syngas ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$) from coal or biomass is one of the most effective methods. As a promising source of energy, SNG has attracted much attention on research and applications due to the high demand for environmental protection. It is regarded as a clean energy source and an effective method for the application of coal resources, particularly in the regions with abundant coal resources but scarce natural gas such as in China [1-3]. SNG has attracted increasing attention due to its lower emission of sulphur and particulate matter. SNG is expected to be one of the main energy sources of the 21st century. It is environmentally friendly and less costly, has high calorific value, complete combustion, and smoke free compared to other energy sources. It has significant importance for the industrial level and transportation sectors.

Keywords: Role of promoters; enhanced CO methanation; catalytic performance; CO methanation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

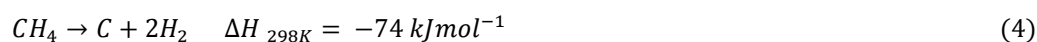
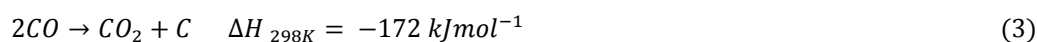
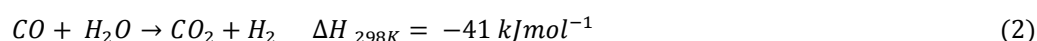
The increasing demand of natural gas and its rising cost have urged some countries to take initiatives to fulfil their energy needs. The production of substituted natural gas (SNG) by syngas ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$) from coal or biomass is one of the most effective methods. As a promising source of energy, SNG has attracted much attention on research and applications due to the high demand for environmental protection. It is regarded as a clean energy source and an effective method for the application of coal resources, particularly in the regions with abundant coal resources but scarce natural gas such as in China [1-3]. SNG has attracted increasing attention due to its lower emission of sulphur and particulate matter. SNG is expected to be one of the main energy sources of the 21st century. It is environmentally friendly and less costly, has high calorific value, complete combustion, and smoke free compared to other energy sources. It has significant importance for the industrial level and transportation sectors. Conversion of coal to SNG consists of many elementary steps (Figure 1) including coal gasification, methanation of syngas, and separation of products. Methanation of CO is an important step to convert syngas (mixture of $\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$) into SNG [1, 5].

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn. Authors should discuss the results and how they can be interpreted in perspective of previous studies and of the working hypotheses. The findings and their implications should be discussed in the broadest context possible. Future research directions may also be highlighted.



Figure 1 Basic elementary steps involved in the production of SNG.

In addition, CO methanation reaction is extensively used to remove CO content from reformat gases to an extremely lower level (less than 50 ppm) as required for fuel cell technology. It is also used in removing traces of CO from H₂ and ammonia production plants [6-7]. The main CO methanation reaction is represented by Equation 1, which is also known as the Sabatier reaction, whereas other main side reactions during CO methanation are represented by Equations 2–4, which are water gas shift reaction, Boudouard reaction, and CH₄ dissociation, respectively [8].



CO methanation is highly exothermic in nature. It is very difficult to transfer heat of reaction from fixed bed reactors during CO methanation. Carbon black can be easily produced on the surface of catalysts at higher temperature as mentioned in Equations 3 and 4, which can deactivate catalysts. Furthermore, at higher temperature, sintering can also happen on active metals in catalysts. To avoid these issues, it is uneconomical for industries to carry out the process at lower temperature because it could decrease the efficiency of the reaction and affect the actual yield of the products [2]. Furthermore, durability and excellent catalytic activity at higher temperature are very important factors during the application of a catalyst. Technically, the catalytic properties of nickel-based catalysts can be improved by several techniques, such as by increasing the dispersion of nickel particles or reducing nickel particles by improving the preparation methods, increasing nickel loading on supports, or adding a proper amount of promoters or additives to catalysts. The addition of promoters or increasing nickel loadings have been used extensively to enhance the catalytic activity in CO methanation [13]. A good understanding of the properties of promoters, which are recently used in CO methanation, is very important to design new catalysts. This review will be useful a guide to synthesise and achieve the desired characteristics such as higher catalytic activity, stability, and selectivity for CO methanation.

2.0 PROMOTERS/ADDITIVES

It was reported that Ni/SiC catalyst showed improved catalytic performance and high stability during CO methanation upon addition of cerium (Ce) as a promoter, which might be due to improved interactions between SiC support and Ni particles, and this improved the dispersion of Ni active species [2]. Figure 2 describes the role of Ce as a promoter in the catalytic activity of Ce-Ni/SiC catalyst. The addition of a small amount of lanthanum (La), zirconium (Zr), cobalt (Co), Ce, and magnesium (Mg) on Ni-Al₂O₃ improved the stability and catalytic activity of the catalysts for CO methanation [9]. Therefore, it is easy to remove OH species in terms of H₂O molecules, which generates enough vacant space of active sites for a continuous CO methanation reaction [10]. For further improvement in the stability and catalytic performance of Ni-based catalysts in CO methanation, many studies have been conducted with the addition of second metals such as molybdenum (Mo), Ce, Co, La, iron (Fe), and copper (Cu) to improve the stability and catalytic activity of nickel catalysts [11]. Ni-supported γ -Al₂O₃ catalyst is considered as a preferable selection for large-scale production of SNG due to its low cost. However, it shows lower stability at high temperature and causes sintering of Ni particles present in catalyst. It is well known that La metal as an additive/promoter can inhibit phase transformation of γ -Al₂O₃ and sintering of metal [12]. Furthermore, in another study, Ni/SiO₂ catalyst was synthesised with trace amount of Ru promoter by either polyethylene glycol (PEG)-free impregnation or PEG-assisted method for CO methanation. PEG molecules form bimetallic Ni-Ru particles with better anti-sintering property, smaller size, and low-temperature reducibility on SiO₂ support compared to conventional PEG-free derived Ni-Ru/SiO₂ catalyst [3]. A comparative study of different promoter-based catalysts is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparative study of the results for some recent CO methanation catalysts.

Catalysts	Promoter	Temp. (C)	X _{co} (%)	S _{CH₄} (%)	Y _{CH₄} (%)	Stability (h)	References
Ni-MCM-41	-	350	69	65	44.85	-	[14]
Mo-Ni-MCM-41	Mo	350	100	93	92	100	
Ni/KIT-6	-	300	93.7	81.4	76.27	-	[15]
Mo-Ni/KIT-6	Mo	300	99.9	86.4	86.31	-	
Ni/MgO-Al ₂ O ₃	-	240	8.2	22	2	-	[18]
Ni/MgO-Al₂O₃	CeO₂	240	99.5	95	94.5	60	
Ni-V/KIT-6	-	350	29	87	33	-	[19]
Ni-V/KIT-6	V	350	100	85	85	60	
NiO / Al ₂ O ₃	-	400	80	72	57.6	-	[21]
NiO-Sm₂O₃/Al₂O₃	Sm₂O₃	400	94	76	71.44	-	
Ni/SiO ₂	-	210	8	100	8	-	[8]
Ni/SiO₂	La, Ce	210	100	85	85	200	
Ce-Ni/SiC	-	600	92	80	73.6	-	[2]
Ce-Ni/SiC	Ce	600	95	85	80.75	100	
MCM-41	-	400	86	92	79.12	-	[22]
La-MCM-41	La	400	92	97	89.24	100	

2.1 Molybdenum

Mo promoter-based Ni/MCM-41 catalyst was used for CO methanation and the results demonstrated excellent catalytic performance. CO conversion and selectivity of CH₄ were enhanced up to 100% and 93%, respectively. It was found that the addition of Mo with Ni-supported MCM-41 catalyst improved the interaction between support oxide and nickel metal by the formation of Ni-Mo alloy. The results confirmed that Mo could promote the metal nickel particles refinement to a certain extent, which was conducive to improve the catalytic activity of the catalyst and it was consistent with the catalytic results. Therefore, Mo addition makes it hard for Ni particles to migrate and inhibit sintering of metal particles. The results are consistent with a previous study [14]. In another study, it was found that promoter-based Mo-KIT-6 catalyst for CO methanation could increase CO conversion and CH₄ selectivity to 99.9% and 86.4%, respectively. It was suggested that Mo improved the interaction between Ni and support by the formation of Ni-Mo alloy, which increased thermal stability and performance of the catalyst in CO methanation to a significant extent [15].

2.2 Zirconium

Haidong Li *et al.* [7] used Zr as a promoter in the synthesis of Zr/SBA-15 catalyst for CO methanation. In comparison to 10Ni/SBA-15 catalyst, the catalytic performance of promoter-based catalyst was significantly enhanced. It was suggested that Zr species contributed to the formation of oxygen vacancies during reduction and calcination. Consequently, it enhanced the ability of CO to adsorb or dissociate. CO adsorbed on oxygen vacancies and reacted with H₂ to produce CH₄. In another study, the use of ZrO₂ as a promoter in the synthesis of Ni/SiO₂ catalyst significantly improved the catalytic performance for CO methanation in CH₄ formation [25]. In addition, ZrO₂ was used in the modification of Al₂O₃ support for CO₂ methanation. It was claimed that highly dispersed ZrO₂ on the surface of γ -Al₂O₃ inhibited the formation phase changes in γ -Al₂O₃, which led to easier reduction of NiO species and improved better dispersion of NiO species, and subsequently enhanced catalytic performance of the corresponding catalyst [26].

2.3 Cerium

Shu-Sen Liu *et al.* [2] synthesised Ce-Ni/SiC catalyst and performed CO methanation at high temperature. The results in terms of CO conversion and CH₄ selectivity were 95% and 85%, respectively. It was suggested that Ce improved the interaction between SiC and Ni particles, where Ce might significantly influence Ni²⁺ reducibility due to special capacity of valence fluctuation, oxygen vacancies, and Ni particle size that might effectively promote the resistance to carbon deposition and anti-sintering of Ni particles. It could make a strong interaction between catalyst support and metal particles, and the addition of Ce on Ni/SiC catalyst inhibited the formation of graphite carbon. In addition, Ni/Al₂O₃ was modified with Ce as a promoter. The catalytic performance results illustrated that Ce-Ni/Al₂O₃ catalyst synthesised by co-impregnation method demonstrated smaller Ni particle size, higher Ni species dispersion, lower reduction temperature, and higher catalytic activity for CO

methanation (Figure 2). CO conversion of 95.4% and CH₄ selectivity of 90.7% were recorded [16]. Another study revealed that highly active, coking- and sintering-resistant CeO₂-decorated Ni/ γ -Al₂O₃ catalyst synthesised by impregnation method showed enhanced catalytic performance for CO methanation. CeO₂ nanoparticles act as a physical barrier to inhibit the growth of Ni particles during the catalytic reaction at high temperatures and the addition of CeO₂ can retard the growth of carbon by increasing the supply of active oxygen species on Ni surface during the reaction [17].

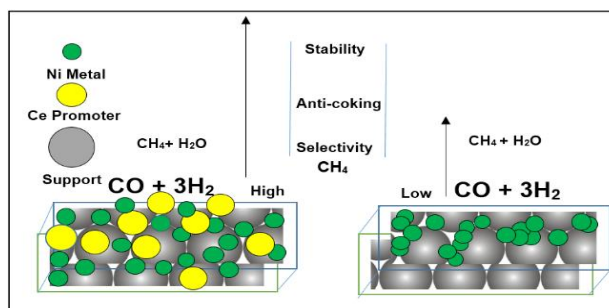


Figure 2. The role of Ce as a promoter in catalytic activity during CO methanation.

2.4 Lanthanum

Yang Han *et al.* [22] synthesised a catalyst by adding La as a promoter to study CO methanation. The results revealed that La-MCM-41 catalyst greatly improved catalytic activity and achieved 92% and 97% of CO conversion and selectivity, respectively, with 100 h stability during CO methanation. FTIR study confirmed that La metal atoms entered into the framework of MCM-41. La was used to restrain the growth of NiO particles, which could increase the dispersion of Ni particles on the catalyst support. The results showed that La enhanced catalytic activity and boosted the stability against sintering of metal particles and coking during CO methanation. In another study, La-Ni/SiO₂-supported catalyst showed good anti-carbon deposition and anti-sintering properties, and consequently enhanced the catalyst's reaction stability significantly. They claimed that the effect of La as a promoter for the dispersion of NiO particles was more significant compared to other promoters [23-24].

2.5 Vanadium

Ni-V/KIT-6 catalyst was synthesised to investigate CO methanation. The results showed excellent performance with the conversion of CO around 100% and CH₄ yield of approximately 85%, whereas the conversion of CO and CH₄ yield over Ni/KIT-6 (non-promoter) were 33% and 29%, respectively. It was claimed that the formation of Si-O-V linkage and confinement effect of 3D mesopores by the addition of V species were favourable to generate small-sized Ni nanoparticles and further prevented the aggregation of Ni nanoparticles during high-temperature reduction and CO methanation [21]. In another study, a highly active and coking-resistant Ni-V₂O₃/Al₂O₃ catalyst was prepared for CO and CO₂ methanation. Ni-V₂O₃/Al₂O₃ catalyst demonstrated a significant improvement in catalytic activity, resistance to coke formation, and thermal stability. For V₂O₃, the formation of smaller Ni particle size led to higher Ni dispersion, as well as the increase of oxygen vacancies, which enhanced the dissociation of CO₂ and generated surface oxygen intermediates [20].

3.0 CONCLUSION

CO methanation is an important step in the production of SNG. There is a big challenge to synthesise the catalyst due to its higher exothermic nature. Deactivation of catalysts and coke formation are the main consequences during CO methanation. More research efforts are necessary to design suitable methanation catalysts by adding promoters or additives in CO methanation in order to enhance catalytic performance with high stability. Many encouraging results have been obtained from previous studies, which provide useful information and findings to design suitable catalysts in CO methanation for the production of SNG.

Acknowledgements

This research work was sponsored and supported by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia through Research University Grant No. FRGS/1/2017/STG07/UTM/01/1

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