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Mesoporous silica synthesised from natural local kaolinas an effective adsorbant for removing of acid Red 337 and its application in the treatment ofreal industrial textile effluents

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Abstract

This paper presents a synthesis of mesoporous silica (MS) from natural clay as silica sourceusing L35 pluronic(EO11PO16EO11) as structure directing agent. The prepared material wascharacterised by XRD, FRX, TGA, SEM, MET and N2 adsorption-desorption analyses. Then,mesoporous material was used for the removal of Acid Red 337 (AR337) from aqueous solution, and the treatment of real textile effluent. The effect of pH, contact time, weight of adsorbent and initial concentration wasstudied in batch adsorption. The synthesizedmesoporous material showed good discolouration efficiency with a 62% percentage. Experiment with real textile wastewater showed that 39%, 40% and 31.2% of thecolor, TOC and CODrespectively were eliminated byusing 1g of MS per litre of wastewater.

Keywords

mesoporous silica (MS), clay, Acid Red 337, real textile wastewater.

1. Introduction

In recent years, research on orderedmesoporoussilica-based materialshas become a major area of interest[1],[2] and [3],due to their highspecificsurface area, and uniform pore size distribution and the importantpotential applications of mesoporous materials in catalysis [4], adsorption [5], [6] and [2], and wastewater treatment [7].

Typically,the mesoporoussilicais preparedwith tetramethylorthosilicate (TMOS) or tetraethylorthosilicate (TEOS) as silica sources [5,8]using a cooperative surfactant templating. Many minerals rich in $SiO₂$ or $Al₂O₃$ have beenused as an alternative to silica source. Severalstudies refer to the use of raw silica sources in ordered mesoporous materials synthesis [9], such as SBA-15 from natural clay[10], MCM-41 from Kaolin[11,12], mesoporous silica materials from natural sands [2], natural halloysite[9] and Kaolin[13].

For several years,great effort has been madeto study textile effluenttreatment and dye removal, in particular. Textile dyeing industry is one of the most chemically intensive industries in the world and known to be one of themainsources of environmental pollution.Itusesa variey of chemicals: dyes, surfactants, solvents, oxidizingagents, reducing agents, synthetic resins and many other chemical auxiliaries. In addition, a large quantityof water is consumed during production process. Approximately 200 L of water is required to produce 1 kg of textile [14]. Subsequently, large quantities of effluents are generated, which arerich in colour, (chemical oxygen demand)(COD)complex chemicals, inorganic salts, total dissolved solids (TDS), pH,temperature, turbidity and salinity[15].

Direct discharge of textile wastewater into freshwater gives an undesirable colorthat reduces sunlight penetration and resist photochemical and biological attacks to aquatic life. Traditional textile wastewater treatment technologies include various combinations of biological, physical, and chemical methods[14]. However, the adsorption method is a very promising technique because of its simplicity and economy, and the availability of a wide range of adsorbents [16-18].

Over the past few years, several experimentshavebeen carried out using low-cost natural materials as silica source such as sawdust [18], active carbon [19-21] and clay soil [22,23]. They were successfully used to remove toxic dyes from aqueous solutions. A largecompilation of potentially effective

adsorbents in dye removal can be found in a review ofYagub et al. (2014)[24]. Nevertheless, studies on the adsorption of real textile wastewater remain relatively scarce[25].

This study aimsto present a novelsynthesizedmesoporous silica material using clay from northeastern Algeria and to investigate the ability of this material to removeAcid Red 337 and treat real textile wastewaters by adsorption.

1. Materials and methods

2.1. Materials

Natural Kaolin clay(DD3)was used asasilica sourcefor synthesis of mesoporous silica material.

It wasextracted from DjbalDbagh mountains, located in Guelmaprovice, Algeria, and is composed of halloysite and kaolinite (weight ratio halloysite/kaolinite of 1.23)[26][27]. Acid Red 337 was purchased from Alfa Kimya (Textile Chemical Company inIstanbul, Turkey) with commercial name Telon Red FRL (Table 1). Pluronic L35 (EO11-PO08-EO11, MW=1900) and sodium hydroxide (NaOH 97%) were purchased from Sigma–Aldrich, and hydrochloric acid (HCl 37%) was obtained from Riedel-deHaën.

The real textile wastewaters were supplied byCOTITEX (a factory specialisedin the manufactureof militaries fabrics in Algeria). During the manufacturing and dyeing processes, two types of dyes (vat and dispersive) and different types of chemical substances were used, such as peroxide, caustic soda and auxiliaries products.

Table 1:Main properties of Acid Red 337 dye

2.2. Synthesis

Raw natural Kaolin(DD3)was calcined at 500°C for 4ha rate of 2° C/min.Then, 10g of calcined clay mixed with 200mL of 6MHCl and stirred for 4h at 80 $^{\circ}$ C after the solution was filtered, washed with deionized water and driedin ambient temperature. Mesoporous material was synthesised according to the literature procedure [3], using Pluronic L35 and natural Kaolin (DD3) as a silica source,4g of Pluronic L35 dissolved in 6.67gofdeionized water and 0.24gHCl, while stirring at 40°C. Then,8.54g of treated Kaolin (DD3)was added to the stirring solution.

These mixtures were stirred continuously for 24h.The white gel was observed and was transferred to a Teflon-coated autoclave and heated to100°C for 48h.The solid product was separated by filtration andwashed several times with deionized water, then dried at room temperature and calcined for 4h at 500°C at a rate of 2°C/minto remove the template L35 and obtain the synthetic mesoporoussilica(MS).

2.3.Materialcaracterisation

The chemical composition of materials wasdetermined by Bruker-Axs: SRS 3400 and S8 TIGER X-ray fluorescence (FRX) spectrometer. MS was structurallycharacterised by the X-ray powderdiffraction (XRD) methodusingBruker D8 Advancediffractometerunder Copper Kα radiation (*λ* $= 1.5406$ Å) at 40 kV/30mA, with a scanning rate of 0.08°min⁻¹ over 2θ-range between1°and10°. Morphological and microstructure analyses were carried out using aQuanta 650 Scanning electron microscope (SEM) and JEOL 2100F transmission electron microscopy (TEM) operatingat 200kV and equipped witha probe aberration corrector, an EELS (GatanTridiem) spectrometer and an

EDXSDDdetector.

Nitrogen adsorption-desorption experiments were measured at -196°C on a MicromeriticsQuantachrome NOVA 1000. The sample was outgassed for 1h at 100°C. The surface area was measured according to the Brunauer– Emmett–Teller (BET) method. The average pore size was determined from the N_2 adsorption branch of nitrogen isotherms using the Barrett–Joyner– Halenda (BJH) method.

TG analysis of the sample was performed on a DTG-60 instrument in an alumina pan at a 10°C/min heating rate from 20° C to 1000° C under an N₂ flow.

Effluents conductivity and pHwere determined by Thermo Scientific Orion Star A215 pH/ Conductivity Benchtop Meter.pH measurement is in accordance with ISO 10523.2008[28].Chemical oxygen demand (CODmg O_2/L)was measured using the closed reflux colorimetric method[29].

Total organic carbon (TOC) was measured by a Lotix TOC Combustion analyzer.

Effluent's colorwas measured by UV-vis spectrophotometer (DR6000, HACH) according tothe NCASI method[30].

2.4.Dyeadsorption experiments

Firstly, the Acid Red 337 stock dye solution at 200 mg/L was prepared. Then, pH effect on the ability of mesoporous silica (MS) to adsorb Acid Red (AR 337) dye was examined in the range of 2- 10. pHwas adjusted to the desired value with NaOH or HCl 1 M before adding the quantityof adsorbent.

Batch adsorption was performed with 200 mL of dye solution ata concentration of $(C_0= 100 \text{ mg/L})$ and, a weighed quantity($m= 0.4g$) of MS. The mixture was stirred at room temperature ata speed of (r $= 300$ rpm) for 24h until it reached equilibrium. The solution was then separated from the adsorbent by centrifugation for 15 min at 5000rpm.

Non-adsorbed dye in the final liquid phase was determined by a UVvisspectrophotometeratamaximum absorbance wavelength of 500 nm. The quantity(mg) of dye adsorbed per gram of adsorbent was assessed (Q_t) and the highest equilibrium values were used to define the maximum adsorption capacity (Q_{max}) and at equilibrium $(Q_e)Q_t$ and Q_e (mg/g), were calculated using equations (1) and (2):

$$
Q_t = \frac{(C_0 - C_t)V}{m}(1)
$$

$$
Q_e = \frac{(C_0 - C_e)V}{m}(2)
$$

Where, C_0 , C_t , and C_e (mg/L) are the liquid-phase concentrations of the adsorbate at initial time (*t*) and at equilibrium, respectively; *V* (L) is the solution volume and *m* (g) is the adsorbent mass. To calculate the decolorization efficiency, equation (3) was used:

$$
\%R = \left(\frac{c_0 - c_t}{c_0}\right) \times 100(3)
$$

2. Results and discussion

2.1 Chemical analysis

The chemical composition of natural Kaolin(DD3) and synthesizedmesoporoussilica (MS)obtainedby XRF are shown in Table 2.Resultsshowedthat after treatment of DD3 and synthesis of mesoporous silica, the content of all elements decreased except for SiO2.Whichincreasedfrom 41.74% to 89.3%.

Table 2:Chemical composition of natural Kaolin DD3 and synthesized mesoporoussilica(wt %)

2.2 XRDand TEM analysis

The mesoporous silica structure was characterised by small angle X-ray diffraction (SXRD), as shown in Figure 1. The pattern shows a small single diffraction peak at $2\theta=2^{\circ}$ with smaller intensity. It indicates a formation of disordered mesoporousstructure[30,31]which is similar to that of mesoporous silica synthesized by sodium silicate as a precursor [33]. TEM analysis results showed no obvious order in pore arrangement and confirmed the disordered structure of mesoporous material, as shown in Figure2.

Figure 1:SXRD pattern ofas-synthesizedmesoporous silica

Figure 2:TEM images of as-synthesizedmesoporoussilica

2.3 SEM analysis

SEM microphotographs of as-ynthesizedmesoporous material showed a platy particle shape (Figure 3). A similar morphology was found by Madhusoodana et al. (2006) and Li et al. (2015) [33,34].

Figure 3:SEM microphotographs of as-synthesized mesoporous silica

2.4 Porosity measurement

Figure 4 illustrates the N_2 adsorption/desorption isotherm of as-synthesized MS.Based onIUPAC classification [36], MS isotherm exhibits a typical type IV class with an H3-type hysteresis loop due to capillary condensation processes, which is a characteristic of mesoporous material. Similar results have been found byAuta et al.(2012) [37]. Therefore, the size distribution and pore shape of assynthesized MS are irregular. TheBETspecific surface area, pore width and total pore volume of assynthesized MS and natural Kaolin (DD3) are presented in Table 3. An increase in the specific surface area of natural Kaolin DD3 was observed, suggesting an increase in their available adsorption sites.

Figure 4: N₂adsorption–desorption isotherms of as-synthesized mesoporous silica

Table 3: BET surface area, BJH surface area, total pore volume and pore size of natural kaolin DD3 and as-synthesized mesoporous silica (MS)

2.5 Thermal analysis

The evaluation of the product thermal stability bythermogravimetric analysis (TGA)weight curve and differential thermal analysis (DTA) of natural Kaolin(DD3) and synthesized MS, arepresented in Figures 5A and 5B.

It can be noted that natural Kaolin DD3 has a mass loss of 8.1% at a temperature of 56.2°C (Figure 5A), which implies a loss of moisture.DTA result also show an endothermic peak at approximately 479°C corresponding tothe second weight loss (13.7%) and is attributed to the external halloysite hydroxylation[38].

Forsynthesized MS (Figure 5B), it can be observed that avery small weight loss (3.19%) at less than80°C accompanied by an endothermic DTA peak corresponds to the loss of free water and a second weight loss of 1.4% between 600 and 1000°C is attributed to a loss of waterdue to silanols condensation [39]. It can therefore be deducedthat thesynthesized MShas good thermal stability.

Figure 5:TGA and DTA curves of (**A**) naturalKaolin (DD3), (**B**) as-synthesized mesoporous silica

3. Adsorption experiments

3.1 Effect of initial solution pH

The solution pH is an important parameterthat dominates the adsorption of dyes on adsorbents [40].pH can affect the surface charge of the adsorbent and the ionization degree of adsorbate functional groups[41].

Figure 6shows the equilibrium capacities of Acid Red 337 over MS with different pH values, rangingfrom 2 to 10, for $C_0 = 100$ mg/L and an adsorbent dose = 2.0 g/L.

Figure 6: Effect of pH on Acid Red 337 (**A**) adsorption capacity (*Qt*) and (**B**) % R over synthesized

mesoporous silica $(C_0 = 100 \text{ mg/L}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 20 \text{ °C}, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, m = 0.4 \text{ g})$

In addition, it has been found that byincreasingthe initial pH from 2 to 10 the **%**Rdecreases from 62.61 to 0% (Figure 6B). This result can be explained by a low pH lead to an increase in H^+ molecule concentration in the system.Moreover, the surface of MS exhibits positive charges by adsorbing H⁺ ,and an electrostatic attractioniscreated between the positive charge of the surface of the synthesized MS and anionic dye moleculesenhancing adsorption of color at p*H* 2, which was used for all further

adsorption studies.The expansion of the adsorption limit at pH 2 can also be attributedtothe isoelectric point (*pI)* of mesoporous silica adsorbents that is around 2.5- 3[42]. Indeed, the surface area of the adsorbent was positively charged at pH values below (*pI)* and there were attractive forces between the positive charges of the surface and anionic dye molecules. When pHvalueswere above (*pI*), the surface area of the adsorbent was negatively charged and it did not allowthe adsorption of anionic particles of dye, because of the electrostatic repulsion.

3.2 Effect of contact time (*t***)**

Figure 7 illustrates the impact of contact time on AR337 adsorption over synthesized MS.

Figure 7: Effect of contact time (*t*) on theAcidRed 337adsorption capacity (*Qt*) and % *R* over the synthesized mesoporous silica $(C_0 = 100 \text{ mg/L}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 25^{\circ}C, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, pH = 2, m = 0.4$

Figure 7 also shows that dye adsorption is quick. It reached $%R = 56$ after 20 min and increased with an additional contact time. Equilibrium was achieved at $(t = 60 \text{ min}, Qe = 31.3 \text{ mg/g})$ since no change in adsorption capacity was observed (the study was extended for 1440 min). The optimal contact time was 60 minutes.

3.3 Dye concentration effect

To examine the impact of anionic dye fixation on the limit of adsorption onto MS, several tests were performed by modifying the initial concentration of the dye between 10 and 200 mg/L (Figure 8).

Figure 8:Effect of initial dye concentration (C_0) on: (A) adsorption capacity (O_t) and (B) % R over the

as-synthesized mesoporoussilica($m = 0.4$ g, $V = 200$ mL, $T = 20$ °C, $r = 300$ rpm, $pH = 2$)

Figure 8 shows that the increase in the initial Acid Red concentration leads to an increase inadsorption capacities. Furthermore, the rate of adsorption is fast and the equilibrium is reached in 10 min for all concentrations and 30 min for C_0 = 200 mg/L. Thus, it indicates the availability for AR337 of accessible active sites on synthesizedmesoporous silica [43]. The continuous curves showed the monolayer coverage on adsorbent surface[18].

g)

3.4 Adsorbent concentration effect

To optimise the amountof the adsorbent, experiments were performed using different quantities of synthesizedmesoporous silica(0.2, 0.4 and 1g/200mL). Figure 9 illustrates that anincreasein the amount of MS from 0.2 to 0.4 g leads to a decrease in Q_{max} values from 36 to 16.34 mg/g. Thiscan be related to particule interactions, such as aggregation which would result in a decrease in the total surface area of the adsorbent[43]. Particle interactions may also cause the desorption of a portion of the sorbate that is loosely and reversibly bound to the surface[44]. As a result, 0.2 g/200mL of MS is the optimal amount of mesoporous silica necessary to remove dye at a 100 mg/L concentration.

Figure 9: Effect of adsorbent amount (m) on: (A) the adsorption capacity (Q_t) and (B) % R over the synthesized mesoporous silica $(C_0 = 100 \text{ mg/L}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 20^{\circ}C, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, pH = 2)$

4. Use of synthesized mesoporous silica in the treatment of real industrialtextileeffluent

The potential use of synthesised MS in the treatment of a real textile effluent and its ability to reduce color, COD, and TOC were tested. Initial color, COD and TOC of the sample were *67 Pt-Co*, 330 mg/L, and 96.6 mg/L respectively and it's pH was 8.15.

For this experiment, the textile wastewater was first filtered, thenthe batch experiment was conducted in a 250 mL flask containing100 mL of textile effluent and 0.1g of adsorbent at room temperature atan average shaker's speed of 300 rpm without changing the pH of the effluent.The mixture was then stirred overnight to reach equilibrium.

4.1 Effect of contact time

Figure 10 shows the effect of contact time on reduction of TOC concentration of the wastewater effluent.

Figure 10: Effect of treatment time on the reduction of TOC of the real textile effluent by adsorption onas-synthesizedmesoporous silica $(T = 30 \text{ °C}, pH = 8.15, m = 1 g, V = 100 mL$ effluent, $r = 300$ rpm) It can be observed that during the first 60 minutes, there is a fast decrease in TOC concentration. The equilibrium is reached after one hour of contact time. At first, the solute molecules were adsorbed by the external surface of adsorbentparticles, so the adsorption rate was fast. When the adsorption of the external surface reached saturation, the molecules needed to diffuse through the pores of the adsorbent into the internal surface of the particle. This phenomenon may have taken arelatively long contact time[21]. A 60-minute time period was then used as contact time for color and CODtreatment.

4.2 TOC, CODand colorremoval

Figure 11 provides the concentration reduction and removal percentage of TOC, COD and colorof wastewater by adsorption onMS.

Figure 11: Percentage of removal, concentration of TOC, CODand color in treated and untreated wastewatercompared to as-synthesizedmesoporous silica

After adsorption,it can be seen that the concentration of TOC, CODand color decrease by 40% (from 96.6 mg/L to 56 mg/L), 31% (from 330 mg/L to226.25 mg/l) and 39% (from 67 Pt-Co to 41 Pt-Co) respectively. Theseaveragevalues can be explained by the complexity of real effluentschemical composition.

5. Conclusions

This study determined that mesoporous silica was successfully synthesized from local raw clay (DD3) ofGuelmaprovince in Algeria as a source of silica. Before its use, the clay underwent two treatments: thermal and chemical. In addition, the pluronic L35 has been used as a structuring agent.

Several characterisation analyses were used to evaluate the textural and structural properties as well asthe composition of the synthesized material. Mesoporous silica gives a surface area of 161 m²/g which shows promisingresults of adsorption to Acid Red 337 dyes in aqueous solutions.

In addition, it was noted that pH is the most important factor to affect the dye removal.

The adsorption properties of the synthesized mesoporous silica have been tested on real textile effluents and indicatedpromising treatment efficiency by reducing most of the parameters(color, COD and TOC). These results suggest that mesoporous silica material synthesized from low-cost and available clay would contribute to a more sustainable environmental process.

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Table 1: Main properties of Acid Red dye 337

Table 2: Chemical composition of natural Kaolin DD3 and as-synthesizedmesoporous silica (wt %)

Figure 1:SXRD pattern of as-synthesized mesoporoussilica

Figure 2: TEM image of as-synthesizedmesoporous silica

Figure 3:SEM microphotographs of as-synthesismesoporous silica

Figure 4: N2 adsorption–desorption isotherms of as-synthesizedmesoporous silica

Table 3: BET surface area, BJH surface area, total pore volume and pore size of DD3 Kaolin and as-

synthesizedmesoporous silica (MS)

Figure 5: TGA and DTA curves of (A) natural Kaolin (DD3), (B) as-synthesizedmesoporous silica

(MS)

Figure 6: Effect of p*H* on the Acid Red 337 :(**A**) adsorption capacity (*Qt*) and (**B**) % R over the synthesizedmesoporous silica $(C_0 = 100 \text{ mg/L}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 20^{\circ}C, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, m = 0.4 \text{ g})$

Figure 7: Effect of contact time (t) on the Acid Red 337 adsorption capacity (Q_t) and % R over the synthesized mesoporous silica *(C0* = 100 mg/L, $V = 200$ mL, $T = 20$ °C, $r = 300$ rpm, $pH = 2$, $m = 0.4$

Figure 8:Effect of initial dye concentration (*C0*) on: (**A**) adsorption capacity (*Qt*) and (**B**) % R over the synthesized mesoporous silica $(m = 0.4 \text{ g}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 20 \text{ °C}, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, pH = 2)$

Figure 9:Effect of adsorbent amount (m) on: (A) the adsorption capacity (Q_t) and (B) % R of the synthesized mesoporous silica $(C_0 = 100 \text{ mg/L}, V = 200 \text{ mL}, T = 20^{\circ}\text{C}, r = 300 \text{ rpm}, pH = 2)$

Figure 10: Effect of treatment time on the reduction of TOC of the real textile effluent by adsorption onas-synthesized mesoporous silica $(T = 30^{\circ}\text{C}, pH = 8.15, m = 1 \text{ g}, V = 100 \text{ mL eff}$ luent, $r = 300$

Figure 11: Concentration reduction and removal percentage of TOC, CODandcolor of wastewater by

adsorption on as-synthesizedmesoporous silica