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CO₂ Electroreduction efficiency of various Cu based layered double hydroxides.

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The emission of CO_2 by industrial action seriously impacts our environment which requires us to consider strategies to reduce the emitted CO_2 to the atmosphere. The electrochemical reduction of CO_2 (CO_2ER) into molecules such as CO, HCOOH, CH_3COOH , and CH_4 is one of the many ways to valorize CO_2 as fuels or chemicals¹. Not only could this help reduce pollution, but it would also convert the CO_2 into valuable products to use as a feedstock. Amongst the different heterogeneous catalysts investigated, Cu based electro-catalysts for CO_2ER Cu electrodes have attracted much attention due to their unique advantages including hydrocarbon production and product selectivity.²

Recently, Cu-based LDH $([M(II)_{1-x}Al(III)_x(OH)_2]^{x+}[A^{n-}]_{x/n} \cdot yH_2O, 0.20 \le x \le 0.33)$, with M(II) = Cu and M(III) = Al have particularly been investigated for CO₂ER. These matrices appear as promising electrocatalyst promoting the electrochemical conversion, in galvanostatic conditions, of CO₂ to CO and HCOOH ³. A morphology control allowed to improve the catalytic activity by tailoring the structure of active sites and increasing the surface area/number of active sites.⁴

Herein, the electrochemical efficiencies towards CO_2ER of a series of CuAl-LDH matrices were compared. The LDH materials were synthesized by both the coprecipitation and the polyol method and characterized using powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD), Infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR) and scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Electrochemical characterization of the Cu-LDH modified electrodes was carried out following a specific protocol by linear sweep voltammetry and cyclic voltammetry showing that an electrochemical activation of the Cu-LDH occurred at $E^{app} >-1.4 V$, leading to an enhancement of the electrochemical signal of the copper redox couples, addressing to more accessible catalytic sites and to an increase in current under CO_2 and hence CO_2 activation. The influence of the LDH composition that is the Cu amount into the layer, the presence of Mg or Zn in a ternary layer composition, and the nature of the interlayer anions were investigated showing that the composition $Cu_{1.5} Mg_{0.5}Al-CO_3$ provides the highest faradaic yield of HCOOH formation, reaching 57%.

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