Heterogeneous electro-catalysis by Ni(III)Cyclam

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The simplicity and versatility of preparation of porous SiO₂ matrices, using the sol-gel method, as well as the relative inertness and stability of the matrices, have promoted a redox agent, NiL²⁺ (L=1,4,8,11-tetraazacyclotetradecane), to be used as an electro-catalyst for waste treatment. Two different electrodes were studied. Preliminary results indicate that electro-catalytic processes based on sol-gel electrodes can be developed.

Advantages of heterogeneous electro-catalysts:
1. The redox reagent is entrapped in the matrix and therefore it has not to be separated from the product and can be easily recycled.
2. Often the redox reagent in its active oxidation state decomposes via a second order mechanism, e.g. NiL²⁺, and NiL⁺ is then oxidized to NiL₂⁺ and thus shortens its effective lifetime as an electro-catalyst. Entrapment in the matrix can inhibit these reactions.
3. Such electrodes can operate in solvents in which the electro-catalyst is insoluble.

Two different electrodes were made:

Graphite + TMOP Phenyltrimethoxysilane

(+)

Without NiL

N₂ electrodes

Or

A1(without NiL)

N₁ electrodes

Figure 1. Voltammogram of different electrodes, 500 mV/s. In 3.0 M CH₃NH₂, 0.10 M NaClO₃ at pH 10. Glassy carbon electrode, A1: sol-gel electrode, A2: sol-gel electrode. The oxidation of the three amines was studied with sol-gel electrodes without incorporated NiL²⁺. Figure 1 shows cyclic voltammograms of methyl amine by A1, A2 and GC as working electrodes. The results indicate that the three amines studied are oxidized at ~0.90 V, in the absence of NiL²⁺.

The results in figures 2 and 3, indicate that the first reaction that occurs is reaction (1). In analogy to the reaction occurring in aqueous solutions, oxidation of NiL²⁺ to NiL⁺ occurred.

The oxidation of dimethyl amine is shown in figures 4 and 5. The results point out that NiL²⁺ acts as a heterogeneous electro-catalyst, when it is immobilized in the sol-gel matrix.

The current was studied as a function of the scan rate with and without dimethyl-amine in the solution, figure 6 describes the results.

The tendency of the results is a linear tendency which suggests that the rate of the catalytic oxidation of the amines is limited by diffusion. The intercepts in figure 6 and the plateau in N₂ NH(CH₃)₂ graph, figure 6, indicate that the mechanism is not controlled only by diffusion. It can be explained by the competition between mass transfer and electron transfer. At high scan rates the electron transfer is slower than the mass transfer, therefore the oxidation current doesn't change. Interestingly the results indicate the composition of the electrodes affects the activity of the NiL²⁺. The N₁ matrix includes methyl residues, and the N₂ matrix includes phenyl residues. The phenyl residues might cause larger steric effects in the pores relatively to the methyl groups. The species that have to move in the redox process might be slowed down by the larger residues in the pores, thus decreasing the catalytic current.

The identification of one of the known catalytic products, formaldehyde, was done according to a known procedure. The formaldehyde identification results, inset figure 7, point out that the second reaction occurring on the electrode surface is the mechanism described in figure 7.

Conclusions:
• The oxidation of the amines is observed at amine concentrations above 0.10 M, while in a homogeneous system the oxidation is observed at lower concentrations.
• All the results described above were obtained using only two electrodes. The active species, in this case, NiL²⁺, can be recycled and reused.
• An additional advantage of these electrodes is the small amount of NiL²⁺, 1.8x10⁻⁷ mol, that is needed for the catalysis.

Study the electroactivity of NiL²⁺ incorporated in a sol-gel matrix via the electrocatalytic oxidation of (CH₃)₂NH₂⁺.

NiL²⁺ is a known electro-catalyst for the oxidation of amines in aqueous solutions.

These amines are formed in a variety of industrial processes as by-products i.e. as pollutants. Therefore their oxidation is of environmental interest.