Evaluation of D-glucose hydrogenation catalysts suability in different reactor systems

V. DOLUDA¹, M. GRIGOREV¹, V. MATVEEVA¹, E. SULMAN¹, M. SULMAN¹, N. LAKINA¹, V. MOLCHANOV¹, E.V. REBROV^{1,2}

¹Department of biotechnology and chemistry Tver State Technical University A.Nikitin Str., 22, 170026, Tver RUSSIA

> ²School of Engineering University of Warwick Coventry CV4 7AL UK

Abstract: - The samples of ruthenium impregnated in hypercrosslinked polystyrene and activated carbon were tested in D-glucose hydrogenation using butch reactor, shaker type reactor and fix bed reactor system to evaluate catalysts long term stability. Catalysts were characterized by nitrogen physisorption, X-Ray photoelectron spectroscopy, hydrogen chemisorption, X-Ray fluorescence analysis. Physicochemical changes of the studied catalysts are shown during catalysts stability investigation. A strong influence of the reactor type on catalysts stability in D-glucose hydrogenation is discussed.

Key-Words: - glucose, sorbitol, hypercrosslinked polystyrene, Ru, stability.

1 Introduction

D-glucose catalytic hydrogenation to D-sorbitol can be considered as a promising step in cellulose feedstock transformation technology to fuel components and valuable chemicals [1-3]. Moreover D-sorbitol has wide application in food, nutrition and chemical industries. Traditionally D-glucose is hydrogenated in batch reactor systems using Ru, Ni, Pd impregnated over different organic and inorganic supports [2-13]. Catalysts based on active metals incorporated in different type of carbon supports are more selective comparing to catalysts based on oxide type supports [5, 14-16]. However catalytic hydrogenation of D-glucose is characterized by the formation of numerous side products such a Dmannitol, gluconic acid (Fig. 1) [3, 4, 10, 14, 17, 18]. The formation of side products results in appropriate decrease of the process selectivity.

Catalyst deactivation can be considered as a key parameter for D-glucose hydrogenation process[6]. There are several possible ways for catalyst deactivation that can be divided into following groups: a) blockage of the catalyst active surface with different adsorbed substances (carbon, polymers, carbon monoxide and dioxide etc.), b) leaching of the catalysts active phase, c) active phase sintering and migration d) change of the catalysts active phase structure, e) mechanical catalysts abrasion [19]. The insight in the catalyst deactivation for D-glucose hydrogenation process can be valuable for the development of new stable catalysts. The results of such study for Ru based catalysts are described in the article.



Fig. 1. Scheme of the reactions flowing during D-glucose hydrogenation.

2 Experimental

2.1 Materials

Reagent grade hydrogen of 99.99% purity, sodium hydrogen carbonate (NaHCO₃), reagent-grade THF, methanol activated carbon (designated as ACC), glucose, sorbitol, maltose, maltitol, gluconic acid, acetone were purchased from local supplier and were used as received. Ruthenium hydroxychloride (Ru(OH)Cl₃) was purchased from Aurat Ltd (Moscow, Russia). The distilled water was purified with Aqua post water purification system. Hypercrosslinked polystyrene (HPS) was purchased from Purolite Int. (U.K.), as Macronet MN 100. 1-2 mm polymer and ACC granules were washed with acetone and water twice and dried under vacuum for 24 h.

2.2 Catalyst synthesis

Prior to the catalyst synthesis ACC and HPS samples were grinded and fraction 0.12 mm was taken for preparation. Carbon and HPS based catalysts were prepared by the impregnation of supports with ruthenium hydroxychloride in a complex solution. The complex solution consisted of 5 mL of THF, 1 mL of water and 1 mL of methanol. In a typical synthesis, 0.21 g Ru(OH)Cl₃ was dissolved under nitrogen into 7 mL of a complex solvent, to which 3 g of ACC or MN-100 were added. The suspension was continuously stirred for 10 min to allow the adsorption of the solution by the support, which was then dried at 75 °C for 1 h. The catalysts were reduced in hydrogen for 3 hours at 3000C. Ru content was found to be 2.9 and 2.85 wt. % for ACC and HPS based catalysts by XRF elemental analysis. Samples were designated as HPS-Ru-3%, ACC-Ru-3% (Table 1).

2.3 Glucose hydrogenation methodology

The hydrogenation was conducted in a specially constructed set up (Fig. 2). The set up consists of 2 cm³ fix bed stainless tube reactor with liquid preheater, gas-liquid mixer, liquid pump and gasliquid separator. The reactor was heated with thermostat. Hydrogen pressure was maintained with reducer at 4 MPa. The reactor was operated in down flow, fixed bed regime, liquid hourly space velocity (LHSV) = 30 h⁻¹. The glucose solution 50 wt% was purged with nitrogen to decrease oxygen content. The temperatures were maintained at $120\pm0.5^{\circ}$ C. The reaction media samples were taken once an hour. Catalyst bed height was 10 cm.



Fig. 2. Reactor set up (1-flasc with glucose solution, 2 – HPLC pump, 3 – back pressure valve, 4 – mass flow controller, 5 – mixer, 6 – balloon with hydrogen, 7 – balloon with nitrogen, 8 – pressure reducer, 9 – preheater, 10 – thermostat, 11 – tube reactor, 12 – thermocontroller, 13 – flow separator, 14 – sample tube)

2.4 Analysis

HPLC analysis

The analysis of the reaction media was performed using ULTIMATE 3000 HPLC chromatograph equipped with an IR detector. Ion exchange a 250×4 mm tungsten column produced by Dr. Maish was used for analysis. H₂SO₄ (1 mM) in deionized water was used as a mobile phase. The flow rate was kept constant at 0.5 mL.min⁻¹ at 30 °C. The concentrations of glucose, sorbitol, maltitol, gluconic acid were determined using standards and calibration curves.

X-Ray fluorescence analysis

XFA measurements were done to determine Ru concentration using Spectroscan – Maks – GF1E spectrometer (Spectron, St-Petersburg, Russia) equipped with Mo anode, LiF crystal analyzer and SZ detector. The analyses were based on the Co K α line. A series of Ru standards was prepared by mixing 0.1-0.2 g of matrix with 10-20 mg of standard Ru compounds.

Liquid nitrogen physisorption

Nitrogen physisorption analysis was conducted at the normal boiling point of liquid nitrogen using Beckman Coulter SA 3100 apparatus (Coulter Corporation, USA). Prior to the analysis, samples were degassed in Becman Coulter SA-PREP apparatus for sample preparation at 120 °C in vacuum for 1h.

X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy analysis

XPS data were obtained using Mg K α (*hv* =1253.6 eV) radiation with ES-2403 spectrometer modified with analyzer PHOIBOS 100 produced by SPECS (Germany). All the data were obtained at an X-ray power of 200 W and an energy step of 0.1 eV. The

samples were allowed to outgas for 180 min before the analysis and were sufficiently stable during the examination. The data analysis was performed by CasaXPS. Deconvolution of Ru based catalysts was made by simultaneous fitting of Ru 3p and C1s+Ru 3d energy levels.

Chemisorption

The dispersion and the mean diameter of the ruthenium nanoparticles were measured by hydrogen chemisorption. Micromeritics AutoChem 2910 was used in the measurements. Prior to the analysis the samples were purged in-situ at 300 °C for 2 h in a continuous flow of Ar. Thereafter the temperature was decreased to 25 °C. Pulses of hydrogen (10% H₂ in Ar) were introduced in to the sample and the amount of non-sorbed hydrogen was measured. A ratio of H₂:Ru = 2 was used in the calculations.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Initial catalysts characterization results

The synthesized catalysts are characterized by large surface areas typical for micro-mesoporous materials (Table 1). Active metal dispersion is 32% and 28% for ACC-Ru-3% and HPS-Ru-3% samples. The dispersion values correspond to particle sizes between 2-5 nm for ACC-Ru-3% and 2-8 nm for HPS-Ru-3%. Ru is mainly presented in the +4 oxidation state in the form of ruthenium oxide.

Catalysts characteristics	ACC-Ru-	HPS-
Catalysts characteristics	3%	Ru-3%
Surface area, m ² /g	720	810
Granulometric	01014	0.1-0.14
composition, mm	0.1-0.14	
Nanoparticles size, nm	2-5	2-8
Ru oxidation state	Ru ⁺⁴	Ru^{+4}
Ru concentration, w %	2.9	2.85
Ru dispersion, %	32	28

Table	1	Initial	catalyst	characteristics
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3.2 D-glucose hydrogenation in a fix bed reactor

The evaluation process in a fixed bed reactor showed that initial D-glucose hydrogenation rate is lower compared to batch or shaker type reactor (Table 2-3, Fig. 3), this can be attributed to diffusion limitations [19]. Initial D-glucose hydrogenation rate over HPS-Ru-3% and ACC-Ru-3% was found to be 27.2 and 27.5 kg(Glu)/(kg(Cat)*h) at 99.7% D-glucose conversion, the process selectivity to sorbitol was higher and was found to be 98.6% for both catalysts. However catalysts showed rather high stability, overall time on steam was 1008 hours, deactivation rate was found to be 0.31% of the initial activity per day for ACC-Ru-3% and 0.17% of the initial activity per day for HPS-Ru-3% (Fig. 3). It should be noted that the catalysts activity becomes the same at 300th h on steam for both catalysts due to lower deactivation rate of HPS-Ru-3% sample. Afterwards HPS-Ru-3% sample (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Synthesized catalysts long term stability

It is possible to see the decrease of the catalysts surface area for both catalysts however the decrease of the surface area for HPS-Ru-3% sample is not so high compared to ACC-Ru-3% (Table 2). The decrease of the surface area can be attributed to the pores blockage with oligosaccharides that can be formed during the reaction. The granulometric composition of the studied catalysts decreased a little during D-glucose catalytic hydrogenation. This decrease can be explained by the catalyst granules self-grinding, however self-grinding rate is rather low compared to the catalysts ground by a reactor impeller mixer. This also explains rather small catalysts mass losses that are only 27% and 12% for ACC-Ru-3% and HPS-Ru-3% samples.

Table 2. Catalysts characteristics of D-glucosehydrogenation in a fixed bed reactor

Catalyst characteristics	ACC-Ru-	HPS-Ru-
Catalyst characteristics	3%	3%
Surface area, m^2/g	610	711
Granulometric	0.01.0.12	0.1-0.14
composition, mm	0.01-0.12	
Nanoparticles size, nm	4-16	4-12
Ru oxidation state	Ru^{+4}	Ru^{+4}
Ru concentration, w %	2.3	2.4

Ru dispersion, %	25	27
Sample mass losses, %	27	12

However there is some decrease in the active metal concentration, Ru dispersion and nanoparticle size that can be explained by the active metal leaching and nanoparticles sintering. XPS data showed that Ru remained mainly in the form of ruthenium oxide, meanwhile 0.1 at% of Fe⁺³ and traces of S⁺⁶ ions was found to adsorbed on the catalysts surface compared to the catalyst before the reaction. The appearance of iron on the catalysts surface can be explained by iron leaching from the reactor surface and the appearance of sulfur can be explained by its adsorption from the reaction.

4 Conclusion

The investigation of HPS-Ru-3%, ACC-Ru-3% catalysts stability in different reactor systems shows that the use of common batch and shaker type reactor systems results in high losses of the initial catalysts, due to catalysts grinding on the reactor impeller and reactor walls and during the catalysts separation and washing. Besides providing Dglucose hydrogenation in periodic batch or shaker type reactors results in some decrease in process selectivity due to gluconic acid formation because of oxygen traces. However the initial D-glucose hydrogenation rate in periodic reactor systems is higher compared to a continuous process in a fixed bed reactor, which can be explained by better mass transfer in this systems. D-glucose hydrogenation rate was found to be 110-135 and 112-139 kg(Glu)/(kg(Cat)*h) for over HPS-Ru-3% and ACC-Ru-3% in batch and shaker at 99.5-99.7% Dglucose conversion, the achieved process selectivity to sorbitol was found to be 97-98% for both catalysts. HPS-Ru-3% sample showed lower weight losses in a periodic D-glucose hydrogenation process that can be explained by better mechanical properties of hypercrosslinked polystyrene compare to activated carbon. A continuous D-glucose hydrogenation in fixed bed reactor systems allows evaluating catalysts long term deactivation. The calculated deactivation rate was found to be 0.31% of initial activity per day for ACC-Ru-3% and 0.17% of initial activity per day for HPS-Ru-3%. The main reason for the catalysts deactivation in case of continuous D-glucose hydrogenation was found to be leaching of an active phase and adsorption of iron and sulfur ions over the catalysts

surface. HPS-Ru-3% sample showed rather high stability during testing compared to ACC-Ru-3% sample.

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