OXIDATIVE DEHYDROGENATION OF ETHANE TO ETHYLENE OVER MOLYBDENUM BASED CATALYSTS

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ABSTRACT
Molybdenum based catalysts with second metal (Me) supported on alumina ($\gamma$-$\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$) were studied for oxidative dehydrogenation of ethane to obtain ethylene. The catalysts, Mo-Me/Al$_2$O$_3$ mixed oxide catalysts at the ratio Me/Mo+Me (varying from 0 to 1), were prepared by using incipient wetness impregnation technique with total metal loading fixed at 20% by wt. The catalysts were investigated for their activity toward the reaction at temperature of 400, 450 and 500 $^\circ$C under atmospheric pressure. The reaction was carried out in a fixed-bed reactor with feed ratio of 20% ethane to 10% oxygen balanced by helium. The W/F ratio (W = catalyst weight, F = total feed flow rate) was fixed at 0.54 g.s.cm$^{-3}$. In addition, the catalysts were characterized by several techniques, such as BET surface area analysis and XRD. Among the tested catalysts, the best catalyst provides relatively high ethylene yield (>20%) at 500 $^\circ$C. Nonetheless, the ethylene selectivity is decreased with increasing Me/Mo+Me ratio while the CO selectivity is increased.

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INTRODUCTION
Ethylene is one of the most important petrochemicals to produce several downstream products, such as polyethylene, ethylene oxide, ethylene dichloride, ethyl benzene and etc. The global demand of ethylene has been forecasted to increases by 6 million metric tons per year.(Advisors, 2016) Currently, ethylene is commercially produced by steam cracking or catalytic cracking of naphtha. However, there are some disadvantages of these processes for example, high energy consumption due to high reaction temperature, catalyst deactivation due to coke formation. Ethylene can also be produced from ethane via dehydrogenation. With the advent of shale gas, ethane is available at relatively low cost. Therefore, ethane from shale gas is economically considered to produce ethylene. Instead of direct dehydrogenation, oxidative dehydrogenation (ODH) of ethane is an attractive route to the conventional process of making ethylene. Oxidative dehydrogenation requires lower energy consumption because it is an exothermic reaction. In addition, the presence of oxygen in feed gas help prohibiting coke deposition on catalyst. However, the drawback of ethane ODH is that the yield of ethylene is relatively lower than the steam cracking, due to the lower conversion and the formation of undesired products (e.g. carbon monoxide and...
Therefore, an active and selective catalyst to efficiently convert ethane to ethylene is necessary. (Gärtner et al., 2013) The aim of this research is to test Mo based catalysts for the ODH process with high catalytic activity, selectivity and to investigate the effect of adding vanadium on catalytic activity of Mo based catalysts. The effect of reaction temperature on ethane conversion, product selectivity and ethylene yield are also investigated. Moreover, the prepared catalysts are characterized by BET surface area analysis and XRD techniques in order to gain more information of the catalysts.

EXPERIMENTAL

A. Catalyst preparation
Transition metal oxide catalysts were prepared by incipient wetness impregnation of γ-Al₂O₃ with ammonium molybdate and ammonium metavanadate. The alumina and metals were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. Metal solutions containing the precursor salts with appropriate amounts were dissolved and heated in deionized water at 70 °C. After that prepared metal solutions were impregnated on alumina support. Samples were dried at 120 °C overnight and then calcined in the air at 500 °C for 5 h.

B. Catalyst characterization
B.1 Surface area analysis
Surface area analysis (BET): surface area of the catalysts was determined by using the multi-point BET analysis method. Prior to N₂ adsorption, 0.1-0.2 g of catalysts was degassed by using a vacuum at 250 °C for 10 h. The relative pressure used (P/P₀) in the range of 0.001 to 0.999 with a number of adsorption equal to 15 points and desorption 10 points.

B.2 X-Ray diffraction
X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were obtained with a Rigaku SmartLab RINT 2000 diffractometer employing with Cu-Kα radiation (λ = 1.542 Å). The catalysts were scanned from 2θ = 5° to 80° at a rate of 5°/min and their diffraction patterns was analyzed with the aim of determining crystalline structures. The mean crystallite size was calculated by using the Scherrer’s equation from the XRD data.

C. Catalytic activity testing
The catalytic activity of the catalysts was known by performing the reaction in a packed-bed quartz tube reactor at atmospheric pressure with W/F of 0.54 g s/cm³. The catalyst was activated in flowing oxygen at 500 °C for 30 min. The total flow was 50 cm³/min with the composition of reaction mixture of C₂H₆/O₂/He = 20%/10%/70%. The furnace temperature was raised to the desired reaction temperature. The reaction products were analyzed by gas chromatograph equipped with a flame-ionization detector (FID) and thermal conductivity detector (TCD).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Effect of adding V to Mo/Al₂O₃ catalysts and reaction temperature

In this work section, the vanadium was added into molybdenum based catalysts with total metal loading fixed at 20wt.% similar to the work done by Christodoulakis et al. (2006) and the V/(Mo+V) ratio were varied from 0 to 1. The prepared V-Mo catalysts were tested for ethane ODH reaction using packed-bed reactor with W/F of 0.54 g s/cm³ at temperature of 500 °C. As shown in Figure 1, the ethylene selectivity is decreased with increasing V/(Mo+V) ratio. However, ethane conversion is relatively constant with V/(Mo+V) ratio. Furthermore, CO selectivity is increased with V/(Mo+V) ratio. For the optimum V/(Mo+V) ratio, it was found that V/(Mo+V) ratio of 0.2 provided the highest ethylene selectivity and ethylene yield comparing to the other V/(Mo+V) ratio. Meanwhile, V/(Mo+V) ratio of 0.8 obtained the highest CO and CO₂ selectivity. The effect of reaction temperature on activity of 20wt.%MoₓV₀.₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst was investigated at temperature of 400, 450 and 500 °C. The data in the Table 1 shows that ethane conversion is increased with increasing reaction temperature because ethane is favorable to be converted toward desired and undesired products at high reaction temperature. As expected, the ethylene selectivity is not similar tendency as ethane conversion. Nonetheless, the CO and CO₂ selectivity are increased with increasing reaction temperature.

Table 1 The catalytic activity of 20wt.%MoₓV₀.₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst at reaction temperature of 400, 450 and 500 °C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Conversion (%)</th>
<th>Selectivity (%)</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C₂H₄</td>
<td>CH₄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 The catalytic activity of 20wt.%Mo₁₋ₓVₓ/Al₂O₃ catalysts (x = 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1) at reaction temperature of 500 °C, X : conversion (%), S : selectivity (%) and Y : yield (%)
B. Surface area analysis

The surface area and pore volume of alumina support and prepared catalysts are reported in Table 2. As a result, it exhibits that the specific surface area of alumina support was decreased after loading metal which was mainly attributed to the pore blocking of doped metal. The 20wt.%V/Al₂O₃ catalyst obtained lower specific surface area than 20wt.% Mo/Al₂O₃ catalyst. For the activity of 20wt.%Me/Al₂O₃ (Me = Mo and V) catalysts was independent from specific surface area. According to 20wt.%Mo₁₋ₓVₓ/Al₂O₃ catalysts, the diminishing of specific surface area was affected by increasing V/(Mo+V) ratio and also related to the catalytic activity. These results were also correlated with X-ray diffraction technique (XRD) which will be mentioned in the following section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalyst</th>
<th>Surface area (m²/g)</th>
<th>Pore volume (ml/g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Al₂O₃</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%Mo/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%V/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%Mo₀.₈V₀.₂/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%Mo₀.₆V₀.₄/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>0.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%Mo₀.₄V₀.₆/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>0.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20wt.%Mo₀.₂V₀.₈/Al₂O₃</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. X-Ray diffraction

XRD patterns of γ-Al₂O₃, 20wt.%Me/Al₂O₃ (Me = Mo and V) is shown in Figure 2. The peaks at 2θ = 66.80°, 46.01° and 37.44° indicate the presence of γ-Al₂O₃ (Qiao et al., 2013). It is clearly noticed that the peaks at 2θ = 12.73°, 23.37°, 25.59°, 27.32° and 33.75° indicating the presence of Al₂(MoO₄)₃ crystallites from 20wt.%Mo/Al₂O₃ catalyst while the peaks at 2θ = 20.29°, 26.18° and 34.34° indicating the presence of V₂O₅ crystallites from 20wt.%V/Al₂O₃ catalyst. (Qiao et al., 2013) As illustrated in Figure 2, XRD patterns of 20wt.%Mo₁₋ₓVₓ/Al₂O₃ catalysts (x = 0.2, 0.4, 0.6) exhibit the peak at 2θ value of approximately 20.89° indicating the presence of Al-V-MoO₇ crystallites.(Khatib et al., 2006) The average particle size of Al₂(MoO₄)₃, Al-V-MoO₇ and V₂O₅ crystallites calculated by using the Scherrer’s equation, is shown in the Table 3. It is obviously seen that the particle size of Al-V-MoO₇ crystallites is increased with increasing the V/(Mo+V) ratio. In case of the 0.8 V/(Mo+V) ratio, it is no peak appearance at 2θ value of 20.89° but it is found the peak at 2θ value of approximately 20.29° that indicates the presence of V₂O₅ crystallites. From the previous results, it was implied that the diminishing of specific surface areas was related to the increasing of crystalline size. It was possibly due to occurring of pore blockages from the large crystals. Furthermore, it can be mentioned that the ethylene yield of Mo₀.₈V₀.₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst was enhanced, due to the presence of Al-V-MoO₇ phases. In case of Al₂(MoO₄)₃ phases, it is possible to mention that the presence of
Al$_2$(MoO$_4$)$_3$ phases has no significant effect on ethylene yield comparing to the Al-V-MoO$_7$ phases. Another relevant problem is that the ethylene yield tends to decrease when both Al-V-MoO$_7$ and V$_2$O$_5$ crystalline size are increased.

Table 3  Effect of crystalline size on surface area of 20wt.%Mo$_{1-x}$V$_x$/Al$_2$O$_3$ catalysts ($x$ = 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V/(Mo+V) ratio</th>
<th>Crystalline size (nm)</th>
<th>Surface area (m$^2$/g)</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Al$_2$(MoO$_4$)$_3$</td>
<td>Al-V-MoO$_7$</td>
<td>V$_2$O$_5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2  X-Ray diffraction patterns of 20wt.%Mo$_{1-x}$V$_x$/Al$_2$O$_3$ catalysts ($x$ = 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1)

CONCLUSIONS

Mo-Me mixed catalysts with second metal (Me = V) supported on alumina, have been successfully synthesized by incipient wetness impregnation technique. Surface area analysis of 20wt.%Mo$_{1-x}$V$_x$/Al$_2$O$_3$ catalysts ($x$ = 0.2, 0.4, 0.6 and 0.8) indicates the specific surface area of alumina support was decreased with increasing V/(Mo+V) ratio and also resulted in decreasing of ethylene yield. From XRD results, it revealed the presence of Al-V-MoO$_7$ crystallites at 2θ value of 20.89° belonging to 20wt.%Mo$_{1-x}$V$_x$/Al$_2$O$_3$ catalysts ($x$ = 0.2, 0.4 and 0.6). At the V/(Mo+V) ratio of 0.8, there is no appearance of Al-V-MoO$_7$ crystallites but it discovered the presence of V$_2$O$_5$ crystallites. It was obviously seen that the increasing of Al-V-MoO$_7$ crystalline size resulted in decreasing of specific surface area and also ethylene yield, due to the pore blockades of large particle size. Among the tested catalysts, the 20wt.%Mo$_{0.8}$V$_{0.2}$/Al$_2$O$_3$ catalyst provided relatively high ethylene yield.
Nonetheless, the increasing of reaction temperature was favorable to increase ethane conversion while the ethylene selectivity was decreased.

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REFERENCES


