

LANTHANUM ORTHOFERRITE AS PHOTOCATALYST PREPARED USING
SOL-GEL METHOD FOR OILY WASTEWATER TREATMENT

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my beloved family.

I love you.

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ABSTRACT

Lanthanum orthoferrite (LaFeO_3) is the perovskite type of photocatalyst that has potential to treat oily wastewater. Compared to better-known titanium dioxide (TiO_2), LaFeO_3 has been found to have a smaller band gap. The key purpose of this study was therefore to manipulate the physicochemical properties of LaFeO_3 in order to enhance the degradation of oily wastewater by calcination heat treatment. Synthesis of the photocatalyst via the sol-gel route produced positive result. The precursor and LaFeO_3 were characterized using X-ray diffraction for crystallinity test, thermogravimetric analysis and differential thermal analysis for thermal decomposition, ultraviolet- visible spectroscopy for optical properties, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy and Brunauer-Emmett-Teller, BET for surface area and field emission scanning electron microscope (FESEM) for surface morphology analysis. LaFeO_3 was calcined at different temperature ranging from 500-900°C in two hours. Using glucose as chelating agent, LaFeO_3 calcined at 600°C started to have a complete crystal structure. Sharper and stronger peak indicated greater crystallization with increasing calcination temperature, where crystallite sizes of 7.29 nm, 11.55 nm, 12.60 nm and 15.43 nm were obtained for samples calcined at 600 to 900°C. FESEM images revealed that samples calcined at 600°C appeared to be in porous and regular shape, forming a large network system with smaller particles size and higher surface area compared to samples calcined at higher temperature. The BET surface areas for the samples were 3.89 m²/g, 15.68 m²/g, 6.43 m²/g, 4.63 m²/g, and 2.40 m²/g at the aforementioned calcination temperature intervals. The perovskite photocatalyst calcined at 600°C was thus chosen as the finest photocatalyst to undergo photocatalytic study. This LaFeO_3 -600 had the most outstanding surface area (15.68 m²/g) with the lowest band gap value (1.88 eV) and smallest crystal size (7.29nm) compared to the others. Photocatalytic activity was conducted for 180 minutes where the first 30 minutes were for adsorption and desorption. The effects of the initial concentrations under visible light irradiation have been studied for 150 minutes and the findings indicate that the degradation efficiency were 70 %, 80 % and 65 % for concentrations of 1000 ppm, 10000 ppm and 20000 ppm respectively. Less than 5% was removed under visible light irradiance (photolysis), showing the stability of the pollutant. In conclusion, the perovskite-based photocatalyst LaFeO_3 was successfully prepared via the sol-gel method, where LaFeO_3 -600 demonstrated the highest efficiency in degrading synthetic oily wastewater by up to 80% in 180 minutes.

ABSTRAK

Lantanum ortoferit (LaFeO_3), adalah jenis fotomangkin perovskit yang berpotensi untuk merawat air kumbahan berminyak. Berbanding dengan titanium dioksida (TiO_2), yang lebih terkenal, LaFeO_3 telah diketahui mempunyai jurang jalur yang lebih kecil. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk memanipulasi sifat fizik-kimia LaFeO_3 untuk meningkatkan degradasi air sisa berminyak dengan rawatan haba kalsinasi. Hasil sintesis fotomangkin melalui kaedah sol-gel menghasilkan keputusan yang positif. Prapenanda dan LaFeO_3 dicirikan menggunakan pembelauan sinar-X untuk ujian pengkristalan, analisis termogravitimetrik dan analisis kebezaan terma untuk penguraian terma, spektroskopi ultraviolet dan cahaya kelihatan untuk sifat optik, spektroskopi transformasi inframerah Fourier dan Brunauer-Emmett-Teller, BET untuk luas permukaan, dan mikroskop elektron imbasan pancaran medan (FESEM) untuk analisis morfologi permukaan. LaFeO_3 dikalsin pada suhu berlainan antara 500°C hingga 900°C dalam masa dua jam. Menggunakan glukosa sebagai ejen pengkelat, LaFeO_3 yang di kalsinasi pada suhu 600°C mula membentuk struktur kristal yang lengkap. Puncak yang lebih tajam dan kuat menunjukkan penghabluran kristal yang lebih ketara dengan peningkatan suhu kalsinasi, di mana kristalit berukuran 7.29 nm, 11.55 nm, 12.60 nm, and 15.43 nm diperoleh untuk sampel dari 600°C hingga 900°C . Imej FESEM menunjukkan bahawa sampel yang dikalsinasi pada suhu 600°C kelihatan berliang dan bentuk biasa, membentuk sistem rangkaian besar dengan saiz partikel yang lebih kecil dan luas permukaan yang lebih luas berbanding sampel yang dikalsinasi pada suhu yang lebih tinggi. Luas permukaan BET untuk semua sampel ialah $3.89 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$, $15.68 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$, $6.43 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$, $4.63 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$, dan $2.40 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ dengan selang peningkatan suhu kalsinasi yang telah dinyatakan diatas. Fotomangkin perovskit yang dikalsinasi pada suhu 600°C dipilih sebagai fotomangkin yang paling berpotensi untuk menjalani kajian fotobermangkin. $\text{LaFeO}_3\text{-600}$ ini mempunyai luas permukaan yang luar biasa ($15.68 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$) dengan nilai jurang jalur terendah (1.88 eV) dan saiz kristal yang kecil (23.82 nm) berbanding dengan yang lain. Aktiviti pemangkin foto dilakukan selama 180 minit dengan 30 minit yang pertama sebagai masa penjerapan dan penyerapan. Kesan kepekatan awal di bawah penyinaran cahaya boleh lihat telah dijalankan selama 150 minit dan penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kecekapan degradasi adalah 70%, 80% dan 65% masing-masing bagi kepekatan awal 1000ppm, 10000ppm, dan 20000ppm. Hanya kurang daripada 5% disingkirkan di bawah sinaran cahaya yang boleh dilihat (fotolisis), menunjukkan kestabilan bahan pencemar. Kesimpulannya, fotomangkin berasaskan perovskit LaFeO_3 telah berjaya disintesis melalui kaedah sol-gel, di mana $\text{LaFeO}_3\text{-600}$ menunjukkan kecekapan tertinggi dalam melakukan degradasi air kumbahan berminyak sintetik sehingga 80% dalam masa 180 minit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOPs	-	Advanced Oxidation Processes
BET	-	Brunauer, Emmet and Teller
BOD	-	Biochemical Oxygen Demand
COD	-	Chemical Oxygen Demand
DTA	-	Differential Thermal Analysis
FESEM	-	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope
FTIR	-	Fourier-transform Infrared Spectroscopy
IUPAC	-	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
JCPDS	-	Joint Committee on Powder Diffraction Standards
LaFeO ₃	-	Lanthanum Orthoferrite
N ₂	-	Nitrogen gas
TDS	-	Total Dissolved Solid
TiO ₂	-	Titanium Dioxide
UV-Vis	-	Ultraviolet Visible Spectroscopy/Spectrometry
UV	-	Ultraviolet
XRD	-	Xray Powder Diffraction

LIST OF SYMBOLS

°C	-	Degree Celsius
λ	-	Lambda
Nm	-	Nanometer
cm^{-1}	-	Per centimeter
g	-	Gram
L	-	Liter
m	-	meter
h	-	Hour
a.u.	-	Absorbance unit
eV	-	Electron volt
%	-	Percentage
M	-	Molar
mL	-	Milliliter
Ppm	-	Parts per million
min	-	minutes

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Petrochemical industries, oil and petroleum industries, transportation have generated oily wastewater that can be harmful to the environment. If left untreated, oily wastewater, which is usually emulsified, can have a significant negative impact on facilities. Water is the main source of living; untreated wastewater could affect drinking water and endanger aquatic resources. Significant threats that can be identified include soil, human, air and water (Jamaly *et al.*, 2015). China has decided to limit as much as 10g/mL the maximum allowable emissions of oily wastewater in the country showing that oily wastewater is at a hazardous level (Yu *et al.*, 2017).

In the oil and gas (O&G) industries, water will be produced in a high quantity and can be said to be the most productive in a day. O&G industries handle more water than oil on a daily basis (Adham *et al.*, 2018). Water used primarily to maintain the pressure of the reservoir and through floods of water, may increase the recovery of oil (Adham *et al.*, 2018). There are few technologies available to treat oily wastewater such as gravity seals, dewatering, flotation, coagulation and membrane separation technologies that are called traditional methods, although advanced oxidation processes (AOPs) and hybrid technologies are the new technologies. Conventional methods such as treatment of wastewater will not completely remove contaminants from water. Researchers therefore always find a new and alternative way to treat wastewater so that the contaminants can not only be transferred to another phase, but can be permanently eliminated. Figure 1.1 shows the photo-induced electron-hole pair formation mechanism in a semiconductor TiO_2 particle with the presence of a water pollutant (P).

Countless harmful mixtures of hydrocarbons, chemical components and heavy metals in oily wastewater. There is a typical limit for oil and fat discharges depending on the type of oil. For example, the discharge limits for mineral and synthetic oils are 10-15 mg/L while for those of vegetable and animal based from 100-150 mg/L (Purification *et al.*, 2011). Oily wastewater needs to be treated because it can affect drinking water and groundwater resources, endangering aquatic resources and human health, affecting crop production and destroy the natural landscape.

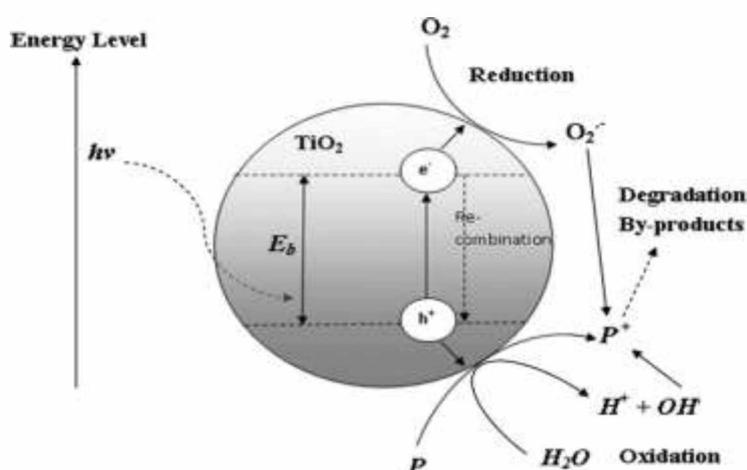


Figure 1.1 Reaction mechanisms of TiO₂ photocatalysis (Umar and Abdul, 2013).

Various kind of materials has been created and alter to get the best result in water treatment. Photocatalyst either heterogenous or homogenous being study to advance the treatment. Titanium Oxide (TiO₂) is the best and most common photocatalyst used to remove contaminants. This TiO₂ receives wide attention in the field of research due to its high catalytic activity, high stability and lower rate (Shao, 2013). Other than TiO₂, some other photocatalyst used are LaNiO₃ (Li *et al.*, 2010) Bi₂WO₆ (Shang *et al.*, 2008) and BiFeO₃ (Humayun *et al.*, 2016).

Photocatalyst nanoparticles can be synthesized by hydrothermal method, combustion method, sol-gel method, co-precipitation method, micro emulsion method, thermal decomposition method and sono-chemical method. The common and widely used method of synthesizing photocatalyst nanoparticles is through sol-gel method. The advantages of this method are controllable size, less complex, cost-effectiveness and low temperature growth. Textural and structural material properties have been shown to be strongly influenced by the parameters of synthesis and processing. Synthesis parameters, including precursor types, molar ratios between reactants, solvents, complexing agents, pH, temperature of synthesis and temperature of calcination.

Perovskite with typical ABO_3 formula such as $NaTaO_3$, $KTaO_3$, $LaFeO_3$ have a higher photocatalytic activity due to its narrow band gap, unique crystal structure and electronic properties. Citric acid and glucose-based sol-gel methods were used in the previous study and were successfully synthesized by $LaFeO_3$. Based on previous studies, the temperature used for calcining while synthesizing was undeniably affected by the structure, particle size and properties of the final product, but rarely explored and reported. Advantages of the structure of perovskite:

- (a) Their crystal structures generally provide an appropriate electronic structure that shifts the band gap energy to visible-light absorption.
- (b) Their crystal structural arrangements allow lattice distortions, significantly affecting the separation of photogenerated charge carriers and avoiding the recombination processes.

Thus, the possibility of controlling the physicochemical properties of perovskite structures allows the relationship between structural properties and photocatalytic activity to be unraveled, making this material a good alternative to TiO_2 photocatalyst.

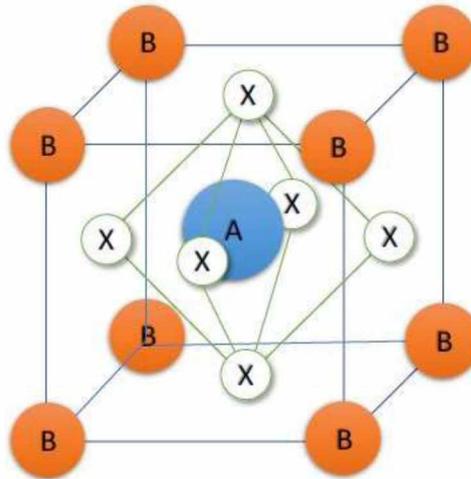


Figure 1.2 Structure of perovskite ABO_3 crystal (Yahya *et al.*, 2018)

In this study, lanthanum-based photocatalyst Lanthanum Orthoferrite ($LaFeO_3$) with narrow band gap was synthesized to replace TiO_2 as a photocatalyst to be activated using visible light. A study was conducted on the effect of the calcination temperature on the physicochemical properties and the photocatalytic degradation performance of the synthesized $LaFeO_3$.

Glucose is more favourable as a complexing agent because of its eco-friendly nature, low cost, ease of use and reproducibility. The use of glucose as a chelating agent often results in convenience that requires less energy to synthesize high-purity nanoparticles. The main role of glucose is to generate a highly viscous and stable mixture solution, which prohibited the aggregation of cations and favoured the formation of $LaFeO_3$ phase. The glucose structure is a ring with five hydroxyl groups and can form complexes with the La and Fe cations in the precursor solution, resulting in the simultaneous crystallisation of the La and Fe cations as the water evaporates. Calcination temperatures are also known to have an impact on physicochemical properties such as band gap, surface crystalline and morphological properties (Shen *et al.*, 2016).

1.2 Problem Statement

Titanium dioxide (TiO_2) is the most widely studied since it is non-toxic, chemically stable, commercially available and inexpensive. However, TiO_2 can only be activated with ultraviolet light ($< 390 \text{ nm}$) as it cannot be activated by visible light due to the high band gap (3.2 eV). The other barrier used by TiO_2 as a photocatalyst is the rapid recombination of the electron-hole pair. Due to this limitation, this method is still practically not in use in the large industry. The wide band gap of TiO_2 limits their absorption of light within the ultraviolet region. The semiconductor must have a small band gap in order to get as much sunlight as possible. The band gap is one of the main factors to be considered for photocatalytic activity. Generally, the acceptable value of band gap of most photocatalysts that can be activated by visible light irradiation are below 3.0 eV . In that case, current researchers preferred LaFeO_3 nanoparticles due to its narrow band gap.

LaFeO_3 is considered to be an effective visible-light driven photocatalyst for photocatalytic reactions due to its narrow band gap and optoelectronic properties. The UV source requires a large amount of electrical energy, which would result in high costs in practical applications. However, TiO_2 is not ideal for all purposes and is rather weak in processes associated with solar photocatalysis due to its wide band gap ($3.0\text{--}3.2 \text{ eV}$), making it impractical to set up large technological processes based on TiO_2 . Studies on the synthesization of LaFeO_3 and its purpose as a photocatalyst were rarely reported, the smallest band gap from pure LaFeO_3 was 2.07 eV at 900°C via the auto-combustion route. In addition, research has also studied the impact of calcination temperature on the physiochemical properties of synthesised photocatalysts in ways of producing photocatalysts at lower cost and energy consumption.

1.3 Objective of Study

The main aim of this study is to develop a new photocatalyst based on perovskite with low band gap (< 2.2 eV) for the treatment of oily waste water. The study aim can be further elaborated as follows:

1. To examine the effects of calcination temperature on LaFeO_3 crystal formation.
2. To determine the physicochemical properties of LaFeO_3 through the route of the sol gel.
3. To identify the photocatalytic degradation performance of the synthesized LaFeO_3 for potential applications of oily wastewater treatment.

1.4 Scope of Study

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the following scopes have been drawn up:

1. Synthesizing the LaFeO_3 perovskite using the glucose sol-gel method as a complexing agent. The temperature of the calcination ranged from 500-900°C.
2. Characterization of the physicochemical properties of the synthesized LaFeO_3 in terms of thermal stability, morphological properties, surface areas, crystallinity, structural analysis and optical properties using Fourier Transform Infrared Spectra (FTIR), Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope (FESEM), Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) surface area, Xray powder diffraction (XRD) and UV-Vis spectrophotometer.
3. The optimal photocatalyst was selected by comparing the data collected. Optimal samples with a high surface area, a low band gap value and a small crystal size were selected.

4. Evaluating the photocatalytic activity of the selected LaFeO₃ photocatalyst in degrading oily synthetic wastewater by varying the operating parameters, including the irradiation time (0-180 min) and the initial concentration (1000,10000, 20000 ppm) under visible light irradiation. The catalytic load remains unchanged at 1.0 g/mL. The aliquot taken was characterized by the use of UV-Vis to determine degradation.

1.5 Significance of Study

Study on synthesizing LaFeO₃ via glucose sol gel route rarely reported, previous study found that the lowest calcination time for pure LaFeO₃ with orthorhombic structure was 500°C with a molar ratio between complexing agent and metal 3:10 and glucose as a complexing agent (Liu and Xu, 2011). No band gap value reported. A study conducted by Parida et al. 2010, using citric acid as a complexing agent, showed that a high surface area with a molar ratio of 3:5 with a band gap value of 2.1 eV can be achieved. Previous studies using citric acid as a complexing agent have shown that pure LaFeO₃ can only be achieved with a high calcination temperature > 550°C (Khalil *et al.*, 2016; Lebid and Omari, 2013; Qi *et al.*, 2003). Deep research on the synthesizing of visible-light driven photocatalysts, which can be produced at a minimum molar ratio between the complexing agent and the metal (3:5), has therefore been conducted starting at a minimum calcination temperature of 500-900°C. The crystallization of LaFeO₃ nanoparticles is known to have been favoured at high calcination temperature (Liu and Xu, 2011; Shen *et al.*, 2016). This LaFeO₃ is possible to create energy-saving and environment friendly technology to treat oily wastewater.

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