

MXENE MODIFIED LAYERED DOUBLE HYDROXIDE NANOCOMPOSITE
FOR PHOTOCATALYTIC CARBON DIOXIDE REDUCTION TO RENEWABLE
FUELS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father for giving me strength to reach for the stars and chase my dreams, to my mother who always prayed for me and all other family members for their support

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ABSTRACT

Photocatalytic conversion of carbon dioxide (CO_2) to solar fuels is a promising solution to resolve the energy crisis and global warming issues. The overall efficiency of photoreduction of CO_2 to fuels can be improved through the development of highly efficient catalyst and suitable photoreactor configuration. Hence, the main objective of this research work was to design a photocatalytic reactor system and synthesize cobalt-aluminium-lanthanum-layered double hydroxide (CoAlLa-LDH) modified with graphitic carbon nitride ($\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$) and titanium carbon ($\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$) MXene for enhanced photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 to renewable fuels. Initially, a novel CoAlLa-LDH was synthesized by co-precipitation method that has hexagonal nanosheet structure. The $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ was synthesized through controlled etching with hydrogen fluoride acid that resulted in the formation of layered structured Ti_3C_2 MXene embedded with anatase and rutile phases of titanium dioxide (TiO_2). The $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ having layered structure and embedded TiO_2 effectively acted as electrons reservoir and electrons mediator, respectively. Graphitic carbon nitride ($\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$) nanosheets were obtained through thermal heating and subsequent sonication. $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, CoAlLa-LDH and $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ were hybridized to obtain $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$, $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$, $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$ and $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$ composites with layer-by-layer assemblies. The performance of photocatalysts was investigated through photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 with water (H_2O), dryreforming (DRM) and bireforming (BRM). Among LDHs the $\text{Co}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ showed maximum photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 with H_2O resulting in production rate of 21.80 and 25.5 $\mu\text{molecat}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ for CO and CH_4 , respectively. The $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{Co}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ sample resulted in maximum CO and CH_4 production rate of 106 and 49.8 $\mu\text{mole gcat}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ through photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 with H_2O . The $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ sample showed very good performance in photocatalytic DRM with production of 73.31 and 51.24 $\mu\text{mole gcat}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ for CO and H_2 , respectively. The $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{Co}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ sample, through photocatalytic BRM showed maximum CO and H_2 production of 47.81 and 73.31 $\mu\text{mole gcat}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ with higher selectivity towards H_2 production that is a high-quality syngas. The best performing $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{Co}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ catalyst in the fixed bed photoreactor for photocatalytic BRM was compared with multistage mesh photoreactor (MSM). The MSM showed syngas production of 1.81 and 1.22 folds higher as compared to fixed bed photoreactor for CO and H_2 respectively. The effects of various parameters such as amount of catalyst, feed ratio and illumination time for the photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 was studied to optimize yield and selectivity of fuel products through response surface methodology. It was found that the optimum CO production was obtained at 0.143 g, 4.48 h and 1.67 while the optimum H_2 production obtained was at 0.143 g, 4.93 h, 1.41 of catalyst loading, time and feed ratio, respectively. Finally, Langmuir-Hinshelwood model was developed to investigate adsorption behaviours and photocatalytic oxidation and reduction process, fitted well with the experimental data. It was determined that CO and H_2 production were dependent on quantity of CO_2 and CH_4 in the feed, respectively. In conclusion the $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ and $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ modified CoAlLa-LDH catalyst can produce high quality renewable syngas fuel with high selectivity towards H_2 production.

ABSTRAK

Fotomangkin penukaran karbon dioksida (CO_2) kepada bahan api suria merupakan penyelesaian yang berpotensi untuk menyelesaikan krisis tenaga dan isu pemanasan global. Kecekapan keseluruhan fotopenurunan CO_2 kepada bahan api dapat ditambah baik melalui pembangunan mangkin yang sangat cekap dan konfigurasi fotoreaktor yang sesuai. Oleh itu, objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mereka bentuk sistem reaktor fotomangkin dan mensintesis dwihidroksida berlapis kobalt-aluminium-lantanum (CoAlLa-LDH) diubah suai dengan nitrida karbon bergrafit ($\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$) dan MXene karbon titanium ($\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$) untuk penurunan fotomangkin CO_2 yang dipertingkatkan kepada bahan api boleh diperbaharui. Pada awalnya, CoAlLa-LDH novel disintesis melalui kaedah ko-pemendakan yang mempunyai struktur nanolembaran heksagon. $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ disintesis melalui punaran terkawal dengan asid hidrogen florida yang menghasilkan pembentukan struktur berlapis Ti_3C_2 MXene terbenam dengan fasa anatase dan rutil titanium dioksida (TiO_2). $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ yang mempunyai struktur berlapis dan TiO_2 terbenam ini masing-masing bertindak dengan berkesan sebagai takungan elektron dan pengantara elektron. Nanolembaran karbon nitrida bergrafit ($\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$) diperoleh melalui pemanasan terma dan sonikasi berikutnya. $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, CoAlLa-LDH dan $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ dihibridkan untuk mendapatkan komposit $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$, $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$, $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$ dan $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CoAlLa-LDH}$ dengan gabungan lapisan demi lapisan. Prestasi fotomangkin disiasat melalui penurunan fotomangkin CO_2 dengan air (H_2O), pembentukan semula kering metana (DRM) dan dwipembentukan semula metana (BRM). $\text{CO}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ menunjukkan penurunan fotomangkin CO_2 dengan H_2 yang maksimum berbanding LDH lain dengan kadar penghasilan CO dan CH_4 masing-masing 21.80 and 25.5 $\mu\text{mol g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$. Sampel $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CO}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ memberikan keputusan kadar pengeluaran maksimum CO dan CH_4 masing-masing sebanyak 106 and 49.8 $\mu\text{mol g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ melalui penurunan fotomangkin CO_2 dengan H_2O . Sampel $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ menunjukkan prestasi yang sangat baik dalam DRM fotomangkin dengan pengeluaran CO dan H_2 masing-masing sebanyak 73.31 dan 51.24 $\mu\text{mol g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$. Bagi sampel $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CO}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ pula, BRM fotomangkin menunjukkan pengeluaran maksimum CO dan H_2 masing-masing sebanyak 47.81 dan 73.31 $\mu\text{mol g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}\text{h}^{-1}$ dengan kememilihan lebih tinggi kepada pengeluaran H_2 yang merupakan singas berkualiti tinggi. Mangkin $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}/\text{CO}_2\text{Al}_{0.95}\text{La}_{0.05}\text{-LDH}$ berprestasi terbaik dalam fotoreaktor lapisan tetap untuk BRM fotomangkin dibandingkan dengan fotoreaktor jejaring berbilang tahap (MSM). MSM menunjukkan pengeluaran singas CO dan H_2 masing-masing sebanyak 1.81 dan 1.22 kali ganda lebih tinggi berbanding fotoreaktor lapisan tetap. Kesan daripada pelbagai parameter seperti jumlah mangkin, nisbah suapan dan masa pencahayaan untuk penurunan fotomangkin CO_2 telah dikaji untuk mengoptimumkan hasil dan kememilihan produk bahan api melalui kaedah gerak balas permukaan. Didapati bahawa pengeluaran CO optimum diperoleh pada 0.143 g, 4.48 j dan 1.41 manakala pengeluaran H_2 optimum diperoleh pada 0.143 g, 4.93 j, 1.41 masing-masing bagi pemuatan mangkin, masa dan nisbah suapan. Akhir sekali, model Langmuir-Hinshelwood yang dibangunkan untuk mengkaji kelakuan penjerapan dan proses pengoksidaan dan penurunan fotomangkin, sangat bertepatan dengan data eksperimen. Ditetapkan bahawa pengeluaran CO dan H_2 masing-masing bersandar pada kuantiti CO_2 dan CH_4 dalam suapan. Kesimpulannya, mangkin CoAlLa-LDH diubah suai $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_{A/R}$ dan $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ dapat menghasilkan bahan api singas boleh diperbaharui berkualiti tinggi dengan kememilihan tinggi untuk pengeluaran H_2 .

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQY	-	Apparent quantum yield
BET	-	Braunauer-Emmer-Teller
BRM	-	Bireforming of methane
CB	-	Conduction band
CBM	-	Conduction band minimum
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
EDS/EDX	-	Energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy
FESEM	-	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope
FID	-	Flame Ionization Detector
F-T	-	Fischer-Tropsch
FTIR	-	Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy
GHG	-	Greenhouse gas
GO	-	Graphene oxide
HRTEM	-	High Resolution Transmission Electron Microscopy
L-H	-	Langmuir-Hinshelwood
LDH	-	Layered double hydroxide
OCN	-	Oxygen doped graphitic carbon nitride
pCN	-	Protonated carbon nitride
PL	-	Photoluminescence
QY	-	Quantum yield
RGO	-	Reduced Graphene Oxide
RSM	-	Response surface methodology
SRM	-	Steam reforming of methane
UV/Vis	-	Ultraviolet Visible
XPS	-	X-ray Photoelectron spectroscopy
XRD	-	X-ray Diffraction
1D	-	One dimensional
2D	-	Two dimensional
3D	-	Three dimensional

LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	-	Absorption coefficient
E	-	Activation energy
β	-	Full width at half maximum
n	-	Concentration of electrons
p	-	Concentration of holes
N_c	-	Effective density state of CBM
N_v	-	Effective density state of VBM
e^-	-	Electron
E_p	-	Energy of photon
E_g	-	Energy bandgap
H	-	Heat of reaction
h_+	-	Hole
KJ	-	Kilo Joule
L	-	Length
I	-	Light intensity (mW/cm^2)
μm	-	Micrometre
P	-	Pressure
d		Plan spacing scattering angle
h	-	Planks constant
f	-	Photon flux
I_p	-	Photon Irradiance
k_B		Boltzmann constant
T	-	Temperature
θ	-	Angle of incident beam
W	-	Watt
λ	-	Wavelength

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Energy is vital for obtaining primary needs as well as for maintaining secure and improved living standards. This excessive energy usage is causing high use of fossil fuels, leading to energy dearth and production of CO₂. Moreover, CO₂ is one of the major greenhouse gases which results in global warming, a major environmental concern [1, 2]. Different approaches have been employed to mitigate CO₂ effects, in particular, reduction of CO₂ emission at the source, CO₂ capture and storage; and reutilization of CO₂ by conversion to value added chemicals. Among all, CO₂ utilization for the production of renewable fuels is the more attractive pathway, thereby relieving our dependency on traditional fossil fuels. However, these technologies have disadvantages that include: high electrical voltage and high temperature requirements to break the stable CO₂ molecule, limitations of raw materials, high cost of operation, and unsustainability [3]. Therefore, the employment of conversion of CO₂ to fuels through photocatalysis would be effective alternative to other processes [4].

The photocatalytic CO₂ reduction can be obtained through various reductants to obtain the desired fuel products. Through photocatalytic CO₂ reduction with water (H₂O) results in formation of methane (CH₄) and carbon monoxide (CO). The photocatalytic dry reforming (DRM) is conducted in the presence methane as reductant for the formation of syngas that is the combination of CO and hydrogen (H₂). The photocatalytic bireforming of methane (BRM) is conducted in the existence of H₂O and CH₄ resulting in the formation of syngas (CO, H₂) that has appeared as prospective energy source in several petrochemical industries to generate synthetic fuels through Fischer–Tropsch process [5].

Usually, the DRM and BRM processes are conducted at elevated temperature and demand high input energy, thus making the process uneconomical. In this scenario, photocatalytic DRM and BRM provides a cleaner technology by utilizing only light irradiation, while the process occurs at room temperature and atmospheric pressure.

The sunlight energy is acquired and collected in molecular bonds, similar to the natural photosynthesis process [6]. Photocatalysis over semiconductors is activated by the light of energy absorption, larger than their band gap, resulting in origination of excited electron (e^-) and a positive hole (h^+) pair that subsequently reduce and oxidize CO_2 and reductant, respectively. In photocatalysis, the excitation of electrons occur when light falls on the surface of photocatalyst which leads to the conversion of CO_2 to fuel [7]. The CO_2 conversion by phototechnology would satisfy the energy challenges and solve the environmental problems [8]. However, the efficiency of photocatalytic activity and selectivity is lower for CO_2 photoreduction that is needed to be improved. The performance of photocatalytic process can be improved by the use of novel photocatalyst in the efficient photoreactors [9].

Although, substantial development in the strategies to enhance the efficiency of semiconductor materials has been accomplished, however, the practical applications of these photocatalyst for CO_2 reduction have still limited conversion efficiency due to low utilization of light and fast charge carrier recombination. To make CO_2 conversion technique practically economic and industrial scalable, research should aim on increasing the overall CO_2 photoconversion efficiency and selectivity [10]. Hence, for the conversion of CO_2 into valuable chemicals such as CO, CH_3OH , CH_4 , $HCOOH$ and $HCHO$ numerous semiconductors such as TiO_2 [11], ZnO [12], WO_3 [13], SnO_2 , CdS , $\alpha-Fe_2O_3$ [14], Cu_2O [15, 16], and SiC [17] have been implemented to fabricate profecient photocatalytic systems for CO_2 photo-reduction to hydrocarbon fuels. However, the practical applications of these photocatalyst for CO_2 reduction are still limited by the efficiency due to less utilization of light and quick charge carrier recombination.

In this scenario, graphitic carbon nitride (g-C₃N₄), a visible light active semiconductor material, has attracted considerable interest because of the distinct layered structure, excellent thermal and chemical stabilities, low expense and simple synthesis. However, the photocatalytic activity of pristine g-C₃N₄ for CO₂ reduction is still very low due to rapid charge recombination. For this purpose, the photocatalytic CO₂ reduction efficiency improvement is obtained through coupling g-C₃N₄ with a second semiconductor, cocatalyst and/or photosensitizers to fabricate a multi-component composite photocatalyst with enhanced photocatalytic performance.

In the quest for materials having photocatalytic properties, high adsorption capacity and alkaline nature, the Layered Double Hydroxide (LDH) is getting attention as a potential photocatalyst due to its high adsorption capacity, high surface area, and semiconductor properties [18]. Moreover, the alkaline nature of LDH helps to adsorb the acidic CO₂. LDHs, with the general stoichiometry $[M^{2+}_{1-x}M^{3+}_x(OH)_2]^{x+}(An)_{x/n} \cdot mH_2O$, are a class of 2D layered materials encompassing positively charged edge-sharing MO₆ octahedra layers with charge compensating anions between the interlayers [19]. In this regard, the earth-abundant Zn, Ni and Co based LDH catalysts have drawn consideration as photocatalysts for CO₂ reduction [20].

Among the LDHs, CoAl-LDH has found widespread application for photoreduction of CO₂ due to its strong performance and stability [21]. However, pristine LDHs usually display weak quantum efficiency under light irradiation because of sluggish charge carrier movement and high electron–hole recombination. Approaches to enhance LDH performance include research on ternary LDHs with the modification or doping of cations has reflected the properties of added cation that resulted in the improvement in photocatalytic activity. Doping of semiconductors results in: (i) modification of the structure surface, (ii) improved spectral response, (iii) variation in the bandgap, (iv) reduction in the electron–holes recombination and (v) formation of crystalline defects, resulting in improvement in photocatalytic activity [22, 23].

In this scenario, Ahmad et al [24] found that the incorporation of third metal Cu to the ZnGa-LDH improved the photocatalytic activity. Similarly, Parida et al [25] studied the influence on textural properties and photoactivity of Mg/Al+Fe-LDH by varying the atomic ratios of $\text{Al}^{3+}/\text{Fe}^{3+}$. Parida et al [26] further extended the work to study the effect of Co divalent cation Cu+Co/Cr LDH by altering the atomic ratio of ($\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Co}^{2+}$) to observe the effect of Co^{2+} on electronic and structural properties for photocatalytic activity of Cu/Cr LDHs. The combined effect of binary cations, enhanced charge carrier capability of cobalt and even pores dissemination led to enhanced photocatalytic activity.

LDHs are all exciting materials with attractive properties but their applications are still limited due to their inherent shortages [27]. Therefore, a series of strategies have been adopted to couple LDH materials with other materials to improve the CO_2 photocatalytic reduction efficiency. For example, compounding with other conductive substances such as Pt/ZnCr LDH [28], Ag/ Zn_3Ga -LDH [29], Ru/MgAl-LDH [30], rGO/NiTi-LDH [31], and CoAl-LDHs/RGO [32] have been utilized to improve the photocatalytic activity of LDHs. Nevertheless, the efficiency of these materials is still low to curb large-scale application. Another strategy is combining LDH with other semiconductors is one of the most efficient tactics to improve the photogenerated charge carriers separation efficiency during the photocatalytic process. For instance, the coupling of g- C_3N_4 and NiAl-LDH resulted in the formation of 2D/2D interface heterostructures that showed the production of CO and H_2 . However, the selectivity towards H_2 production was very low resulting in production of a low-quality syngas [33]. Similarly, urchin-like g- $\text{C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{NiAl}$ -LDH heterojunction was constructed for excellent CO production, however, the study on the production of other fuels such as CH_4 and H_2 were not conducted. Therefore, the coupling of LDH material with a cocatalyst having highly active sites is one of the most effective approach to enhance the performance of LDHs for CO_2 reduction to selective fuels such as H_2 and CH_4 is very important [34].

Titanium Carbide (Ti_3C_2) a typical MXene has been enormously studied as a cheap cocatalyst due to their outstanding electrical conductivity, elemental composition adjustability, even layered structure and controllable surface functional

groups. Ti_3C_2 possesses 2D structure and therefore has the possibility to form intimate 2D/2D interface with other 2D materials. The resultant photocatalyst form the intimate connection that can greatly enhance the photo-induced electron-hole pairs separation. For example, Cao et al. [35] hybridized ultrathin Ti_3C_2 with Bi_2WO_6 nanosheets to form a 2D/2D $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2/\text{Bi}_2\text{WO}_6$ heterojunction, resulting in the substantially improved photocatalytic CO_2 reduction in comparison to pristine Bi_2WO_6 nanosheets. The Ti_3C_2 has also been coupled with g- C_3N_4 that has resulted in enhanced photocatalytic activity towards CO_2 reduction. For example, Yang et al. [22] also formed 2D/2D $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ ultrathin heterojunction that increased photocatalytic H_2O_2 production activity, attributed to the outstanding electronic conductivity of Ti_3C_2 for boosting spatial charge carrier separation. Similarly, Ti_3C_2 was combined with a photocatalytic material (BiOBr) that demonstrated superb photocatalytic activities in H_2O detoxification and splitting [20]. The coupling of Ti_3C_2 has also been done successfully to enhance the photocatalytic reduction of CO_2 . For instance, Co-Co layered double hydroxide has been coupled with $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$ nanosheets (Co-Co LDH/TNS) to integrate the functional and structural merits of active Co species with conductive $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{T}_x$ nanosheets for the formation of hierarchical nanoarray architecture composed of ultrathin nanosheets, which promoted the separation of photogenerated charge carriers and accelerated electrons transmission. Yang et al [18] fabricated urchin-like CoZnAl-LDH/RGO/g- C_3N_4 heterojunction that formed Z-Scheme heterojunction resulting in the restriction of the recombination of photoinduced electron-hole pairs that caused the enhancement of the oxidizability and reducibility of CoZnAl-LDH and g- C_3N_4 . Z-scheme photocatalysts are named as due to their charge transfer mechanism similarity to natural photosynthesis, in which the charge-carrier transportation pathway follow a two-step photoexcitation that resembles the English letter “Z”. Although distinct works have been done on Ti_3C_2 coupling with g- C_3N_4 or LDH, however, further research is required to study the effect of binary and ternary composite to generate photocatalysts with excellent photocatalytic properties towards CO_2 reduction.

After exploring the photocatalytic system process optimization is important to identify the optimum reaction conditions such as catalyst loading, time and feed ratio towards in achieving the maximum fuel production is necessary. To understand the interaction between input process parameters and output responses such as feed conversion and product yield is necessary. Therefore, the surface response surface

methodology (RSM) has been used for experimental design, optimize and investigate the effect on conversion of reactant and products yield. Through this technique Delavari et al [36] was able to achieve maximum find the optimized conversion of CO and CH₄ up to 37.9% and 48.7%, respectively. Umar et al [37] optimized H₂ production by employing RSM technique. Therefore, RSM can be a useful technique to optimize the photocatalytic reaction process conditions. understand the kinetics of a photocatalytic reaction is important in order to determine the rate determining step and the right pathway. Delavari et al [36] employed Langmuir–Hinshelwood model to find yield rates of products reliant on effective reactants adsorption and products desorption on the catalyst surface.

Tahir et al [38] was able to modulate the reaction of CO₂ and H₂O vapours over the larger mesoporous In-doped TiO₂ catalyst surface area. Therefore, the L-H model can be helpful to modulate the photocatalytic CO₂ reduction to study the effect of rate constants on the photocatalytic activity.

In this study, Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} MXene and g-C₃N₄ modified CoAlLa-LDH structure composite is synthesized and test for photocatalytic activity through CO₂ reduction with H₂O, DRM and BRM. The Z-scheme formation between Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} MXene and g-C₃N₄ modified CoAlLa-LDH possessing the merits of conductive and semiconductive components can exhibits photocatalytic activity. The best performing catalyst is used to compare the result between fixed bed reactor and Multistage mesh photoreactor (MSM). The effects of various parameters such as amount of catalyst, feedstock gases ratio and illumination time for the photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ was studied to optimize yield and selectivity of fuel products through response surface methodology (RSM). The Langmuir-Hinshelwood model is used to study the adsorption behaviours and photocatalytic oxidation and reduction process.

1.2 Problem Statement and Hypothesis

The fossil fuels exhaustion and the devastating environmental pollution arising from their combustion have been known as two key challenges in the future. With the diminution of fossil-fuel reserves and emission of greenhouse gas CO₂, an important challenge faced by human beings is to search a clean and sustainable alternate-energy sources. Instead of CO₂ sequestration, CO₂ can be captured and reused as a carbon source for the production of other valuable chemicals. However, breaking stable CO₂ molecule requires higher energy input, making this process costly. Different approaches have been used to mitigate CO₂ effects, in particular, reduction of CO₂ emission at the source, CO₂ capture and storage; and reutilization of CO₂ by conversion to value added chemicals. Among these approaches, CO₂ utilization for the production of valuable fuels and chemicals is the more attractive approach for production of renewable fuels. The reutilization of CO₂ to fuels can be obtained through: chemical conversions, electrochemical reductions, biological conversions, reforming and photochemical reductions [39]. Many photocatalysts are in use but yet lower CO₂ conversion, lesser yield rates and selectivity were observed [11].

Among them, g-C₃N₄, a visible light-responsive semiconductor material, has drawn substantial interest due to the distinct layered structure, excellent chemical and thermal stabilities, low cost and simple synthesis. However, the photocatalytic activity of pure g-C₃N₄ for CO₂ reduction is still very low and mainly limited owing to the rapid charge recombination. The as-prepared g-C₃N₄ usually has high recombination rate of electrons and holes in bulk g-C₃N₄, which highly impact the photocatalytic activity. In this regard, several approaches have been thus adopted to improve photocatalytic CO₂ reduction activity of g-C₃N₄ photocatalysts [40]. The coupling of g-C₃N₄ with other semiconductors having appropriate band edge positions and high sorption capacity have been adopted to further promote the photocatalytic efficiency. However, the improvements were very little that caused various disadvantages, for example, shielding of irradiations, trapping of charges produced, using redox active sites, unselective adsorption of reactants and products, *etc.*[41]. This urges to find new and highly efficient composite photocatalyst for photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ to duels under UV and visible light irradiations.

Moreover, the fabrication of a novel photoreactor that serve larger exposed surface area to the light irradiations is needed so that photons can effectively and constantly be distributed throughout the entire photocatalyst surface. To this point, the challenges and possible solution strategies are:

1. Many semiconductors have been used as photocatalysts for CO₂ reduction, however the developed photocatalysts have weak light harvesting in visible light region and pose problem of fast charge carrier recombination. Among semiconductor materials, g-C₃N₄ is widely investigated because of abundant availability, comparatively cheap and numerous other advantageous. Also, the exploration of novel LDH photocatalyst by fine tuning the structural, compositional, band-gap and surface reaction sites promote light harvesting and retarding the charge recombination for practical application as a photocatalyst for the conversion of CO₂ to fuel.
2. The incorporation of Co-based LDHs catalyst that respond to visible light photocatalytic performance, have better surface charge transfer and low recombination of electron–hole would show high photocatalytic activity towards CO₂ photoreduction. The addition of electrons rich lanthanum (La) to the CoAlLa-LDH would enhance the photocatalytic activity by enhancing the reductive sites to increase the separation of photogenerated charges due to the formation of vacancy rich ternary CoAlLa-LDH. The presence aluminum in the LDHs have shown high selectivity towards CO₂ reduction and the Co²⁺ electron transfer to the Al³⁺ electrodeficient cation produce a delay in the rate of the electron–hole pair recombination. Furthermore, the presence of Al³⁺ imposes superior crystallinity to the LDH.
3. The Ti₃C₂ MXene with a large work function, good structural stability, and excellent visible light harvesting ability is electronically and catalytically considered as a suitable CO₂ reduction cocatalyst that can promote the migration and separation of photo-induced charge carriers because of its strong electronic conductivity. The Ti₃C₂ through controlled treatment could be converted Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} with enhanced photocatalytic properties due to the formation of TiO₂.

4. A photostable photocatalyst is highly needed that has high light absorption and utilization efficiency, superior charge separation, impedes recombination, absorbs in visible region and has a larger reactive surface area to adsorb high amount of CO₂. Nevertheless, by coupling of g-C₃N₄, tri metallic CoAlLa-LDH and Ti₃C₂ materials would result in the formation of a composite with high photocatalytic activity that is ascribed to the strong interfacial interaction with formation of Z-scheme and electron rich linkers of oxygen defective La/Ti sites for superior charge-transfer separation. The CoAlLa-LDH and g-C₃N₄ would form a Z-scheme mechanism for electrons transfer whereas the Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} with the presence of TiO₂ and Ti₃C₂ act as electrons mediator and electrons reservoir respectively. The substantially improved photocatalytic CO₂ reduction would be enhanced further due to the synergistic effect of electron rich lanthanum doped CoAlLa-LDH coupling with negatively charged highly conductive Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} and semiconducting g-C₃N₄ leading to improved charge separation.
5. Maximum utilization of photons has always been a problem of concern in the photoreactors therefore, the fabrication of photocatalysts on mesh may provide large illuminated surface area to reactor volume ratio and efficient light and catalyst utilization/distribution. Hence, growing of CoAlLa-LDH, g-C₃N₄ and Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} in multistage mesh (MSM) photoreactor to develop photocatalytic system is envisaged to success for the enhancement of the photoreduction of CO₂ to fuels.
6. The optimization of operating parameters would further be fruitful to maximize syngas (CO and H₂) production and selectivity. This would also be helpful to optimize operating the catalyst loading, reaction time and feed ratio. The Langmuir–Hinshelwood model developed to study the effect on dependent on desorption of the reactants surface reaction and desorption of products over the catalyst surface.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research work is to increase the efficiency of photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ to fuels through fabricating efficient photocatalytic system. The objectives of this work include:

1. To synthesize and characterize Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} and g-C₃N₄ modified CoAlLa-LDH composites for reduction of CO₂ under light irradiations;
2. To investigate the photocatalytic performance of synthesized photocatalysts for CO₂ reductions to fuels using different reforming systems and photoreactors;
3. To conduct the optimization study of the parameters such as reaction time, effect of loading and feed ratio using response surface methodology;
4. To develop kinetic model for the determination of reaction rate parameters in photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ for the obtained heterojunction.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research is aimed on solving some of the basic problems associated to low CO₂ photoreduction efficiency and selectivity towards fuel. In this viewpoint, synthesize and characterization of g-C₃N₄ and Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} modified LDH photocatalysts were examined. The modification of LDH photocatalysts with g-C₃N₄ and Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} were studied for photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ with H₂O. Some operating parameters effect such as mass of photocatalyst loading, feed ratios, and irradiation times were discussed. The effect of reductants such as H₂O and CH₄ and were studied on the production of fuels. The reaction mechanism of CO₂ reduction and quantum efficiency were studied and analyzed. The CO₂ conversion to fuels efficiency is associated to maximize yield rates of fuel products. The desired products obtained were CO and CH₄ when CO₂ was reduced in the presence of H₂O, while CO and H₂, a potential syngas when CO₂ was reduced in the presence of CH₄ through

photocatalytic dry reforming of methane (DRM) and in the presence of H₂O and CH₄ through photocatalytic bireforming of methane (BRM). Therefore, the detail on research scopes is as follows:

1. The photocatalyst such as g-C₃N₄, Ti₃C₂, Ti₃C₂T_{A/R}, CoAl-LDH, CoLa-LDH, CoAlLa-LDH, Ti₃C₂T_{A/R}/CoAlLa-LDH, g-C₃N₄/CoAlLa-LDH, g-C₃N₄/Ti₃C₂T_{A/R}/CoAlLa-LDH were synthesized. The LDHs were synthesized using coprecipitation, and subsequent hydrothermal treatment method. Ti₃C₂ and Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} were obtained through controlled etching of Ti₃AlC₂. The prepared catalysts were characterized using some equipment analysis such as XRD, FESEM, FTIR, HRTEM, PL, RAMAN, XPS, and UV-Visible spectroscopy. The crystallinity, phase, morphology and structures, metals transition states and optical properties were determined through these characterizations.
2. The photoactivity of catalyst samples were conducted to evaluate the performance of the catalyst samples. The fixed bed photoreactor was utilized to test the yield of CO, CH₄ through photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ with H₂O while yield of CO and H₂ were tested for photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ with CH₄ and H₂O+CH₄ through photocatalytic DRM and BRM, respectively. The photocatalysts were spread in the bottom of fixed bed photoreactor. The light used was a 35W HID Xe lamp having 20 mWcm⁻² light intensity fitted with a concentrator. Multistage Mesh (MSM) photoreactor was employed to compare the performance with Fixed bed reactor through photocatalytic BRM with the efficient performing photocatalyst.
3. The optimization of process parameters was conducted by utilizing response surface methodology (RSM). The parameters selected for optimization were catalyst loading, reaction time and effect of feed ratio.
4. The kinetic model was developed using Langmuir Hinshelwood mechanism to determine rate of reaction. A model equation was derived to examine the effect of parameters on the photocatalytic reaction.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The photocatalytic reduction of CO₂ was conducted to obtain CO and CH₄ in the presence of H₂O. Photocatalytic DRM and BRM were conducted to obtain syngas (CO+H₂) in the presence of CH₄ and CH₄+H₂O respectively. The photocatalyst composite obtained showed very good performance. The numerous outcomes of the research are described below:

1. A highly active ternary CoAlLa-LDH was formed through La³⁺ incorporation resulting in improvement of photogenerated charge carrier separation.
2. A facile etching strategy was adopted to construct hierarchical TiO_{2A/R} nucleates on Ti₃C₂ nanosheets that form Ti₃C₂/TiO_{2A/R} (Ti₃C₂T_{A/R}), where nanoscale TiO_{2A/R} were in-situ formed and uniformly imbedded to cover the edges of the Ti₃C₂.
3. Electrons rich CoAlLa-LDH hybridization with TiO_{2A/R} embedded Ti₃C₂ MXene and g-C₃N₄ through electrostatic assembly strategy resulting in formation of 2D/2D/2D hierarchical architecture with enhanced photocatalytic activity.
4. A new study for investigation of effect of photocatalytic CO₂ reduction with CH₄ and CO₂+CH₄ through photocatalytic DRM and BRM techniques respectively.
5. The effect of employment of MSM photoreactor on the photocatalytic through the increase of surface area and light irradiation utilization.

1.6 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is comprised of 7 chapters excluding all introductory pages, table of content and abstract. Chapter 1 consists of the introductory statements, problem statement, hypothesis, objectives, scope, study significance and outline of thesis. The literature survey on basics of photocatalysis and CO₂ reduction basics understanding

of photoreduction of CO₂, literature on Layered double hydroxides (LDH) and Ti₃C₂ MXene, literature on photoreactors, characterization techniques, development of kinetic models and Response surface methodology (RSM) were deliberated in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3 a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology and order of the research, details of synthesize methods for the catalysts and carry out the photocatalytic experiments are provided. The equipment's employed for characterizations and the type of reactors employed for reduction of CO₂. The results obtained from the analysis of characterization are discussed in Chapter 4. The photocatalytic activity test though reduction with CO₂ with H₂O, DRM and BRM are discussed for different catalysts are conducted in chapter 5. Response surface methodology (RSM) employed for the optimization of parameters and L-H model developed for the photocatalytic process and are discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with conclusions obtained from the research work and suggested recommendations for further research.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1. **Azmat Ali Khan**, and Muhammad Tahir. "Recent advancements in engineering approach towards design of photo-reactors for selective photocatalytic CO₂ reduction to renewable fuels." *Journal of CO₂ Utilization* 29 (2019): 205-239. (Q1, I.F = 5.993)
2. **Azmat Ali Khan**, Muhammad Tahir, and Abdullah Bafaqeer. "Constructing a stable 2D layered Ti₃C₂ MXene cocatalyst-assisted TiO₂/g-C₃N₄/Ti₃C₂ heterojunction for tailoring photocatalytic bireforming of methane under visible light." *Energy & Fuels* 34.8 (2020): 9810-9828. (Q2, I.F =3.421)
3. **Azmat Ali Khan**, and Muhammad Tahir. "Well-designed 2D/2D Ti₃C₂T_{A/R} MXene coupled g-C₃N₄ heterojunction with in-situ growth of anatase/rutile TiO₂ nucleates to boost photocatalytic dry-reforming of methane (DRM) for syngas production under visible light." *Applied Catalysis B: Environmental* 285 (2021): 119777. (Q1, I.F = 16.683)
4. **Azmat Ali Khan**, Muhammad Tahir, and Zaki Yamani Zakaria. "Synergistic effect of anatase/rutile TiO₂ with exfoliated Ti₃C₂T_R MXene multilayers composite for enhanced CO₂ photoreduction via dry and bi-reforming of methane under UV–visible light." *Journal of Environmental Chemical Engineering* 9.3 (2021): 105244. (Q1, I.F = 4.300)
5. **Azmat Ali Khan**, and Muhammad Tahir. "Synergistic Effect of Co/La in Oxygen Vacancy Rich Ternary CoAlLa Layered Double Hydroxide with Enhanced Reductive Sites for Selective Photoreduction of CO₂ to CH₄." *Energy & Fuel* (2021). (Q2, I.F =3.421)
6. Muhammad Tahir, **Azmat Ali Khan**, Sehar Tasleem, Rehan Mansoor, and Wei Keen Fan. 2021. 'Titanium Carbide (Ti₃C₂) MXene as a Promising Co-catalyst for Photocatalytic CO₂ Conversion to Energy-Efficient Fuels: A Review', *Energy & Fuels*. (Q2, I.F =3.421)