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ZEOLITE-BASED CATALYSTS FOR SYNTHESIS OF CARBON NANOTUBES

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Abstract
Supported transition-metal catalysts were prepared on zeolite by self-propagating high-temperature synthesis method and were tested upon receipt of carbon nanotubes by CVD. The effectiveness of zeolite as matrix for catalysts in chemical vapor deposition synthesis of multiwall carbon nanotubesis is presented here. Obtaining of carbon nanotubes on zeolite-based catalysts was characterized by the transmission and scanning electron microscopy as well as Raman spectroscopy. For catalyst of zeolite-Co_3O_4 the carbon nanotubes have a diameter of 11 nm. For catalyst of zeolite-Fe_2O_3 the carbon nanotubes have a diameter from 7 to 21 nm. Raman spectrum indicates at low defectiveness of obtained carbon nanotubes.

Key words: zeolite, catalyst, self-propagating surface thermosynthesis, carbon nanotube

Introduction

Carbon nanotubes due to their unique physico-chemical properties are called as «materials of the future» [1] it's triggered an exceptional splash during investigating of the carbon nanomaterials. Carbon nanotubes are used in many application fields such as energy, biotechnology, microelectronics, textile, etc. [2-4]. The producing of composite materials on the basis of carbon nanotubes is one of the main application fields. There are many methods for the synthesis of carbon nanotubes such as electro arc, CVD synthesis, flame synthesis [5], etc. Currently, CVD method is recognized as the leader in synthesizing of CNTs.

CVD method is an inexpensive system, and there is a feasibility to use different catalysts and various carbon containing sources in solid, liquid and gas forms.Structure and properties of carbon nanotubes depends on many factors: initial components, composition and structure of catalyst, synthesis conditions and other. The catalysts methods are applied for synthesis of carbon nanotubes.

Frequently, the catalyst is the complex of matrix and active phases. The catalysts on the basis of transition metal particles from fine metal or their compounds such as salts and oxides are the most effective in the synthesis process of carbon nanotubes. The silicon wafers [6], aerogels, quartz, mesoporous silica [7] are used as matrixes for the catalyst. Carbonaceous precursors are decomposed into catalytic nanoparticles but the carbon is diffuse through a catalytic nanoparticle and sprout into CNTs. There are two main model of carbon nanotubes growth: «tip-growth model» and «base-growth model».

Depending on composition and structure of the catalyst there is one or the other growth mechanism. The choice of matrix for catalysts, its structure predetermines the properties of final product. Creation of new catalytic systems with various composition of active phases and matrix allows obtaining the carbon nanotubes with different morphology and properties.

Experimental

Obtaining of catalyst

It must be considered the nature of transition metal when choosing the catalyst. In series of transition metals from Ti to Ni, the bonding force M-C with filled electrons of d-level is rising [8]. The formation of strong bindings such as Ti, V, Cr with carbon is determine their low catalytic activity. For this reason such catalyst as oxides of cobalt and iron were used.

For preparation of catalysts the synthetic zeolite (80 % is silicon oxides) with apparent density of about 0.9187 g/cm^3 was used. The zeolite has a structure of thin scaly plates. Previously, the zeolite was heated at a temperature of 1000 °C for the removing of volatile compounds, and in synthesis process of CNT the zeolite leave unchanged its composition and structure. After thermal treatment, investigations on zeolite with the help of XRD and SEM methods were carried out (Fig. 1).

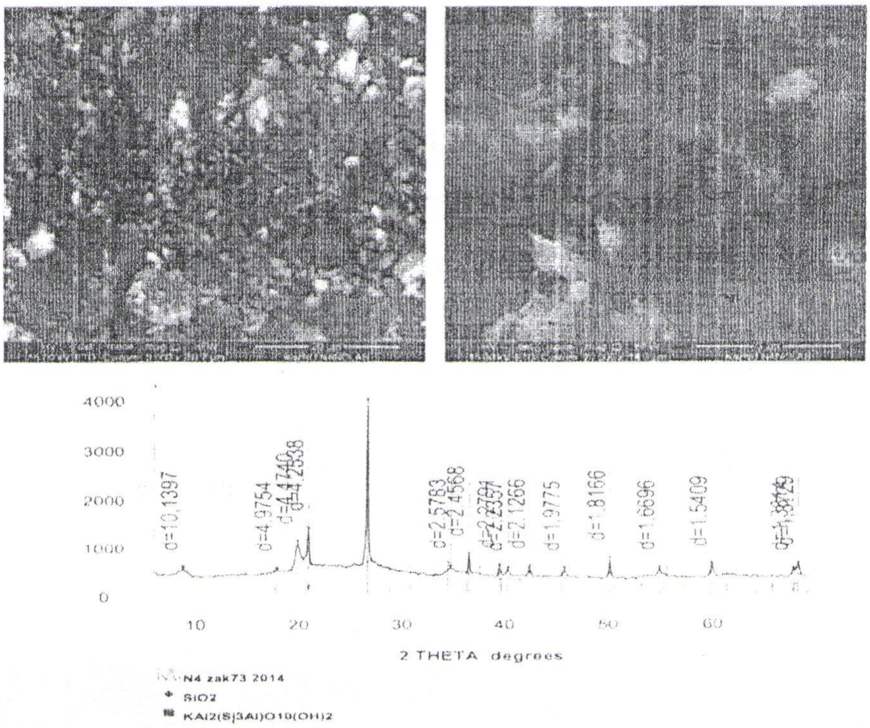

Fig. 1 – SEM images and XRD diffractogram of pure zeolite

The base phase of zeolite is SiO_2 (80 %) and small part of illite is $KAl_2(Si_3Al)O_{10}(OH)_2$. The concentration of the active components of zeolite was 3 wt. %. For preparation of zeolite-based catalyst, a pure zeolite in amounts of 1 g was introduced in aqueous solution of cobaltous nitrate or ferrous chloride as well as glycine in stoichiometric ratio.

After that the sample was dried for 30 minutes in air at 100 °C. Then the catalyst was placed in a furnace where it was heated for 1 hour at a temperature of 500 - 600 °C. The high temperature initiates the self-propagating surface thermosynthesis, the result of which is the formation of cobalt oxide (Co_3O_4) or iron oxide (Fe_2O_3) and ultradisperse particles [9].

$$3Co(NO_3)_2{\cdot}6H_2O + 6C_2H_5NO_2 + 0.5O_2 = 12CO + 33H_2O + 6N_2 + Co_3O_4$$

XRD analysis of obtained metals showed that cobaltous oxide has the following formula Co_3O_4 and the ferrous oxide - Fe_2O_3 (Fig. 2).

Synthesis of carbon nanotubes on the zeolite-based catalysts by chemical vapor deposition

The chemical vapor deposition apparatus was used for synthesis of carbon nanotubes. Gas flow is - 650 cm^3/min, H_2 - 150 cm^3/min, C_2H_2 – 19.5 cm^3/min. The synthesis temperature is 710 °C, the synthesis time is - 20 minutes.

Results and Discussion

The obtained carbon nanotubes are grown on zeolite-based catalysts and were investigated by scanning (Quanta 3D 200i, FEI) and transmission electron microscopes (JEOL JEM-1011) as well as Raman spectrometer (Solver Spectrum, NT-MDT). Fig.3 shows the SEM and TEM images of carbon nanotubes are grown on zeolite with Co_3O_4.

According to TEM images, it can be seen that multi-walled carbon nanotubes have a diameter of about 11 nm.

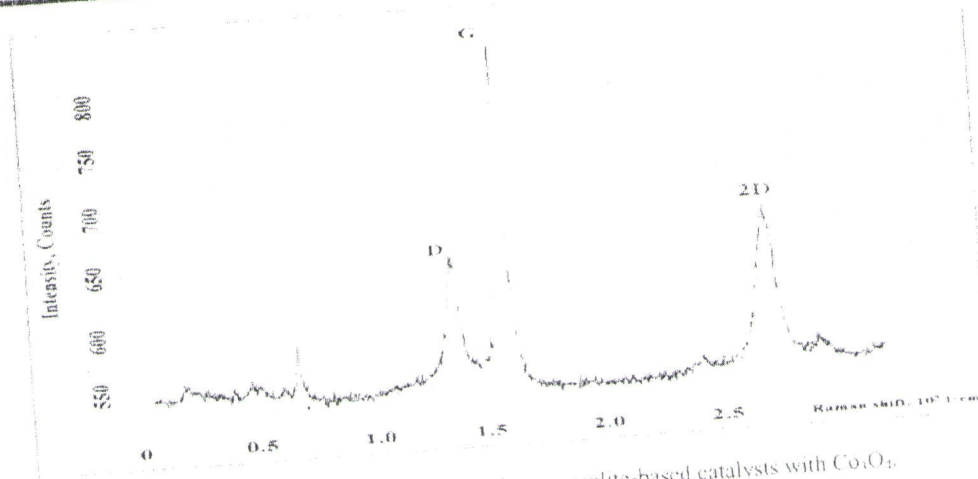

Fig.4.Ramanspectrumof carbon nanotubes on zeolite-based catalysts with Co_3O_4.

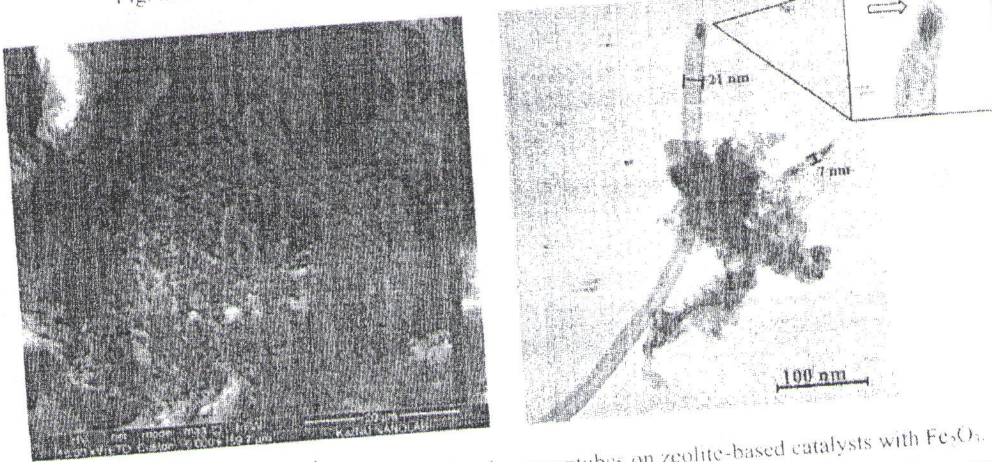

Fig. 5.SEM and TEM images of carbon nanotubes on zeolite-based catalysts with Fe_2O_3.

With the help of TEM images, it can be seen that multiwall carbon nanotubes have a diameters of about 7 and 21 nm respectively; also the image clearly shows the platelet shape of zeolite particles. As seen from the picture, the catalyst particles are at the top of MWCNTs and some catalyst particles are fixed at certain length of the nanotube. The fact that this is a top but not the basis of carbon nanotubes indicates a «cap» on the upper part of catalysts particles. This case illustrates the «tip-growth model», where the interaction of the catalyst and substrate is weak. The hydrocarbon is decomposed on the upper surface of catalyst particles and carbon nanotube crystallizes in place of coalescence of particles of catalysts and substrate, after that the catalysts particle is rend off from substrate, and further crystallization of carbon nanotube leads to migration of catalyst particles to upward. Until the top part of the metal particles is open for access and decomposition of hydrocarbon, the concentration gradient in the metal particle enables to diffuse the carbon and therefore provides a further growth of the carbon nanotube [10]. Availability of a «cap» on top of the catalyst indicates a cessation of growth and deactivation of the catalyst particles. Fig. 6 shows the Raman spectrum of carbon nanotubes on zeolite-based catalysts with Fe_2O_3.

The spectrum of this sample has the following peaks, peak D at a wave-length has 1355 cm^{-1}, G maximum has 1572 cm^{-1}. For this sample of CNT the ratio of peak intensity is I_D/I_G is 0.67. This ratio indicates at low defectiveness of obtained carbon nanotubes. Raman defectiveness of D-peak in graphite and nanotubes is similar. The difference is the width at half height (FWHM full width at half maximum – standard expression).

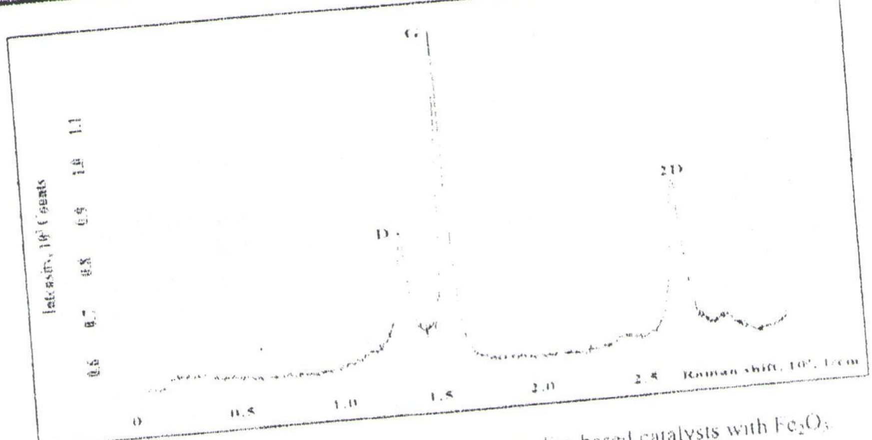

Fig. 6.Ramanspectrumof carbon nanotubes on zeolite-based catalysts with Fe_2O_3

The spectrum of D-band of multiwall carbon nanotubes (δ_v – 80-90 cm^{-1}) is 2 times wider than a similar spectrum of D-band of graphite (δ_v = 32-35 cm^{-1}).For MWNTs a sample is synthesized on zeolite with Fe_2O_3, have a half value width of D-band is δ_v = 52-75 cm^{-1}[12].

Conclusions

The results of investigation have shown the effectiveness of zeolite-based catalysts during synthesis of carbon nanotubes with the help of chemical vapor deposition method. The self-propagating surface thermo synthesis method promotes the producing of metal oxides particles on zeolite. Carbon nanotubes were synthesized on zeolite-based catalysts and were investigated by transmission and scanning electron microscopy as well as Raman spectroscopy. For the catalyst on zeolite-Co_3O_4 the carbon nanotubes have a diameter of 11 nm. For the catalyst on zeolite-Fe_2O_3 the carbon nanotubes have diameters from 7 to 21 nm. Raman spectrum indicates a low defectiveness of obtained carbon nanotubes. Obtained results are confirmed the perceptiveness of zeolite-based catalysts for synthesis of carbon nanotubes by CVD.

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