Comparative Study of Heat Treatment on $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ Nanorods as an Electrode Material for Lithium Ion Batteries

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Uniform $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods with the width of 100 nm and the length of 2 $\mu$m have been synthesized by facile hydrothermal method. To study the influence of heat treatment on electrochemical properties, the as-synthesized $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods have been calcined at 400 °C for 3 hrs in air, following the characterization of the phase and morphology of $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods by XRD and SEM. The electrochemical characterization of the $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods has conducted for the lithium half-cells in the voltage range from 1.5 V to 3.75 V (vs. Li/Li$^+$). The first charge/discharge capacities of as-synthesized and heat treated $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ were 259/297, 274/307 mAh g$^{-1}$, respectively. The heat-treated $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods delivers 307 mAh g$^{-1}$ at a rate of 28 mA g$^{-1}$ (0.1 C), and it exhibits the high rate performance compared to as-synthesized $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods. The oxidation states of Mo and O in $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods have measured by XPS to indicate the strong bonding between Mo and O after heat treatment. Our results present that the oxygen ion filled its vacancy and bonded the molybdenum(V) ion, changed to molybdenum(VI) ion after heat-treatment. It helps to form more stable structure for the heat-treated $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods, showing the improved electrochemical performances as an electrode material for LIBs.

Keywords: Molybdenum Trioxide, Hydrothermal Method, Heat Treatment, Lithium-Ion Battery.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rechargeable lithium-ion battery (LIB) is one of the most important parts in portable devices such as cellular phones and laptop computers because of its high energy density and long cycle life in comparison with the other types of rechargeable batteries. Recently, LIB has been applied to Electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) which require both high energy density and high power density. Therefore, it should be considered that rechargeable LIB with higher capacity as well as high rate capability to meet these requirements.

Various transition metal oxides have been intensively studied as high capacity electrode materials of LIBs in recent years. Molybdenum trioxide ($\alpha$-MoO$_3$) is one of lithium intercalation materials which lithium ions can be reversibly inserted and extracted electrochemically. It is stable layered orthorhombic structure which makes lithium ions to intercalate in double sheet layers build up by MoO$_6$ octahedra. Although it shows good structural stability, cycle life and rate characteristics of this material are not good due to low electronic conductivity. In order to solve this problem, some researchers have reported several approaches to enhance electrochemical properties of $\alpha$-MoO$_3$.

Nanostructured materials have been attracted as one of key solutions by reducing dimensions for higher lithium ion de/intercalation rates. Nanostructures provide materials with large surfaces which facilitate electrochemical reaction. From this point of view, nanomaterials with narrow size distribution and uniform morphology are required for lithium insertion host materials. Here, we have synthesized uniform $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods with the width of 100 nm and the length of 2 $\mu$m by simple hydrothermal method. Hydrothermal method is one of the most powerful methods for synthesis of nanomaterials. It can be controlled by temperature, pressure, solvent and time for size and morphology of nanomaterials. The as-synthesized $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods are annealed to overcome low crystallinity and the relations between heat treatment and electrochemical performances of $\alpha$-MoO$_3$ nanorods are investigated.
2. EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS
The α-MoO₃ nanorods were prepared by hydrothermal synthesis. First, Na₂MoO₄·2H₂O was stirred in 15 mL DI-water for 15 mins, then 20 mL 3 M HCl was added and stirred in 20 mL in the mixture. After mixing, 35 mL DI-water is added in the mixture, then the mixture is transferred to 100 mL teflon-lined stainless steel autoclave and hydrothermally treated at 180 °C for 6 hrs. After hydrothermal method, a white colloidal suspension was washed with DI-water and ethanol 3 times respectively and then dried at 80 °C overnight. To remove H₂O hydrated in α-MoO₃ and improve the crystallinity of α-MoO₃, the as-synthesized sample was sintered at 400 °C for 3 hrs.

The X-ray diffraction patterns were obtained on a diffractometer (D/MAX-RB 12KW, RIGAKU, JAPAN) with Cu Kα radiation (λ = 0.15418 nm) over an angular range of 10° ≤ 2θ ≤ 70° at a step width of 0.01°. The morphology and crystalline phase of the α-MoO₃ were analyzed by scanning electron microscopy (SEM, XL30, Philips, Netherlands). The electrochemical performance of α-MoO₃ nanorods was evaluated by assembling CR2032-type coin cell with a Li metal as both counter and reference electrode and a polymer membrane separator (Celgard 2400). The organic electrolyte was 1 M LiPF₆ in a 1:1 mixture of ethylene carbonate and dimethyl carbonate. The cathode electrode is prepared by 75 wt% of α-MoO₃ nanorods, 17 wt% of carbon black, 8 wt% of polyvinylidene fluoride binder was dissolved in N-methyl2-pyrrolidone well mixed and then dried at 120 °C for 6 hrs in vacuum. Electrochemical test was performed by a WBCS3000 multi-channel battery cycler (WonaTech, South Korea) and VMP3 potentiostat (BioLogic, France). Cyclic voltammetry (CV) was measured in the voltage range of 1.5 to 3.75 V (vs. Li/Li⁺) with a scan rate of 0.5 mV s⁻¹ and galvanostatic charge–discharge test was performed in the voltage range of 1.5 to 3.5 V (vs. Li/Li⁺) at various current rates from 0.1 to 5 C. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was performed with a K-alpha (Thermo VG Scientific, USA) using 180° double focusing hemispherical analyzer with Al Kα (1486.65 eV) X-ray radiation under a base pressure of 1.00 × 10⁻⁹ Pa. The carbon 1s line has been used to calibrate the binding energy scale for the XPS measurements.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Figure 1 shows the X-ray diffraction pattern of α-MoO₃ nanorods. The XRD pattern of the α-MoO₃ nanorods is well indexed with α-MoO₃ (JCPDS No. 65-2421) and the corresponding miller indices are presented in Figure 1. Three obvious peaks are detected at 2θ = 12.65°, 25.61°, and 38.97° which correspond to the crystal planes of (020), (040), (060), respectively. The intensities of these planes are increased after heat treatment and the crystal planes of (101) and (111) can be detected which indicates the improvement of crystallinity of α-MoO₃.

The preferred orientation of (010) plane suggests that the morphology of as-synthesized α-MoO₃ would be a rod-like shaped one-dimensional (1D) structure. The following SEM micrographs of as-synthesized α-MoO₃ and heat-treated α-MoO₃ in Figure 2 confirm these 1D structures. As-synthesized α-MoO₃ shows a uniform rod-shaped morphology with 2 μm length, 100 nm width. Uniform nanorod-shapes for α-MoO₃ powders were maintained after heat treatment as shown in Figure 2(b).

The electrochemical performance of heat-treated α-MoO₃ nanorods was evaluated by cyclic voltammetry at a scan rate of 0.5 mV s⁻¹ in Figure 3(a). In the first cycle, two strong peaks were observed at 2.59 V and 2.08 V in the cathodic reaction while a single peak
is observed at 2.73 V in the anodic reaction. In the second cycle, the cathodic peak at 2.59 V disappeared, indicating an irreversible reaction between Li ion and MoO$_6$ octahedral inter/intra-layers at the initial intercalation of Li ions.$^7$ Disappearance of this peak might be related to a structural modulation that occurs upon insertion/extraction of Li$^+$ ions. Galvanostatic cycling results also show same behaviors that the first plateau at 2.78 V for heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ disappeared in the following cycle (Fig. 3(b)). Theoretical capacity of α-MoO$_3$ is reported about 280 mAh g$^{-1}$, corresponding to the intercalation of 1.5 Li$^+$ ion.$^{12}$ The first charge/discharge capacities of as-synthesized and heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ were 259/297, 274/307 mAh g$^{-1}$, respectively (Fig. 3(b)). The discharge capacity loss of heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ between 1st and 2nd cycle is ca. 26 mAh g$^{-1}$ and that of as-synthesized α-MoO$_3$ is ca. 63 mAh g$^{-1}$, indicating the irreversible capacity of α-MoO$_3$ was decreased after the heat-treatment.

Both α-MoO$_3$ nanorods were galvanostatically tested with variable current rates from 0.1 to 5 C-rate as shown in Figure 3(c). Upon increasing the discharge rates to 28, 140, 280, 560, and 1400 mA g$^{-1}$, reversible capacities of as-synthesized α-MoO$_3$ and heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ were 297, 107, 68, 49, 25 mAh g$^{-1}$, and 307, 230, 168, 104, 77 mAh g$^{-1}$, respectively. Heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ nanorods show higher rate performance than as-synthesized α-MoO$_3$ nanorods because of their high crystallinity. The cycling performance was tested under the galvanostatic mode at 1 C-rate in Figure 3(d). As-synthesized and heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ nanorods in lithium half-cells deliver 243 and 242 mAh g$^{-1}$ of discharge capacity to 1.5 V (vs. Li/Li$^+$). Discharge capacities for the as-synthesized and heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ electrodes at 1 C-rate were 39.7 and 65.0% respectively after 50 cycles versus the initial discharge capacity. From the tendency of successive capacities, the heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ electrode is expected to maintain the reversible discharge capacity of 159 mAh g$^{-1}$ after cycling.

The XPS spectra of both as-synthesized and heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ were measured to further explain the effect of heat-treatment (Fig. 4). The XPS spectra of both α-MoO$_3$ nanorods shows Mo 3$d_{3/2}$ and 3$d_{5/2}$ doublet, which indicates the presence of two types of molybdenum(V, VI) oxo-species. The binding energies of Mo 3$d_{3/2}$ and 3$d_{5/2}$ doublet in the heat-treated α-MoO$_3$ are 234.75, 232.08 eV, respectively, which is higher than those of the as-synthesized α-MoO$_3$. It indicates that oxygen vacancy exists in the as-synthesized α-MoO$_3$ nanorods and Mo$^{6+}$ ions are more generated after heat treatment.$^{13,14}$ The XPS spectra of α-MoO$_3$ for O$_{1s}$ also show that the binding energy was 529.28 and 529.07 eV. The binding energy
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Fig. 4. XPS spectra of α-MoO₃ nanorods for Mo 3d and O 1s core levels.

of O₁s tend to increase as presence of OH groups and association with H₂O. It is important to note that the battery performance is sensitive to H₂O exposure. After heat-treatment, the oxygen ion filled its vacancy and bonded the molybdenum(V) ion, changed to molybdenum(VI) ion, resulting in higher electrochemical performance of the heat-treated α-MoO₃ nanorods.

4. CONCLUSION

We have synthesized the α-MoO₃ nanorods by facile hydrothermal method and conducted a comparative study between the as-synthesized and heat-treated α-MoO₃ nanorods on their electrochemical performances. There is no morphological change of α-MoO₃ nanorods after heat treatment. While the most XRD peak intensity is increased which indicate the improvement of crystallinity of α-MoO₃ nanorods after heat treatment. The heat-treated α-MoO₃ nanorods deliver 307 mAh g⁻¹ at a rate of 28 mA g⁻¹ (0.1 C) and it exhibits higher rate capability as compared to that of the as-synthesized α-MoO₃ nanorods. The XPS spectrum shows the binding energy of as-synthesized α-MoO₃ nanorods for O₁s is related to exposure to H₂O. Furthermore, the binding energy change of Mo 3d₃/₂ and 3d₅/₂ clear to confirm the increase of oxidation states of molybdenum ions after heat treatment of α-MoO₃. Our study supports that the heat-treated α-MoO₃ nanorods could form more stable structure with less oxygen defects, showing the improved electrochemical performances as an electrode material for LIBs.

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References and Notes


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