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Direct measurement of enthalpy and entropy changes in NH₃ promoted O₂ activation over Cu–CHA at low temperature

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Oxygen activation is a key step in the selective catalytic reduction of nitrogen oxides with ammonia (NH₃-SCR) over Cu-chabazite. We present direct measurements of oxygen adsorption at low temperatures over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and framework-bound Cu⁺ species in Cu-chabazite with Si/Al = 14 using isothermal microcalorimetry combined with mass spectrometry. The enthalpy change for O₂ adsorption over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes at 200 °C is determined to be

–79 kJ/mol. By fitting a Langmuir isotherm, the corresponding entropy change is determined to be –142 J/(mol*K) at 10% O₂. The results show that O₂ adsorption at low temperatures over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes is more facile than on framework-bound Cu⁺ species. The experimental results are in agreement with density functional theory calculations showing a lower barrier for O₂ activation over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes as compared to the framework-bound Cu⁺ species.

Introduction

Copper-functionalised zeolites with the chabazite framework structure (Cu–CHA) are efficient catalysts for selective catalytic reduction of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) by ammonia (NH₃-SCR). This reaction is the basis for the current technology to control NO_x emissions from diesel and bio-diesel exhausts.^[1,2] The NH₃-SCR reaction over Cu–CHA has been intensively studied and reaction mechanisms have been proposed with some variations in elementary steps and structural configurations.^[3–6] In general, the reaction is based on a redox cycle, where Cu(I) is oxidised by O₂ and reduced by NH₃ and NO.^[3,6,7] Furthermore, the reaction mechanism at temperatures below 250 °C has been shown to be different from that at higher temperatures.^[8,9] The change in

reaction mechanism often leads to a decrease in the NO_x conversion with increasing temperature in the range 250–350 °C. According to the current views of the NH₃-SCR reaction, the change in reaction mechanism is related to a change in the character of the active Cu(I) species. At low temperature, the Cu(I) species are solvated by NH₃-ligands forming mobile [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes, whereas Cu(I) species become bound to the framework at higher temperatures.^[5,7,9–12] At low temperatures, it has been suggested that O₂ is activated over a pair of [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes.^[4,5,12,13] This suggestion is based experimentally on the observation that, at low Cu loadings, the NH₃-SCR reaction shows a second order dependence on the Cu loading and that the oxidation of Cu(I) with O₂ has a second order behaviour.^[4,9] Moreover, density functional theory (DFT) calculations have revealed that O₂ activation over single framework-bound Cu⁺ species is strongly endothermic, whereas O₂ activation becomes feasible if O₂ reacts with a pair of Cu(I)-ions.^[12,14,15]

According to the present understanding, the oxidation of Cu(I) with O₂ should be more efficient over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complex, as compared to framework-bound Cu⁺. In this work, we present a microcalorimetry study of O₂ adsorption on [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and framework-bound Cu⁺ species in Cu–CHA, and compare the experimental results with DFT calculations. The measurements allow for direct determination of the enthalpy change upon O₂ adsorption over pairs of [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes. By fitting a Langmuir isotherm, the corresponding entropy change can also be determined. By simultaneously monitoring the heat release and the amount of oxygen adsorbed using mass spectrometry, we show that O₂ adsorbs on both types of Cu(I) species at 200 °C. The process is, however, considerably more facile over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes. The apparent activation energy of O₂ adsorption over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes is determined to be lower than over the framework-bound Cu⁺ species. The experimental results are in agreement with the DFT calculations showing a lower

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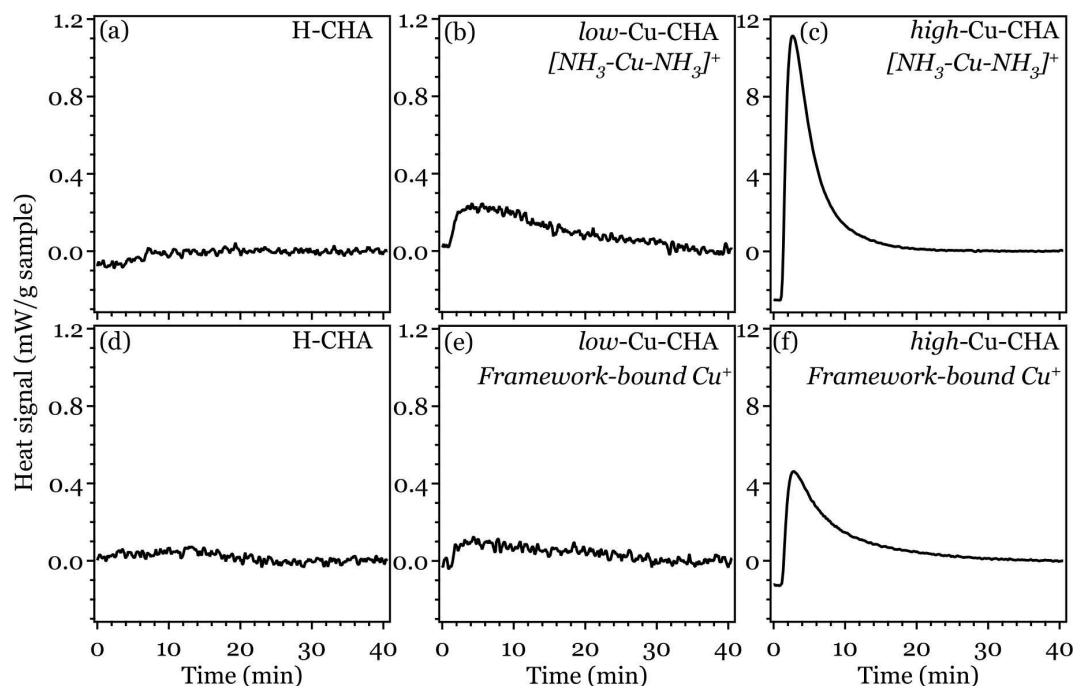


Figure 1. Heat signal recorded during O₂ exposure (500 ppm) at 200 °C over the H-CHA, *low*- and *high*-Cu-CHA samples. (a-c) are pre-treated in NO and NH₃ at 200 °C (see SI, S1.2) yielding [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes for (b) and (c). (d-f) are subsequently pre-treated in O₂ at 500 °C (see SI, S1.2) yielding framework-bound Cu⁺ species for (e) and (f). Note that the range of the y-axis for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample is a magnitude higher than that of the other samples.

barrier for O₂ activation over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes as compared to the framework-bound Cu⁺ species.

Experimental

Two aqueous ion-exchanged Cu-CHA (Si/Al = 14) samples with low and high copper loading were prepared, *i.e.* *low*-Cu-CHA (0.60 wt.% Cu) and *high*-Cu-CHA (3.3 wt.% Cu) (see SI, S1.1). The parent H-CHA zeolite was used as reference. To form the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes, the Cu-CHA samples were reduced in NO and NH₃ at 250 °C for 30 min and subsequently at 200 °C for 30 min.^[8,16] The framework-bound Cu⁺ species were formed by heating the reduced sample in Ar to 500 °C for 60 min whereby the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes decompose yielding predominantly framework-bound Cu⁺ species (see SI, S1.2).^[8,17] The [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and the framework-bound Cu⁺ species have been identified using X-ray absorption spectroscopy in previous studies in Cu-CHA samples with similar Si/Al ratio and Cu loadings.^[8,16,17] The heat signal during exposure of the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and the framework-bound Cu⁺ species in a gas flow containing 500 ppm of O₂ in Ar at 200 °C was recorded for the two Cu-CHA samples and the parent H-CHA zeolite, using a flow-through sample cell for the calorimetry. The amount of adsorbed oxygen was determined from the difference of *m/z* = 32, and the scaled *m/z* = 84 intensity of Kr as trace gas, using a mass spectrometer connected to the outlet of the sample cell.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the heat release during O₂ adsorption for the parent zeolite, and for the NH₃ solvated and framework-bound

Cu(I) in the two Cu-CHA catalysts. The corresponding heat release, calculated heat of adsorption and O/Cu ratio are presented in Table 1. No significant heat release is observed during O₂ exposure of the H-CHA zeolite at 200 °C, while there are clear heat effects for the Cu-CHA samples. For the samples with the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes, we find a heat release of 0.23 J/g for the *low*-Cu-CHA sample, and a significantly higher release of 3.2 J/g for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample. The corresponding numbers for the samples with framework-bound Cu⁺ species are 0.09 J/g for the *low*-Cu-CHA sample and 2.1 J/g for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample. The two important observations are (1) the heat release for the catalysts with the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes is higher than the heat release for the framework-bound Cu⁺ species, and (2) the heat release for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample is considerably higher than for the *low*-Cu-CHA sample.

Figure 2 presents the heat release during O₂ exposure over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and the framework-bound Cu⁺ species in the *high*-Cu-CHA sample between 75 to 275 °C. For the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes, the heat release increases with increasing temperature up to 200 °C after which it substantially decreases. Below 200 °C, we speculate that the possibility to activate O₂ over Cu(I)-pairs increases with increasing temperature thanks to faster diffusion of the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes, resulting in an increased heat release. It is known that [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ starts to decompose above 200 °C, yielding framework-bound [Cu-NH₃]⁺ and Cu⁺ species.^[8,18] It is anticipated that the sharp decrease in heat release for temperatures above 200 °C is a result of decomposition of the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes. For the framework-bound Cu⁺ species, the heat release instead increases within the entire temperature range examined. No

		H-CHA	low-Cu-CHA	high-Cu-CHA ^[a]
[NH ₃ -Cu-NH ₃] ⁺	J/g sample	0.00	0.23	3.2 ± 0.1
	kJ/mol Cu	n.a.	2.5	6.2 ± 0.3
	kJ/mol O ₂	n.a.	n.a.	79 ± 6
	O/Cu ^[b]	n.a.	n.a.	0.16 ± 0.01
Framework-bound Cu ⁺	J/g sample	0.04	0.09	2.1 ± 0.3
	kJ/mol Cu	n.a.	1.0	4.0 ± 0.5
	kJ/mol O ₂	n.a.	n.a.	120 ± 9
	O/Cu ^[b]	n.a.	n.a.	0.07 ± 0.01

^[a] The values are averaged from three separate measurements for each Cu species, see SI, S3.1. ^[b] The O/Cu ratio is calculated by dividing double the amount of adsorbed O₂ [mol/g catalyst], by the total amount of Cu [mol/g catalyst].

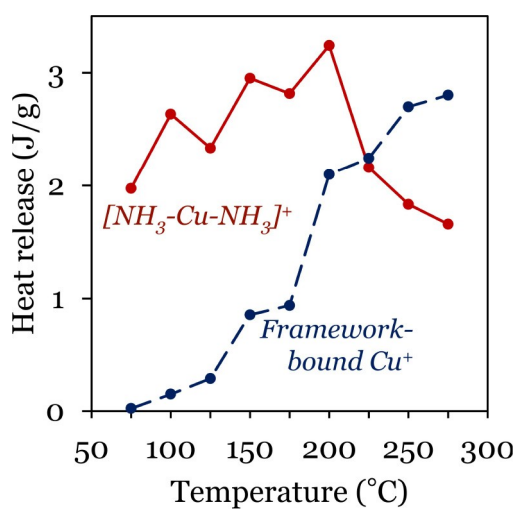


Figure 2. Heat release during O₂ exposure (500 ppm) over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes (red dots with solid line for guidance) and the framework-bound Cu⁺ species (blue dots with dashed line for guidance) in the high-Cu-CHA sample between 75 and 275 °C.

significant heat release is in this case observed below 150 °C. From the O₂ exposure experiments the apparent activation energies were obtained. The activation enthalpy for O₂ adsorption over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and framework-bound Cu⁺ species is determined to be 15 and 39 kJ/mol, respectively (see SI, S3.2).

The measured heats of O₂ adsorption on the different Cu(I) species are compared with DFT calculations. Figure 3 shows possible reaction paths for the O₂ adsorption over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pairs and framework-bound Cu⁺-pairs. The CHA structure is modelled using a hexagonal unit cell, which includes 36 tetrahedral positions with two Al atoms per unit cell, corresponding to an Si/Al ratio of 17. Because it is unlikely to have Al-O-Si-O-Al sequences in Si-rich zeolites,^[19] we use an Al-O-(Si-O)₂-Al sequence with two Al atoms placed in neighbouring six-membered rings to describe the general trends. In our previous work,^[14] the Al-distribution has been found to have an effect on the stability of the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pairs in Cu-CHA, which probably will affect the probability for [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pair formation. The dependence of the O₂ adsorption energy on the Al-distribution is studied by considering five different structural

configurations. The five configurations are selected from our previous work,^[14] and corresponds to an Al-Al distance of 6.28, 7.24, 8.60, 11.46 and 13.77 Å, respectively. Further details of the calculations are given in SI, S2.

To directly compare the experimentally measured heats of O₂ adsorption with the calculated values, the reference (zero level) for the O₂ adsorption over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pair is considered to be the precursor state of the molecularly adsorbed O₂ (see the structure Cu-pair in Figure 3(a)). In similarity, the reference for the O₂ adsorption over the framework-bound Cu⁺-pairs is taken when the two Cu ions are close enough for O₂ to adsorb (see the structure Cu-pair in Figure 3(b)). The final structure for the adsorption of O₂ in a peroxo-state has been studied in detail in Refs. [6, 16, 20].

Previously, the linear [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complex has been shown to be mobile at reaction temperatures^[7] and the diffusion barrier between cages is calculated to be low (~0.3 eV).^[21] Thus, the diffusion step has not been considered in this reaction mechanism (Figure 3(a)). The adsorption of O₂ over the complex-pair proceeds via molecular O₂ adsorption (CuO₂Cu) to the peroxo-state (CuOO-Cu) with a low barrier of 21 kJ/mol. The final CuOOCu configuration is a singlet with two antiferromagnetically coupled magnetic moments (0.6 μ_B per copper ion), implying that the formal oxidation state of copper in this configuration is +2.^[20] The five different Al-distribution configurations give a span of the adsorption enthalpy of O₂, which ranges from 53 to 71 kJ/mol. The difference between the configurations originates mainly from the different Coulomb interactions among the five configurations.

The adsorption of O₂ over the framework-bound Cu⁺ also requires a pair of Cu⁺ ions, which has been discussed in Ref. [15]. A possible reaction path for O₂ activation over the framework-bound Cu⁺-pair is shown in Figure 3(b). Here, the locations of the two Al atoms are similar with that used in Ref. [15]. Each Cu⁺ species is preferably located in the six-membered ring bridging two framework oxygen atoms (2Cu).^[21-23] To make it feasible to adsorb O₂, the two Cu⁺ ions need to be sufficiently close. The barrier for Cu⁺ ion diffusion forming the Cu-pair structure is calculated to be 72 kJ/mol and the pair formation is endothermic by 38 kJ/mol. The activation of O₂ over the framework-bound Cu ions from this configuration (Cu-pair) has a low barrier of 19 kJ/mol. The final

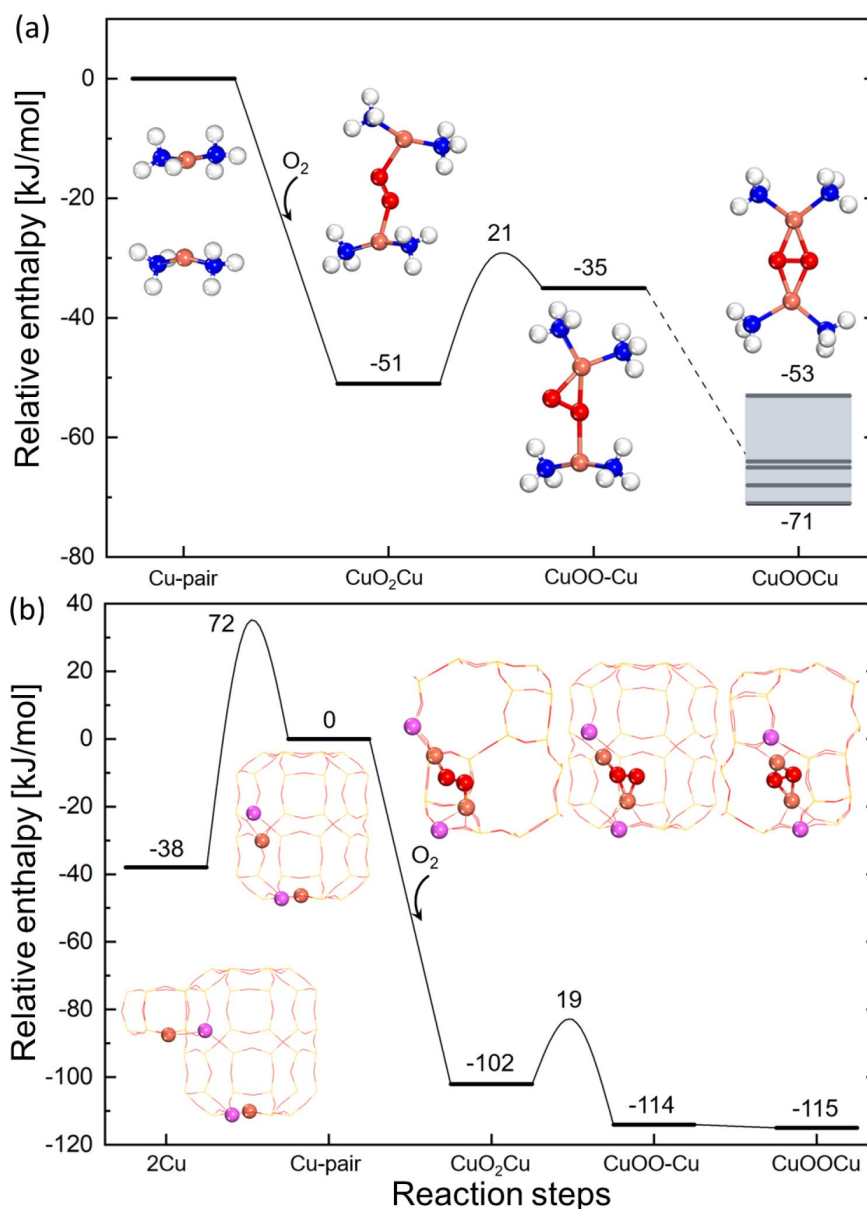


Figure 3. The potential enthalpy landscape at 200 °C of: (a) O₂ adsorption over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pairs in Cu-CHA; (b) O₂ adsorption over framework-bound Cu⁺-pairs. Five selected different Al-distribution configurations for the mobile Cu-complex pair case have been chosen to study the dependence of adsorption energies on the Al-distribution, which results in a span of adsorption enthalpy. The structure for each step is shown. For clarity, the CHA framework is removed in (a) and kept as lines in (b). All energies are zero-point corrected. Atom colour codes: copper (light brown), aluminium (purple), nitrogen (blue), oxygen (red) and hydrogen (white).

CuOOCu species is a triplet with magnetic moments on the copper ions for which we assign the formal oxidation state of copper to be +2. The total adsorption energy for the activated O₂ over the framework-bound Cu⁺-pair is 115 kJ/mol.

The DFT results are in good agreement with the microcalorimetry data, showing a lower barrier over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes as compared to framework-bound Cu⁺ species. The barrier for O₂ adsorption is calculated to be 21 kJ/mol over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ pair, which is close to our experimental value of 15 kJ/mol determined from the Eyring plot (SI S3.2). The corresponding barriers are not as close for the framework-bound case (72 vs 39 kJ/mol), which can be attributed to the

choice of Al-distribution. The DFT calculations show that the origin of the apparent activation energy is different for the two cases. The barrier for O₂ activation over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ pair originates from the formation of the CuOO-Cu species, whereas the barrier over framework-bound Cu⁺ is connected with diffusion of Cu⁺ ions, forming a Cu⁺-pair.

From the DFT calculations, the adsorption enthalpy of activated O₂ over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pairs is within a range (from 53 to 71 kJ/mol), which is slightly lower than the measured heat (79 kJ/mol). Possible reasons for the discrepancy in the absolute energies can be related to the Al-distribution as well as the difficulty to accurately describe the Cu-O bond by

the current exchange correlational functional.^[20] However, our DFT results predict the trend in a good agreement with the measured heat of adsorption, which shows a lower heat of adsorption for the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes (79 kJ/mol) compared to that of the framework-bound Cu^+ species (120 kJ/mol) for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample.

The calorimetric measurements at 200 °C show that the heat release is higher for the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes than for the framework-bound Cu^+ species regardless of Cu loading. The difference in heat release is related to a higher amount of oxygen adsorbed on the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes compared to the framework-bound Cu^+ species (see SI, S3.1). As the direct O_2 activation requires Cu(I)-pairs for both framework bound and NH_3 -solvated copper species, this implies that the propensity for pair formation is higher for $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes than for framework-bound Cu^+ species. This supports the idea that pair formation is facilitated by the higher mobility of the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes.^[7,21,24] For framework-bound Cu^+ species, pair-formation is associated with a barrier of 72 kJ/mol originating from Cu^+ diffusion between adjacent cages (Figure 3(b)), rendering Cu^+ -pair formation less probable. Therefore, the higher heat release for the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes is related to the higher mobility, providing more sites for O_2 activation.

The higher propensity of O_2 adsorption on the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes is also reflected in the higher amount of oxygen adsorbed. Assuming that oxygen only adsorbs over Cu(I)-pairs, for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample with pre-treatment to form dominantly $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes, around 16% of the total Cu content is oxidised during exposure to 500 ppm O_2 at 200 °C, whereas the corresponding number is about 7% for the pre-treatment forming dominantly framework-bound Cu^+ species, see Table 1. Moreover, the fraction of copper participating in O_2 adsorption varies for the two Cu-CHA samples, which is indicated by the heat release per Cu (shown in Table 1). The heat-release per Cu ($[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ or framework-bound Cu^+) is higher for the *high*-Cu-CHA sample (6.2 and 4.0 kJ/mol Cu) compared to the *low*-Cu-CHA sample (2.5 and 1.0 kJ/mol Cu). This suggests that sufficiently high Cu-density is required for Cu(I) pair formation and thereby O_2 adsorption, which is in agreement with previous studies.^[4,12,15]

The heat released during O_2 exposure over the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes is also affected by the O_2 concentration. Figure 4 presents heat release as a function of oxygen concentration from 500 ppm to 12%. Assuming the same mechanism and, therefore, heat of oxygen adsorption for all tested O_2 concentrations, the O/Cu ratio can be calculated for each O_2 concentration, as also presented in Figure 4. For exposure at 10% O_2 , the calculated O/Cu ratio is 0.8 which is comparable to the 80–90% of Cu(II) oxidised from Cu(I) observed spectroscopically in previous studies over similar Cu-CHA samples.^[4,16] The experimental data can be fitted with a Langmuir isotherm:

$$\theta = \text{O/Cu} = \frac{aK_{\text{eq}}^{\circ}(\text{T}) \frac{p_{\text{O}_2}}{p^{\circ}}}{1 + K_{\text{eq}}^{\circ}(\text{T}) \frac{p_{\text{O}_2}}{p^{\circ}}} = \frac{0.848 \times 207 \times \frac{p_{\text{O}_2}}{p^{\circ}}}{1 + 207 \times \frac{p_{\text{O}_2}}{p^{\circ}}}, R^2 = 0.979 \quad (1)$$

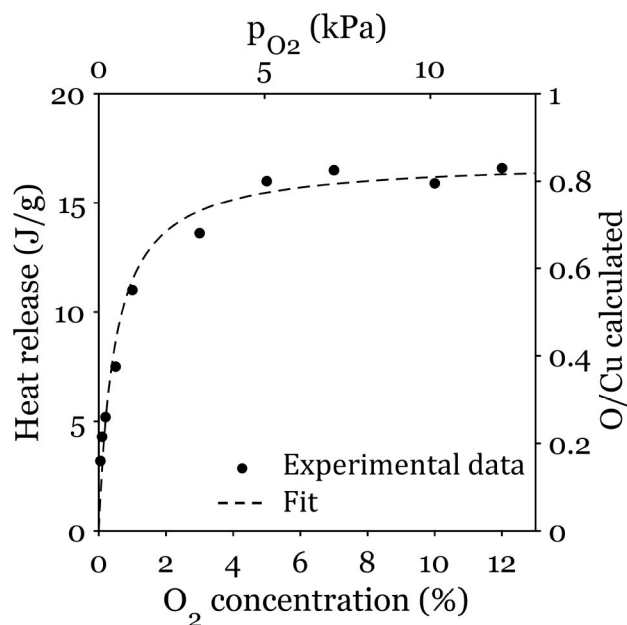


Figure 4. Heat release and O/Cu ratio during exposure of the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complexes to O_2 from 500 ppm to 12% at 200 °C. The O/Cu ratio for O_2 concentrations (c_{O_2}) higher than 500 ppm is calculated using data measured at $c_{\text{O}_2} = 500$ ppm, assuming constant heat of adsorption under all c_{O_2} . The corresponding partial pressure of O_2 (p_{O_2}) is shown at the top axis.

where θ is the coverage and $K_{\text{eq}}^{\circ}(\text{T})$ is the equilibrium constant at standard pressure (P°). The constant a limits the coverage to the experimentally observed saturation coverage. The $K_{\text{eq}}^{\circ}(\text{T})$ and a is fitted to be 207 and 0.848 at 200 °C, respectively.

The entropy change for reactions in zeolites has been discussed recently in the literature. For the NH_3 -SCR reaction some estimates for entropy changes along the reaction path have been suggested based on simulations.^[5,6,16] However, no quantitative experimental data has been reported. The information on the equilibrium constant and the heat of adsorption gives us the possibility to calculate the entropy loss for O_2 adsorption over the $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ -pair. The equilibrium constant is given by:^[25]

$$K_{\text{eq}}^{\circ}(\text{T}) \times \frac{p_{\text{O}_2}}{p^{\circ}} = \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta G}{RT}\right) = \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta H}{RT}\right) \exp\left(\frac{\Delta S}{R}\right) \quad (2)$$

where ΔH is the enthalpy change and ΔS is the entropy change. Using the experimentally determined ΔH , the entropy change ΔS is via the equilibrium constant calculated to be $-123 \text{ J}/(\text{mol}\cdot\text{K})$ at standard pressure. Typically, the O_2 concentration during NH_3 -SCR is 10%, which gives an entropy change of $-142 \text{ J}/(\text{mol}\cdot\text{K})$.

The entropy change of O_2 adsorption on a pair of complexes has three main contributions (see the schematic diagram in Figure S4 in SI). Upon entering the CHA cage from the gas phase, O_2 loses entropy. Previously, we have studied the entropy loss for N_2 from gas phase into CHA by performing Monte Carlo potential energy sampling,^[26] which demonstrates

that N₂ loses approximately 50% of the gas phase entropy at 200 °C. Here, we can assume that O₂ also loses 50% of its gas phase entropy upon entering CHA ($\Delta S_{O_2}^1 = -109 \text{ J}/(\text{mol}\cdot\text{K})$). Another part of the O₂ entropy ($\Delta S_{O_2}^2$) is lost upon adsorption over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺-pair. In addition, there is an entropy loss connected to the pairing of the complexes (ΔS_{Cu}). Here, the sum of the three contributions is fitted to be $-123 \text{ J}/(\text{mol}\cdot\text{K})$ at standard pressure. The sum of $\Delta S_{O_2}^2$ and ΔS_{Cu} amounts to $-14 \text{ J}/\text{mol}\cdot\text{K}$, which is a minor part of the entropy loss.

Conclusion

In summary, we have compared the heat of O₂ adsorption over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and framework-bound Cu⁺ species in CHA as measured by microcalorimetry combined with mass spectrometry and compared the results with DFT calculations. For O₂ adsorption over [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes at 200 °C, the heat of adsorption is 79 kJ/mol while the entropy change is analysed to be $-142 \text{ J}/\text{mol}\cdot\text{K}$ at 10% O₂. The results reveal that a higher amount of O₂ adsorbs over the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes than over the framework-bound Cu⁺ species at 200 °C. The DFT calculations show that the activation of O₂ proceeds with low barriers over both types of Cu-pairs. However, the diffusion of framework-bound Cu⁺ species between adjacent CHA cages is associated with considerable barriers, which makes the Cu⁺-pair formation less facile. The low probability of Cu⁺-pair formation for framework-bound Cu-CHA consequently leads to a lower O₂ adsorption upon O₂ exposure as compared to the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes. The higher amount of O₂ adsorbed on [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes as compared to framework-bonded Cu⁺ species, provides further support for the suggestion that the mobility of the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes is a key factor for the activation of O₂ in low-temperature NH₃-SCR over Cu-CHA. Furthermore, the observed differences in O₂ activation on the [NH₃-Cu-NH₃]⁺ complexes and framework-bound Cu⁺ species contribute to an enhanced understanding of the underlying chemistry of partial oxidation reactions, such as that of direct oxidation of methane to methanol.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

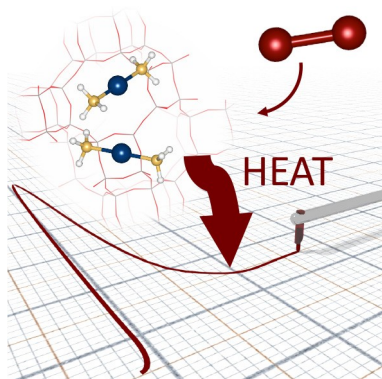
Keywords: adsorption · Cu-chabazite · NH₃-SCR · oxygen activation · zeolites

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FULL PAPERS

The heat release of oxygen adsorption on a pair of $[\text{NH}_3\text{-Cu-NH}_3]^+$ complex in Cu-CHA is recorded using micro calorimetry combined with mass spectrometry. The apparent activation energy, as well as enthalpy and entropy changes of this process are determined experimentally.



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Direct measurement of enthalpy and entropy changes in NH_3 promoted O_2 activation over Cu-CHA at low temperature

