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# Study on the Performance of AlCl $_3$ / $\gamma$ -Al $_2$ O $_3$ Catalyst with Modified $\gamma$ -Al $_2$ O $_3$

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**Abstract:**  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> was modified with HCl and NaOH then used as supported material for preparation the catalyst AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The supported catalyst surface properties (acid center type, acid strength and acid amount) were characterized by pyridine-FTIR and pyridine-TPD. In addition, the catalytic ability of supported catalyst and its stability were evaluated by the polymerization of 1-decene. The results indicated that there were two types of acid centers on the immobilized catalyst, which were Lewis and Brönsted acid sites. Compared with AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, the acid amount of NaOH modified catalyst increased 47% and the activity for 1-decene polymerization augmented 11.4%. However, as for the HCl modified catalyst, the increased value were 112% and 33.6% respectively. The acidity grew as the following order: AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>< AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (NaOH) < AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (HCl).

**Key words:** modification; immobilization;  $\gamma$ -alumina; aluminum chloride; acid site

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Environmental catalyst (γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>)-O-AlCl<sub>2</sub> has been prepared by AlCl<sub>3</sub> immobilized on  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub><sup>[1-2]</sup>, which was widely used to prepare synthetic lubricants<sup>[3-4]</sup>. The interaction between the hydroxyl of carrier and AlCl<sub>3</sub> directly determined the catalyst activity, selectivity and stability. It is well known that the superficial acidic properties of catalyst are responsible for their cataly- tic performance, so the study of catalyst surface acidity is very important for the research of catalytic activity. It is well known the surface acidity of carrier depends on different modified methods, such as: fluorinated  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub><sup>[5-6]</sup>, acid-modified zeolite HY<sup>[7]</sup>, chloride alumina<sup>[8]</sup>. Liu Changkun et al<sup>[6]</sup>. found that F/γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> had higher activity for acid catalytic reaction, both Brönsted and Lewis acid sites were found on the surface of  $F/\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The acidity of surface hydroxyl groups (i. e, acid strength of Brönsted) increased as the amount of fluorine augmented, which attributed to the effect of high electronegativity of fluoride. The total Brönsted acidity reached a maximum when the content of fluorine with  $2\% \sim 3\%$ . Wu Wei et al. [7] found that acid strength, total acidity and the ratio of weak acid to strong acid could be modified by the chemical dealuminium. David Dubé et al. [9] reported the physical and chemical properties of immobilized AlCl<sub>3</sub>/zeolite catalyst and characterized the acidity .

This study was about the preparation of  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$  modified with HCl and NaOH. The surface acid properties (acid center type, intensity and amount) were characterized by pyridine-TPD<sup>[10-11]</sup> and pyridine-FTIR<sup>[12-13]</sup>. The impact of the two modified methods

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to carrier acidity and catalytic properties were also studied.

# 1 Experimental

#### 1.1 Preparation of Catalyst

The  $\gamma$ -Al $_2$ O $_3$  was impregnated with distilled water, 1.0 mol LHCl and 1.0 mol LNaOH respectively, then dried under vacuum and calcinated at 600 °C for 6.0 h prior to use. The certain amount of supported material  $\gamma$ -Al $_2$ O $_3$  and AlCl $_3$  were added to 100 mL CCl $_4$  under dry argon atmosphere and refluxed for 12 h, the solvent was removed by filtering and the residue was washed three times with dry CCl $_4$ . The grafted catalyst was obtained and stored in a Schlenk tube under dry argon atmosphere. The raw materials were supplied by Shanghai Lingfeng Chemical Reagent CO., Ltd. (China)

#### 1.2 Catalyst Characterization

The chlorinity of the catalyst was determined by Volhard method [14].

Adsorbed Pyridine Infrared Spectra (Pyridine-IR) was recorded on a IMPACT-420 FTIR spectrometer. The wafers were prepared in a glove box under a dry argon atmosphere. The self- supporting wafers were evacuated in situ in an IR cell at 400 °C and  $1.0\times10^{-2}$  Pa for 3 h and  $0.2\sim0.4$  kPa pyridine was permitted to desorb at room temperature for 1 h and depressurize to 0.1 Pa at 150 °C. Then the spectra were recorded after cooling at room temperature.

The pyridine desorption experiment (pyridine-TPD) was performed on a TP-5080 adsorption instrument (Tianjin Xianquan Industry and Trade Development Co., LTD). The catalyst was prepared in a glove box under dry argon atmosphere. For pyridine-TPD, 50 mg of catalyst was treated at 25 ~ 300 °C (ramp = 10 °C min $^{-1}$ ) and 1 h isotherm at 300 °C under a He flow of 20 mL min $^{-1}$ . The catalyst was cooled down to room temperature under flowing helium. The catalyst was saturated with pyridine at 120 °C under a flow of He (15 mL min $^{-1}$ ) and pyridine (5 mL min $^{-1}$ ) for 5 min. The set up was stabilized for 3 h at 120 °C under a flow of He (20 mL min $^{-1}$ ). The catalyst was then cooled down to room temperature. The conditions

of the desorption tests were: He (20 mL min<sup>-1</sup>) temperature from 25  $\sim$  600 °C (ramp = 10 °C min<sup>-1</sup>). The catalyst was maintained for 5 min at 600 °C after the end of the ramp in order to achieve desorption. A thermal conductivity detector (TCD) was used to detect.

#### 1.3 Oligomerization of 1-decene

n-hexane(80 mL), catalyst (8g) and 1-decene (40 mL, 95%), which purchased from Tianjin Haina international trading CO., Ltd. (China), were added to three-neacked flask, the mixture was increased to 80°C and kept for 4 h while stirring. The catalyst was filtered out and the resulting oligomer was washed sequentially with NaOH solution and distilled water. The organic phase was distilled to obtain the poly- $\alpha$ -olefin oil. The conversion was calculated and viscometric properties were measured using appropriate ASTM methods.

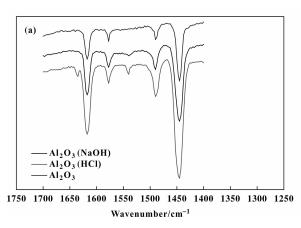
#### 1.4 Oligomer Characterization

Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) was performed on HP-6890GC-5973 MSD. A fusedsilical capillary column DB-5 MS (30 m  $\times$  0.25 mm, 0.25  $\mu$ m film thickness) was used. Helium and methane were used as the carrier and the reagent gas, respectively, for negative-ion chemical ionization. The following oven temperature program was used: 2 min at 70 °C, then an increase to 100 °C at a rate 10 °C · min -1, followed by an increase to 300 °C at a rate of 30 °C minfor 1 h. The injection port of the GC was set at 300 °C. The maximum molecular weight that can be detected by this GC-MS instrument is approximately 500 Da.

# 2 Results and discussion

#### 2.1 Pyridine-FTIR Characterization

The pyridine-FTIR of carriers and catalysts were shown in Fig. 1 with four peaks (1 445 cm<sup>-1</sup>, 1 490 cm<sup>-1</sup>, 1 540 cm<sup>-1</sup>, 1 618 cm<sup>-1</sup>). It can be seen that the shape of spectrogram is similar with different intensities. The peaks of 1 445 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 1 540 cm<sup>-1</sup> are attributed to Lewis acid sites and Brönsted acid sites respectively<sup>[15]</sup>, and the peak of 1 490 cm<sup>-1</sup> is attributed to both of them.



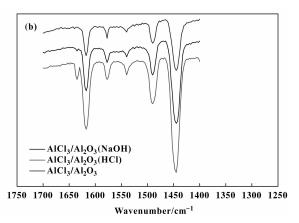


Fig. 1 Pyridine-FTIR spectra of modified carriers and catalysts:
 (a) modified γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and (b) immobilized catalyst

As shown in Fig. 1(a), the  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (NaOH) did not display significant pyridine FTIR signals at 1 540 cm<sup>-1</sup>, suggesting that they have no Brönsted acid center. Moreover, among the three carries, the intensity of all pyridine-FTIR signals increased as the following order:  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub><  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>

(NaOH) <  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (HCl), which means that both of the strength of Lewis acid and Brönsted acid augmented with the same order. From Fig. 1(b), the phenomenon was found for supported catalyst as well. In other words, the acidity of immobilized catalyst mainly depended on the properties of carries.

As we known, the Lambert-Beer law was employed in the  $form^{[11,16]}$ 

$$A = \varepsilon C L \tag{1}$$

where A is the intensity of the band (integrated area, cm<sup>-1</sup>),  $\epsilon$  is the integrated extinction coefficient, C is the concentration of the vibrating species (mmol • g<sup>-1</sup>), L is the thickness of sample(mm).

The concentration of Brönsted and Lewis acid sites obtained from the bands at 1 540 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 1 445 cm<sup>-1</sup> are reported in Table 1. According to Guisnet et al. <sup>[17]</sup>, the extinction coefficients of 1 540 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 1 445 cm<sup>-1</sup> are 1.13 cm µmol<sup>-1</sup> and 1.28 cm µmol<sup>-1</sup> respectively.

Table 1 Acid amount of catalysts

Item —	Composition/w%		Acid amount/(mmol • g <sup>-1</sup> )			
	Cl	ОН	L	В	L+B	
AlCl <sub>3</sub> /γ-Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0	0	1.055	0.055	1.110	
$\mathrm{AlCl_3}/\gamma\text{-Al_2O_3}(\mathrm{NaOH})^{\mathrm{a}}$	0	1.4	1.569	0.062	1.631	
$\mathrm{AlCl_3}/\gamma\text{-Al_2O_3(HCl)}^{\mathrm{a}}$	2.8	0	2.204	0.149	2.353	

a. The mass fraction of NaOH and HCl were about 3% .

As show in Table 1, the acid amount of Lewis acid center is much greater than that of Brönsted acid. The value of L+B implied that the total acid amount of NaOH modified catalyst increased 47% and that of  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$  (HCl) increased 112% compared with  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$ . It means the catalyst acid intensity (Lewis and Brönsted acids) enhanced significantly after  $\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$  modified with HCl, which indicated that

the HCl improved the surface acidity of catalyst dramatically, we call it HCl effect. We consider that the HCl effect comes from the high electronegativity of chlorine. Some hydroxyl on the carrier surface was replaced by chlorine  $^{[6]}$  and the strong inductive effect of Al-Cl bond weakened even broken the Al-OH bond and strong Lewis acid sites  $\mathrm{Al}^{\oplus}$  was formed. Moreover, the strong inductive effect of Al-Cl bond also lead to strong

deprotonation of molecules of coordinatively bonded water, i. e. , which caused an increase in the Brönsted acidity [8]. However, when the  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> modified by NaOH, the surface hydroxyl concentration increased and Lewis Al $^{\oplus}$  sites formed by surface dehydration at

higher temperature calcination<sup>[8]</sup>, the Lewis acid sites are more than that of  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> but lower than that of  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(HCl). Therefore, the presumed modified carrier structure was shown in Fig. 2.

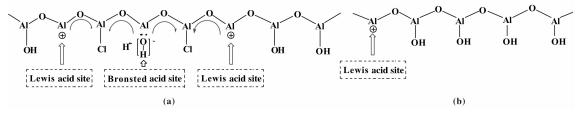


Fig. 2 Surface structure of modified  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>: (a)  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(HCl) and (b)  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(NaOH)

During the immobilization process, the active species -AlCl<sub>2</sub> and -AlCl were produced when AlCl<sub>3</sub> reacted with surface hydroxyl, and the -AlCl<sub>2</sub> is primary species<sup>[1]</sup>. The Lewis acid sites  $Al^{\oplus}$  reacted with the

Cl of AlCl<sub>3</sub> and then the Al coordinated to oxygen atoms of adjacent hydroxyl, at last Brönsted acid sites was formed<sup>[9]</sup>. Thus, the proper immobilized catalyst surface structure was shown in Fig. 3.

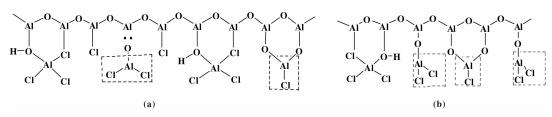


Fig. 3 Surface structure of immobilized catalyst: (a) AlCl<sub>3</sub>/γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(HCl) and (b) AlCl<sub>3</sub>/γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(NaOH)

### 2.2 Pyridine-TPD Characterization

The density of acid sites was determined by pyridine-TPD and the result was shown in Fig. 4. The incorporation of  $AlCl_3$  by a grafting reaction on modified  $Al_2O_3$  created two types of acid sites. According to literature, the peak at 200 °C and 360 ~ 400 °C were attributed to Lewis acid sites<sup>[18]</sup> and Brönsted acid sites respectively<sup>[9,19]</sup>.

The combination energy of pyridine to acid center was determined by the acidity strength, and could be characterized by desorption temperature  $^{[20]}$ . That is to say, the stronger the acidity, the greater the binding energy, and the desired desorption temperature is higher  $^{[21]}$ . Fig. 4 showed the desorption temperature increased in according with the  $\rm AlCl_3/\gamma\text{-}Al_2O_3$ ,  $\rm AlCl_3/\gamma\text{-}Al_2O_3$ (NaOH),  $\rm AlCl_3/\gamma\text{-}Al_2O_3$ (HCl) order, which confirmed our assumption about the surface structure of immobilized catalyst and that the acidity of HCl modified catalyst is the most among three immobilized catalysts.

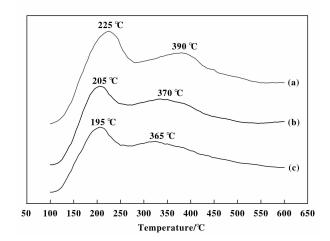


Fig. 4 Pyridine-TPD of immobilized catalyst: (a)  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(HCl)$ , (b)  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(NaOH)$  and (c)  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$ 

## 2.3 Oligomerization behaviors

The properties and composition distribution of oligomers are shown in Table 2.

AlCl<sub>3</sub>/γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(NaOH)

 $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(HCl)$ 

19.5

11.0

Table 2 Effect of supported catalysts on 1-decene oligomerization reaction											
Catalyst	$\text{Kv/(mm}^2 \cdot \text{s}^{-1})^{\text{b}}$			Product composition/% c							
	Conv./% a	40 ℃	100 ℃	Di-	Tri-	Tetra-	Penta-				
AlCl <sub>3</sub> /γ-Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	56.8	28.5	5.6	27.9	30.6	25.4	16.1				

18.2

40.7

6.6

4.7

a. Conversion of 1-decene; b. Kinetic viscosity of oligomer; c. Determined by GC-Mass.

33.8

21.4

Table 2 showed the conversion of 1-decene increases as the following order:  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3 < AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(NaOH) < AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3(HCl)$ , and the corresponding conversion augmented from 56.8% to 63.2% and 75.8%, this order was just like to that of The catalytic activity increased with the

63.2

75.8

increasing of acidity. However, the viscosity of oligomer by  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(HCl)$  was the lowest and the component of that was primarily dimers and where as oligomer by  $AlCl_3/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ (NaOH) was mainly made up of trimers and tetramers (Fig. 5).

29.6

29.2

32.7

19.2

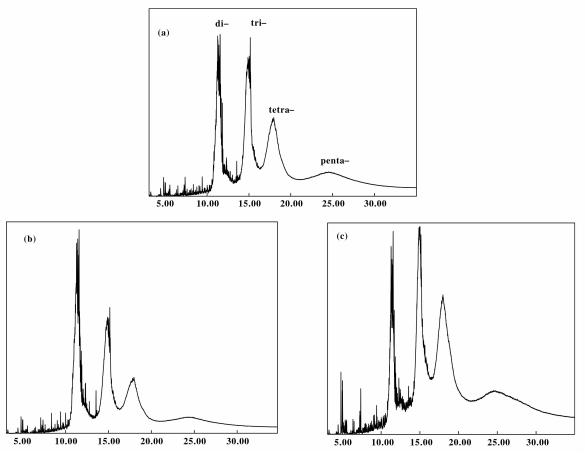


Fig. 5 GC-MS spectra of oligomers: (a) AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, (b)  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3(HCl)$  and (c)  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3(NaOH)$ 

From the polymerization results, it was found that the catalytic activity was mainly controlled by acidity, when  $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3$  (HCl) was used, the reaction speed and conversion varied directly with acidity and inversely with the viscosity of oligomer. As for

 $AlCl_3/\gamma$ - $Al_2O_3(NaOH)$ , the surface hydroxyl concentration of carrier improved, which means there are more AlCl<sub>3</sub> loading to carrier by the reaction of AlCl<sub>3</sub> to hydroxyl, and the value of activated center augmented, thus the catalytic activity increased accordingly. The acid amount and acid strength of  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (NaOH) was lower than  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (HCl) , hence the conversion decreased and oligomer viscosity increased.

The stability of the immobilized catalysts were measured in a batch reactor. The results shown in Fig. 6.

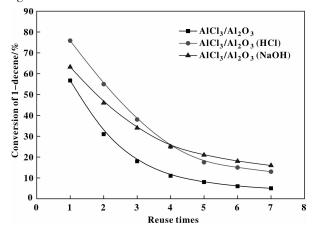


Fig. 6 The stability of immobilized aluminium chloride catalyst

Figure 6 reveals that the conversion of 1-decene markedly decreases during the first four reuse times. After that, the conversion of 1-decene decreases slightly. Two reasons account for this phenomenon. One is the pore-clogging effect, the other is the destruction of active centers with  $H_2\mathrm{O}$  or alcohols<sup>[22]</sup>.

The decreasing rate of 1-decene conversion with three catalysts is  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3 < AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (HCl)  $< AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (NaOH). It means that the catalysts stability is  $AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3 < AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (HCl)  $< AlCl_3/\gamma - Al_2O_3$  (NaOH). Han<sup>[23]</sup> have found that the stability of catalysts depends on the surface area and pore volume rather than acidity. Acidity does not benefit the lifetime of the catalyst. So with the modification of NaOH and HCl, the pore volume and surface area increase, thus the stability of catalysts increases.

# 3 Conclusions

The modification of support affect its surface acid properties (acid center type, acid strength and acid amount), there by altering the surface acidity of catalyst and the catalytic activity. Ultimately influence the oligomer composition and viscosity.

The strength of carrier acidity can be changed by the way to modification, so as to regulate the catalyst acid intensity. Finally it achieves the purpose of adjusting catalytic activity and kinematic viscosity of the product.

The stability of the catalysts used for the oligomerization of 1-decene is not depend on the acidity.

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# $\gamma$ -A1<sub>2</sub> O<sub>3</sub> 改性对 AlCl<sub>3</sub> / $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub> O<sub>3</sub> 催化剂性能的影响

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摘要:采用 HCl 和 NaOH 改性  $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> 载体制备 AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> 固载催化剂,用吡啶-FTIR 和吡啶-TPD 技术分析了催化剂的表面酸性(酸中心类型、酸强度和酸量),并以 1-癸烯齐聚作为探针反应,研究了催化剂的稳定性以及催化剂对聚合反应的影响. 结果表明,催化剂含有两种酸类型,即 Lewis 酸和 Brönsted 酸,与未改性的催化剂相比,氢氧化钠改性载体制备的催化剂,酸量增大了 47%,催化剂催化 1-癸烯的齐聚反应活性增加了 11.4%;而经盐酸改性制备的催化剂酸量增大 112%,催化剂的活性增加了 33.6%. 酸强度依 AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>,AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(NaOH),AlCl<sub>3</sub>/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>(HCl)的顺序增强.

**关键词**: 改性; 固载;  $\gamma$ -氧化铝; 三氯化铝; 酸性位