

## Direct pyrolysis and ultrasound assisted preparation of N, S co-doped graphene/Fe<sub>3</sub>C nanocomposite as an efficient electrocatalyst for oxygen reduction and oxygen evolution reactions

*Karuppasamy Kohila Rani<sup>a</sup>, Chelladurai Karuppiah<sup>b</sup>, Sea-Fue Wang<sup>a</sup>, Saleh O. Alaswad<sup>c</sup>, Pedaballi Sireesha<sup>a</sup>, Rajkumar Devasenathipathy<sup>a</sup>, Rajan Jose<sup>d</sup>, Chun-Chen Yang<sup>b,e,f</sup>*

<sup>a</sup> Department of Materials and Mineral Resources Engineering, National Taipei University of Technology, No. 1, Section 3, Chung-Hsiao East Road, Taipei 106, Taiwan, ROC

<sup>b</sup> Battery Research Center of Green Energy, Ming Chi University of Technology, New Taipei City 24301, Taiwan, ROC

<sup>c</sup> Nuclear Science Research Institute (NSRI), King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), P.O Box 6086, 11442 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

<sup>d</sup> Nanostructured Renewable Energy Materials Laboratory, Faculty of Industrial Sciences & Technology, Universiti Malaysia Pahang, 26300 Kuantan, Malaysia

<sup>e</sup> Department of Chemical Engineering, Ming Chi University of Technology, New Taipei City 24301, Taiwan, ROC

<sup>f</sup> Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, Chang Gung University, Taoyuan City 333, Taiwan, ROC

### ABSTRACT

Bifunctional electrocatalysts to enable efficient oxygen reduction reaction (ORR) and oxygen evolution reaction (OER) are essential for fabricating high performance metal–air batteries and fuel cells. Here, a defect rich nitrogen and sulfur co-doped graphene/iron carbide (NS-GR/Fe<sub>3</sub>C) nanocomposite as an electrocatalyst for ORR and OER is demonstrated. An ink of NS-GR/Fe<sub>3</sub>C is developed by homogeneously dispersing the catalyst in a Nafion containing solvent mixture using an ultrasonication bath (Model-DC150H; power – 150 W; frequency – 40 kHz). The ultrasonically prepared ink is used for preparing the electrode for electrochemical studies. In the case of ORR, the positive half-wave potential displayed by NS-GR/Fe<sub>3</sub>C is 0.859 V (vs. RHE) and for the OER, onset potential is 1.489 V (vs. RHE) with enhanced current density. The optimized NS–GR/Fe<sub>3</sub>C electrode exhibited excellent ORR/OER bifunctional activities, high methanol tolerance and excellent long-term cycling stability in an alkaline medium. The observed onset potential for NS–GR/Fe<sub>3</sub>C electrocatalyst is comparable with the commercial noble metal catalyst, thereby revealing one of the best low-cost alternative air–cathode catalysts for the energy conversion and storage application.

### KEYWORDS

Electrocatalysis; Oxygen reduction and evolution; Energy conversion materials; Hetero atom-doped graphene; Iron carbide nanoparticles

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Financial support from the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), Taiwan (Project No: MOST 109-3116-F-131-001-CC1) is gratefully acknowledged. Dr. Chelladurai Karuppiah also gratefully acknowledges Professor Chun-Chen Yang for the Post-Doctoral position in Battery Research Center of Green Energy, Ming Chi University of Technology, New Taipei City, Taiwan.