

<https://doi.org/10.15388/vu.thesis.838>

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Electrocatalytic Activity of Cu Electrodes in Electroreduction of CO₂

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Natural Sciences,
Chemistry (N 003)

VILNIUS 2025

The dissertation was prepared between 2019 and 2024 (Center for Physical Sciences and Technology).

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The text of this dissertation can be accessed at the libraries of Vilnius University, as well as on the website of Vilnius University:

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

FIZINIŲ IR TECHNOLOGIJOS MOKSLŲ CENTRAS

Birutė Serapinienė

Vario elektrodų katalizinis aktyvumas elektrochemiškai redukuojant CO₂

DAKTARO DISERTACIJA

Gamtos mokslai,
Chemija (N 003)

VILNIUS 2025

Disertacija rengta 2019–2024 metais (Fizinių ir technologijos mokslų centras).

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Disertacija ginama viešame Gynimo tarybos posėdyje 2025 m. spalio mėn. 24 d. 11 val. Fizinių ir technologijos mokslų centro D401 posėdžių salėje.

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Disertaciją galima peržiūrėti Vilniaus universiteto bibliotekose ir VU interneto svetainėje adresu:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3D	Three-Dimensional
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BET	Brunauer–Emmett–Teller Method
CCS	Carbon Capture and Sequestration
CO ₂ ER	Carbon Dioxide Electrochemical Reduction
Cu-M	Bimetallic
CuNP	Copper Nanoparticle
CuNW	Copper Nanowire
CV	Cyclic Voltammetry
DFT	Density Functional Theory
EIS	Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy
ES_r	Electrochemically Active Surface Area
FE	Faradaic Efficiency
f_R	Surface Roughness Factor
GNF	Graphitized Carbon Nanofibers
HER	Hydrogen Evolution Reaction
NGQ	N-doped Graphene Quantum Dots
NP	Nanoparticle
PANI	Polyaniline
PEG	Polyethylene Glycol
RDS	Rate-Determining Step
RHE	Reversible Hydrogen electrode
SAC	Single-Atom Catalyst
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscopy
SF	Stiffness
S_g	Geometric Surface Area
SHE	Standard Hydrogen Electrode
UPD	Underpotential Deposition
XAS	X-ray Absorption Spectroscopy
XRD	X-ray Diffraction

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INTRODUCTION

Escalating threats of climate change and environmental degradation brings the fossil fuel era to the end. The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to more sustainable energy systems, governments, industries, and individuals are accelerating the shift away from coal, oil, and natural gas. In their place, renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power are emerging. However, the intermittent nature of many renewables presents a critical challenge: how to store energy efficiently for use when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing. As a result, energy storage could be achieved by electrochemical reduction of CO_2 with excess renewable electrical energy being converted to fuel for use when needed.

Electrochemical CO_2 reduction could also be the solution to rising worldwide temperature control. Among various CO_2 catalysts, copper stands out for its ability to convert CO_2 to multicarbon products. Also, copper is rather cheap and obtainable. Electrochemical CO_2 reduction yields a variety of products, including C_1 products (e.g., formic acid, CO, and methane) and C_{2+} products (e.g., ethylene, ethanol, and propanol) [1]. C_2 compounds are particularly appealing due to their high volumetric energy densities, important applications in synthesizing long-chain hydrocarbon fuels, plastics, chemicals, and other industrial materials, and ease of compression, storage, and transportation [2,3]. Ethylene is the most widely produced organic chemical, serving as the primary feedstock for polyethylene, polystyrene, and other polymers. It is also a precursor to various chemicals, such as ethylene oxide (used in antifreeze and polyester), ethylene dichloride (used in PVC production), and vinyl acetate. Furthermore, ethylene exists naturally as a plant hormone that regulates fruit ripening and other developmental processes. Ethane is a major component of natural gas and is primarily used to produce ethylene through steam cracking. Due to its high flammability and calorific value, it can also be used as a fuel source, particularly in camp stoves. Ethane is also used to produce acetylene and ethylene glycol. Ethanol has a diverse role as a fuel, solvent, and chemical intermediate, with the ability to be converted into ethylene.

Smooth, polycrystalline or single crystal copper electrodes are characterized by low catalytic activity. Meanwhile, nanostructured copper electrodes have been extensively explored as its open porous structure exhibits large electrochemical activity for CO_2 reduction. The electrocatalytic performance of porous electrodes is highly influenced by their electrochemically active surface area (ES_r), which, in the context of CO_2 reduction, appears to impact both the activity and selectivity of the reaction

[4]. Accurate estimation of ES_r is therefore essential, as a precise understanding of this parameter is critical for reliably comparing different catalytic systems. However, many studies on CO₂ reduction using 3D copper electrodes have either overlooked the evaluation of ES_r or employed measurement techniques whose suitability for porous electrode structures is debatable [5].

Enlargement of copper electrode surface area is limited to the mechanical stability of the electrode. There remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the influence of copper deposition parameters on both the electrochemically active surface area and the mechanical stability of 3D Cu structures used as electrocatalysts.

If the enlargement of surface area is already limited by mechanical stability, there are other ways to improve the efficiency of the electrocatalyst. One way is to use targeted crystallographic orientation. In the case of copper, the (100) facet is favourable towards a higher C₂ output. However, data on the crystallographic orientation of Cu 3D foam surfaces and methods to control it are limited, highlighting the need for further investigation in this area.

MAIN GOAL

To evaluate the structure-properties relationship of Cu 3D foam electrodes in CO₂ electrochemical reduction towards C₂ hydrocarbons.

TASKS

1. To compare methods of estimating the electrochemically active surface area of Cu electrodes and determine the most suitable method for analyzing extremely porous three-dimensional (3D) Cu foams.

2. Optimize the electrochemical deposition parameters for producing Cu 3D electrodes to maximize their electrochemically active surface area and provide sufficient mechanical resistance.

3. Evaluate the influence of the concentration of the primary component of the acidic sulfate solution and possible additives on the structural characteristics of electrodeposited Cu 3D layers and their electroactivity toward CO₂ reduction.

4. Determine the influence of Cu 3D electrode porosity, surface area, crystallite size, crystal structure and crystallographic orientation on CO₂ product selectivity during electrochemical reduction.

5. Evaluate the stability of the Cu foam electrode through post-catalysis characterization.

SCIENTIFIC NOVELTY

For the first time, it is shown that Pb UPD and other analogous methods (based on the UPD principle) for determining the electrochemically active Cu surface area, used by many researchers, are not suitable for the characterisation of porous 3D Cu electrodes. The most reliable results for the analysis of such electrodes are obtained by electrochemical measurements of the double electrochemical layer.

The Pb UPD method was found to be suitable for the assessment of the orientation of the crystallographic planes (hkl) of the Cu crystallites forming 3D electrodes. It is shown that the most reliable results are obtained by voltammetrically dissolving the Pb UPD layer formed under potentiostatic conditions.

It has been shown that the electrochemically active surface area of the electrode can be increased by up to a factor of 3 by selecting the appropriate electrodeposition parameters for Cu 3D electrodes (current density and composition of the acid sulphate electrolyte). Unfortunately, the intensity of the CO₂ electrochemical reduction process is not directly proportional to the ES_r values of the electrodes, especially for coefficients of roughness higher than 1000.

A key structural factor of Cu 3D electrodes influencing the formation of C₂ products is the size of the crystallite aggregates and their spatial arrangement, which favours the maintenance of alkaline pH values of the medium near the electrode, which is favourable for the formation of C-C bonds and C₂ products.

The Cu 3D electrodes used were found to have significantly low yields of methane from the CO₂ reduction product (maximum ~5%) due to the dominant orientation of the Cu(100) and/or Cu(110) crystallites forming the electrode.

STATEMENTS OF DEFENSE

- The electrochemically active surface area of a porous Cu 3D foam electrodes can be estimated using only electrochemical double-layer capacitance measurements.
- The microstructure of the Cu 3D electrodes, which were deposited from solutions with different compositions, allowed us to establish the structure-property relationship for the electrochemical reduction of CO₂.

- To achieve maximum yields of C₂ compounds during CO₂ electrochemical reduction, Cu 3D electrodes deposited in an additive-free electrolytes with surface roughness coefficients up to ~800 should be used.
- The yields of C₂ compounds formed during CO₂ electrochemical reduction are determined by the shape, size, and spatial arrangement of crystallite aggregates within the Cu 3D structure.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHOR

The author designed the electrochemical cell, constructed the equipment for depositing copper samples, and produced all copper electrodes. The author adapted and applied the Pb and Tl UPD methods, conducted all related measurements, including double-layer capacitance, facet analysis via Pb UPD, and peak deconvolution. The author modified the facet distribution of the plain electrode and established CO₂ electroreduction equipment. The author also performed CO₂ electroreduction yield measurements using gas chromatography and an H₂ sensor. Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy measurements were performed by Dr. Laima Gudavičiūtė. BET measurements were performed by Dr. Skirmantė Tutlienė in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Technology at the Center for Physical Science and Technology. Dr. Asta Griguševičienė performed Optical profilometer measurements, and Laurynas Staišiūnas measured the mechanical properties in the Department of Electrochemical Materials Science at the Center for Physical Sciences and Technology. SEM measurements were performed by Prof. Algirdas Selskis and XRD measurements were performed by Prof. Remigijus Juškėnas in the Department of Characterization of Material Structure at the Center for Physical Sciences and Technology. The author analyzed all results, designed figures and graphs, and prepared publications. The author wrote this dissertation independently and cited all external sources appropriately.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. CO₂ problem

Energy in human evolution has been playing crucial role. The ability to use energy to accomplish human ends outside of its users distinguishes us from other animals [6]. The most important extrasomatic energy is fire. For many years wood was the only fuel to keep fire. Then were charcoal, coal, petroleum and natural gas. Apperance of these led to different steps of evolution (metallurgy, industrial revoliution, etc.). Nowadays, drainig petroleum and natural gas resoures aswell as rising levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and global challenge of climate change brought an incresing interest in renewal energy sources. The rising deployment of solar, wind and hydroelectric power to displace fossil fuel based energy generation. In addition, carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) is gaining significant attention as a technological solution that can remove CO₂ directly from industrial emissions or even the atmosphere. According to projections CCS could be potentially contributed to 19% reduction in global CO₂ emissions [7]. However, due to high costs of transportation and storage it is economically unfeasible.

Solar and wind power usage in electricity sector stands out as one of the most promising and sustainable options. These technologies generate electricity without emitting greenhouse gases during operation and have been in significant technological advancements and cost reductions in recent years. However, despite advantages, the widespread adoption of solar and wind power faces critical challenges that must be addressed to ensure a stable and reliable energy supply [8]. Additional electric energy produced on favorable weather could be used for electrochemical CO₂ reduction and stored as fuel for moment when weather conditions are unfavorable or other uses.

1.2. CO₂ reduction on different electrodes

CO₂ electrochemical reduction (CO₂ER) depending on reaction conditions gives a variety of products ranging from CO, HCOO⁻, HCHO, CH₄, CH₃OH, C₂+ hydrocarbons (e.g. C₂H₄, C₂H₆) and oxygenates, to higher hydrocarbons [9]. The ability to control the selectivity of the reaction is very important from an application point of view [10].

Hori and his coworkers carried out a study on different metal electrodes in CO₂ reduction in constant current density at 5 mA cm⁻² in 0.5 M KHCO₃ aqueous solution [11]. Metal electrodes they divided into 4 groups in

accordance with the product selectivity. Pb, Hg, In, Sn, Cd, Tl, and Bi give formate ion as the major product. Au, Ag, Zn, Pd, and Ga, the 2nd group metals, form CO as the major product. Cu electrode produces CH₄, C₂H₄ and alcohols in quantitatively reproducible amounts. The 4th group of metals, Ni, Fe, Pt, and Ti, do not practically give product from CO₂ reduction continuously, but hydrogen evolution occurs [12].

1.2.1.CO₂ reduction on Cu electrode

The production of hydrocarbons in CO₂ reduction using Cu electrodes has caused significant interest due to its high Faradaic efficiency (FE) and selectivity. Cu has been reported to have broad variety of products in CO₂ reduction. Copper electrode's ability to form multicarbon (C₂₊) products has been attributed to the fact that Cu is the only metal with negative adsorption energy for *CO and slightly positive for *H [13]. There are several variations of Cu electrodes investigated – copper electrodes with various morphologies, oxide-derived Cu electrodes, Cu-M bimetallic electrodes, modified surface Cu-based electrodes, Cu electrodes having various supports [9].

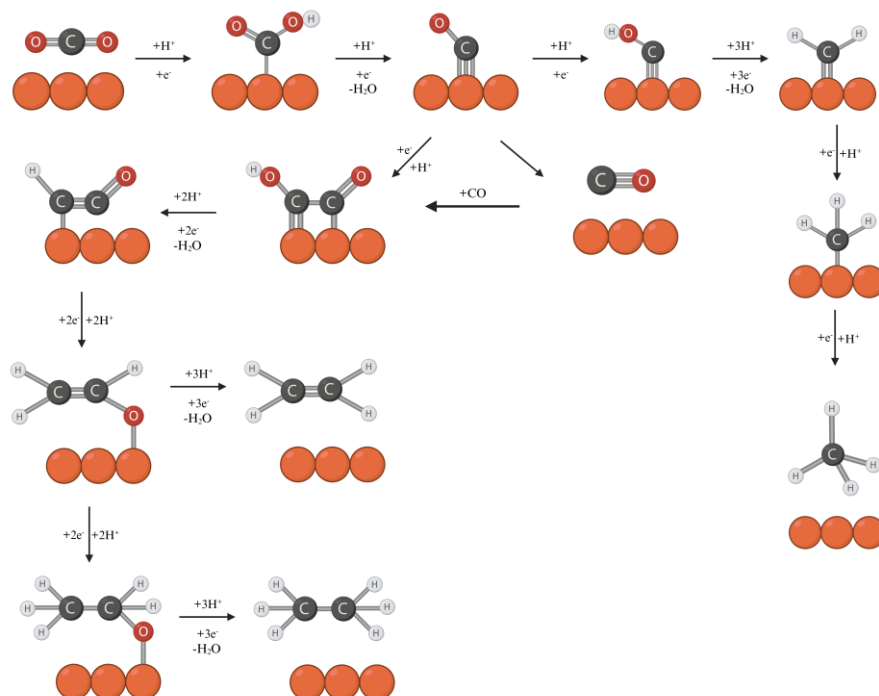


Figure 1. CO₂ER pathways towards CO, CH₄, C₂H₄, C₂H₆ products on Cu catalyst [9,14–16].

1.2.1.1. Cu electrodes with variuos morphologies

Polycrystalline, smooth Cu electrode is characterized by low catalytic activity. Various morphologies have been investigated and developed to improve the activity of Cu-based electrodes. The development of nanotechnology has extended possibilities for Cu-based catalyst variations. Copper morphologies such as nanoparticles (CuNPs), nanocubes, nanoneedles, three-dimensional structures and crystal facets demonstrate exceptional catalytic activity and selectivity in electrochemical CO₂ reduction reactions [17].

Roughened Cu surfaces, in contrast to smooth Cu, have larger electrochemical surface area, which increases the current density for CO₂ reduction. There were investigated the effects of pretreating polycrystalline Cu foil by electropolishing, electrochemical cycling (producing 50-100 nm Cu nanoparticles) and argon sputtering [18]. This study showed that the increased surface roughness resulted in higher activity for hydrocarbon production (CH₄ and C₂H₄) in a KClO₄ electrolyte. Improved performance was attributed to the higher concentration of undercoordinated sites on the roughened surfaces.

The influence of three-dimensional structures on local pH, retention time of intermediates, gas permeability and liquid diffusion has been highlighted in numerous studies. G. Mul, M. T. Koper, et. [19] designed a porous hollow fibre copper electrode with compact 3D geometry which resulted in at least one magnitude larger CO formation rate than nanocrystalline copper electrode.

C-C coupling is the most important step in the formation of C₂ compounds, therefore understanding the reaction pathway is critical for modulating C₂ product selectivity and activity [20–22]. The activity of Cu porous structures as an electrocatalyst for CO₂ER was found to depend on pore size. Meanwhile, the formation of C₂ products predominates over C₁ products when the width and depth of the pores on the Cu electrode are narrowed and increased [23,24]. An explanation was proposed that this phenomenon might be related to the extent of local alkalization [25].

For shape-controlled CuNPs, the presence of sites with a low number of coordination sites (corners, steps and bends) has a significant effect on the CO₂ER selectivity [26,27]. In addition, the distance between CuNPs also influences product selectivity, with NPs closer than about 10 nm facilitating the complex pathways required for hydrocarbon products (such as CH₄ and C₂H₄) [28,29]. For CuNPs, CO₂ER products often include CO, HCOOH, CH₄ and C₂ compounds. The particular geometric structure of CuNPs, which is different from that of NPs, greatly influences the CO₂ER activity [30]. It has

been reported that the miniaturization of CuNPs changes the main products to H_2 and CO, basically by increasing the proportion of low-coordination ($CN < 8$) Cu atoms, which strongly adsorb $*H$ and $*CO$ [26]. In particular, it is important that C_2H_4 , a useful reduction product, can be obtained with high selectivity by using the Cu(100) surface of Cu nanocubes. However, further improvement is needed to prevent the decomposition of CuNPs during CO₂ER [31].

A solvent-, ligand-, and counterion-free approach was used to deposit copper in atomic form directly onto the nanotextured surface of graphitized carbon nanofibers (GNFs) [32]. It was found that under these conditions, copper atoms tended to coalesce into nanoparticles that became strongly anchored at the graphitic step edges, restricting their growth to sizes between 2 and 5 nm. The resulting Cu/GNF hybrid material was reported to exhibit high selectivity for formate production during the CO₂ reduction reaction, achieving a Faradaic efficiency of approximately 94% at -0.38 V vs RHE [32]. But as noted before, during CO₂ER nanoparticles tend to change leading to more negative CO₂ reduction potential and less efficient formate production.

Gas diffusion electrode was modified with CuNPs for CO₂ER. It was recorded that selectivity of the electrode can be changed through the change of CuNPs loading on the electrode. Low loadings favor CH_4 production, intermediate favors C_2H_4 , high loadings promote CO production. It was revealed that both bulk and local CO generation rates and transfer mechanism are responsible for the selectivity [29].

CuNPs with carbon shell were investigated. It was found that Faradaic efficiency of such catalyst for ethanol can reach up to 67.8% and its stability at CO₂ER for more than 16 hours recorded [33]. The complexity of the production of this kind catalyst is its drawback.

Octahedral Cu nanocrystals in the range of 75–310 nm were synthesized as a promising platform to study size dependence of CO₂ER to methane. Results shown that the smallest nanocrystals show the best selectivity for CH_4 . Studies on CuNPs agree that with particle sizes smaller than 20 nm the activity for hydrogen evolution reaction (HER) drastically surpasses the activity of CO₂ER. In addition, the smaller the nanoparticles are the less stable they are during electrolysis [27].

Copper nanowires (CuNWs) are effective in CO₂ reduction due to their unique structure [34]. The selectivity for different CO₂ reduction products can be controlled by adjusting the length and density of CuNWs. Increasing the length of Cu nanowire from 2.4 μm to 7.3 μm , the formation of n-propanol, CO, HCOOH and C_2H_4 was detected. Further increase of CuNWs length led to C_2H_6 formation, accompanying with the formation of ethanol [35]. The

length and density of CuNWs also affect the diffusion of bicarbonate ions (HCO_3^-) into the nanowires and hydroxide ions (OH^-) out of them. This alters the local pH near the electrode surface.

Early reports on morphological changes of CuNWs after CO₂ER processes, showed their structural evolution and the resulting exact nature of active Cu sites remained largely elusive. The studies of well-defined 1D copper nanowires, with a diameter of around 30 nm, with a metallic 5-fold twinned Cu core and around 4 nm Cu₂O shell in operando electrochemical liquid-cell scanning transmission electron microscopy analysis showed that Cu nanowires evolve into completely different metallic Cu nanograin structures supporting the operando (operating) active sites for the CO₂ER [36].

A study of highly dense CuNWs by an electrochemical reduction method resulted in a high Faradaic efficiency of about 60% for CO formation at a low overpotential of 0.3 V to reach 1 mA cm⁻² current density [37]. This suggests that dense CuNWs are highly efficient in catalyzing CO₂ER with a favorable reaction profile. The importance of the balance between CO gas evolution and *CO poisoning (where the active site gets blocked by CO intermediate) was noted. It can be controlled by the electrode potential and the surface structure of the CuNWs. The length, density, and structural properties of CuNWs are essential in optimizing CO₂ER performance and selectivity [38,39].

Heat-induced transformation of copper nanowires into CuO_x/Cu nanotubes with defect-enriched surfaces were studied. This transformation resulted in formation of tubular structures encased within nanosized oxide grains that decreased hydrogen Faradaic efficiency, while carbon monoxide FE was increased. Cu nanotubes exhibit lower selectivity towards H₂ and single-carbon products while favoring the formation of multi-carbon products [40].

Copper 3D nanostructures are also studied for CO₂ER. Nanofoams created by the use of hydrogen bubbles as templates were investigated. It had interconnected pores of 20-50 μm and showed increased selectivity for HCOOH, reduced selectivity for CO, CH₄ and C₂H₄, and novel production of C₂H₆ and C₃H₆ compared to an electropolished Cu electrode. FE for HCOOH recorded was 37% at -0.9 V vs. RHE in 0.1 M KHCO₃. It was also shown that the inner surface of the nanopores became accessible only above a critical electrolyte concentration of 0.5 M KHCO₃, due to the overlapping electrical double layers [41].

In another study, oxide-derived Cu nanofoams were prepared that achieved a Faradaic efficiency of 55% for C₂ products (C₂H₄ and C₂H₆) at -0.8 V vs. RHE in 0.5 M NaHCO₃ [42]. Compared to the foam produced by the Palmore group [41], significant differences in product distribution were observed,

probably due to Cu_2O formation and variations in pore size. Optimum C_2 production occurred with pores between 50 and 100 μm , with a marked decrease below 50 μm . Broekmann's group [43] also found that larger pores within the 3D structure of the Cu foam helped to trap reaction intermediates such as C_2H_4 , promoting fully reduced C_2 products.

Cu nanofoams with micron-scale pores and oxidised in a mixed solution of 60 mM HCl and 60 mM H_2O_2 were prepared. Results confirmed that higher surface roughness and porosity favoured the formation of C_2H_4 over CH_4 in 0.1 M KHCO_3 , 20 sccm CO_2 [44]. In addition to micron-scale pores, nanoporous structures also influenced the local pH and retention time of key intermediates [45,46], which in turn affected product selectivity. Using a sputtering technique on anodised alumina, the pore size and depth of Cu mesopore electrodes were precisely controlled. Narrowing the pore width to 30 nm increased C_2H_4 formation from 8% to 38%, while increasing the depth to 70 nm shifted the primary C_2 product to C_2H_6 with a Faradaic efficiency of 46% at -1.3 V vs. RHE.

Achieving high FEs for C_3 products in electrochemical CO_2ER remains challenging because of complexity of stabilizing C_2 intermediates and the need of active sites for both $\text{C}_1\text{--C}_1$ and $\text{C}_1\text{--C}_2$ coupling. While the mechanisms for C_3 products are not as well understood as those for C_2 products, some strategies have been developed to improve the FE of C_3 oxygenates, particularly $n\text{-C}_3\text{H}_7\text{OH}$. Dendritic Cu catalysts created by electrodepositing Cu(II) ions and annealing at 300 $^\circ\text{C}$, which shifted the product distribution towards C_2^+ alcohols, with an FE of $n\text{-C}_3\text{H}_7\text{OH}$ reaching 13.1%. This enhancement was attributed to smaller Cu nanoparticles and nanocavities that promoted C–C coupling [47].

1.2.1.2. Cu facet influence and faceting methods

The main challenges facing high-performance of electrochemical reduction of CO_2 (CO_2ER) on Cu electrode surface are low efficiency of the electrocatalysts, large overpotential and low selectivity [23,48–50]. Meanwhile, if low overpotential is required for CO and formate production, high overpotential is needed for deep electroreduction to a high value-added C_2 products (e.g., C_2H_4 , C_2H_6) [51–53]. Obtaining C_2 molecules is particularly interesting due to their higher energy density and potential to serve as precursors for various e-fuels and commodity e-chemicals [49,54]. The major cause of poor selectivity of Cu electrodes for CO_2ER to hydrocarbons could be the similar range of redox potentials for different reaction products while, the parasitic hydrogen evolution reaction contributes to the poor Faradaic

efficiency of specific products [55,56]. The lower solubility of CO₂ in aqueous solutions is an additional concern that limits the FE of CO₂ER [23,57].

To achieve high efficiency in Cu catalyzed CO₂ER, the electrodes must have a sufficient number of active sites. Since several studies have shown that Cu electrodes with high surface areas produce C₂ compounds more efficiently, therefore, the influence of the roughness or specific nanostructures of the Cu electrode surface is of great importance [57–61].

Another key morphological factor in CO₂ reduction on copper electrodes is the crystal facet of the electrode. The crystal facet dependence of CO₂ reduction on copper has been extensively studied, particularly on copper foil and single crystal electrodes, using both experimental and theoretical approaches. Among the different facets, the (111) and (100) faces are especially noteworthy for their distinct catalytic behaviors [61,62]. C–C coupling in C₂H₄ formation between *CO or *CHO is the rate-determining step (RDS) [63,64]. Studies have shown that the (111) and (100) facets of copper play different roles in CO₂ reduction, each favoring distinct product pathways [65–68]. On a single-crystal copper electrode, the (111) facet has been observed to have priority to support the formation of CH₄ through one reaction pathway, while the (100) facet favors the formation of C₂H₄ via a different pathway. This facet-specific reactivity is essential in determining the efficiency and selectivity of CO₂ reduction processes. Facet tuning thus emerged as a strategy for improving selectivity [69].

Further the differences in reactivity between terraces and steps of Cu(100) facet were studied. It was discovered that the reduction of carbon monoxide to ethylene at low overpotentials predominantly occurs on the terrace sites, rather than the step sites. This distinction is critical for understanding how different surface features on the (100) facet influence product formation during CO₂ reduction [67]. Theoretical calculations have provided the role of crystal facets in CO₂ reduction. For instance, on the (100) facet, the coupling of two CO molecules to form a *C₂O₂ dimer, which is the RDS for the formation of multicarbon products like C₂H₄ and C₂H₅OH, occurs more efficiently. This highlights the importance of the (100) facet in facilitating the formation of C₂ products [68]. Studies have shown that the formation of methane on Cu(111) is primarily pH-dependent, whereas the formation of ethylene on Cu(100) is relatively independent of pH.

A strategy was presented for in-situ surface reconstruction of copper to preferentially expose Cu(100) facets via electrochemical reduction. A phosphate ligand plays a critical role by slowing down Cu reduction and promoting the co-adsorption of CO and OH[−] species, which directs the surface restructuring toward Cu(100). The resulting catalyst achieves current densities

exceeding 500 mA cm⁻² and Faradaic efficiencies above 83% for C₂₊ products from both CO₂ and CO reduction. Furthermore, the system demonstrates stable operation for 150 hours, maintaining a full-cell energy efficiency of 37% and a single-pass carbon efficiency of 95% [70].

Gao et al. synthesized Cu₂O nanoparticles with mixed (100)/(111) facets, achieving 59% ethylene FE [71]. DFT indicated this facet combo balanced strong CO adsorption (100) with easy ethylene desorption (111), while inter-facet charge transfer further boosted multi-electron kinetics. It was confirmed that facet-dependent selectivity remains effective in gas-fed flow cells at high current densities, where high pH also suppressed H₂ evolution, improving CO₂RR performance [72].

High-index facets also showed promise. Zhong et al. developed a Cu(OH)₂-derived Cu catalyst (Cu(OH)₂-D/Cu) with stepped surfaces like Cu(310) and Cu(210), which lowered the CO dimerization barrier [73]. It outperformed CuO- and Cu₂O-derived catalysts in H-cells, achieving ~59% C₂₊ FE at -0.98 V vs RHE. In flow-cell tests at 1 M KOH, it reached 87% C₂₊ FE (58% for ethylene) at -0.54 V vs. RHE and 250 mA·cm⁻², highlighting facet engineering as a powerful strategy for efficient CO₂-to-C₂₊ conversion at scale.

As mentioned before, another important consideration regarding electrode morphology, is its durability throughout CO₂ER. Over time, the morphology of the copper catalyst can change, which may affect its performance. This evolving morphology can impact the long-term stability and efficiency of copper-based catalysts in CO₂ reduction reactions [9].

1.2.1.3. Cu-M bimetallic electrodes

More recently, Cu-based bimetallic catalysts have emerged as a promising class of materials for tuning product selectivity by modulating the adsorption behaviour of key reaction intermediates. For example, improved activity and selectivity for carbon monoxide (CO) have been observed on CuAg and CuAu systems, while CuSn and CuPb bimetallics have demonstrated improved formic acid production. In addition, CuZn catalysts have shown increased selectivity towards ethanol (C₂H₅OH). Notably, compressively strained CuAg bimetallics have been reported to further promote the formation of multi-carbon oxygenates, highlighting the role of strain engineering in catalyst optimisation [74].

Zheng et al. developed a Cu-based single-atom catalyst (Cu-N₂/CN) with unsaturated coordination sites anchored on graphene. The uniformly dispersed Cu atoms, coordinated with two nitrogen atoms (1.45 wt%), enhanced CO₂ adsorption and electron transfer, achieving a high CO Faradaic efficiency of

81% at -0.50 V vs. RHE [75] and an onset potential as low as -0.30 V due to nearby electronegative N atoms [76]. While Cu catalysts are effective in CO_2 reduction, especially for deep reduction products, their performance in producing two-electron products is surpassed by metals like Ag, Au, and Sn [77].

Cu single-atom catalysts (SACs) can generate CH_4 and other multi-electron products, though often at high overpotentials [78,79]. Cu clusters were synthesized via a reversible Cu–Li amalgamation method, achieving 91% FE for ethanol at -0.7 V vs. RHE [80]. Operando XAS revealed a transformation from single Cu atoms to Cu_3/Cu_4 clusters under CO2ER conditions. A 3D Cu– Cu_2O composite catalyst was fabricated through in situ film decomposition, reaching 80% FE for C_2 products at -0.4 V vs. RHE, due to low charge-transfer resistance and efficient C–C coupling [81].

C_{2+} production was enhanced by modifying commercial Cu nanoparticles with water-insoluble organosuperbases [81]. These formed positively charged “proton sponges” under CO2ER, creating a strong local electric field that stabilized $^*\text{CO}$ and promoted C–C coupling, lowering the C_2H_4 onset potential from -0.57 V to -0.43 V vs. RHE. This also reduced overpotential at high current densities, showing promise for large-scale CO_2 -to- C_{2+} conversion.

Morales-Guio et al. used a tandem Au–Cu catalyst to boost local CO concentration, accelerating C_{2+} product formation by over 100 times and lowering alcohol detection overpotential by 260 mV. CO spillover from Au enhanced performance beyond Cu alone [82]. Similarly, Cu was functionalized with porphyrin complexes, achieving ethanol production at a low onset potential of -0.42 V vs. RHE [83].

Efforts were focused on reducing the energy barrier beyond $^*\text{CO}$ to lower overpotential for multi-electron CO_2 reduction. A nanocrystalline high-entropy alloy (AuAgPtPdCu) was developed that produced CH_4 (38%) and C_2H_4 (29.5%) at -0.3 V vs. RHE [84]. DFT showed the $^*\text{OCH}_3$ to $^*\text{O}$ step as the rate-determining step. Cu was modified with halogens, finding that more electronegative elements like fluorine lowered the C_2H_4 onset potential by promoting $^*\text{H}$ formation, easing $^*\text{CO}$ hydrogenation – the RDS on Cu [85].

A lot of studies are focused on improvement of FE and current density. While reduction of overpotential remains challenging because of slow $^*\text{CO}$ conversion kinetics. Despite of limited activity at low voltages, these findings offer valuable insights for designing efficient catalysts [16].

To boost CH_4 selectivity, C–C coupling must be suppressed. Single-atom catalysts are effective for this, as isolated Cu sites limit C–C coupling. Cu concentration in SACs were tuned by varying calcination temperature. At 4.9 mol%, closer Cu sites enabled C_2H_4 formation (CH_4 FE: 13.9%). Lowering

Cu to 2.4 mol% increased site spacing, inhibiting C–C coupling and raising CH₄ FE to 38.6% [78]. A clear trend showed higher temperature → lower Cu concentration → more CH₄.

To further enhance CH₄ FE, carbon-dot SACs with CuN₂O₂ sites were designed, achieving 78% FE via oxygen ligand-induced electronic tuning [79]. Other metals also showed promise: Zn was used on N-doped carbon, shifting the pathway to *OCHO (bypassing *COOH), which suppressed CO formation [86]. This Zn-based catalyst reached 85% FE for CH₄ and a partial current density of 31.8 mA cm⁻² at -1.8 V vs. SCE.

Single-Cu-site catalysts have shown strong performance for CH₄ production. A Cu-substituted CeO₂ catalyst was developed with multiple oxygen vacancies, which enhanced CO₂ adsorption and activation, achieving 58% CH₄ FE [87]. A conductive metal-organic framework with Cu–O₄ sites was created, reaching 80% CH₄ FE and 203 mA·cm⁻² current density in a flow cell, aided by low charge transfer resistance and favorable *H adsorption [88].

Recently, ultrathin CuGaO₂ nanosheets were synthesized with exposed (001) surfaces containing well-separated Cu(I) sites (Cu–Cu: 3.013 Å), inhibiting C₂H₄ formation [89]. DFT showed water dissociation was easier on CuGaO₂ than CuAlO₂, facilitating *H generation and boosting CH₄ selectivity. As a result, this catalyst achieved 71.7% FE and a high CH₄ partial current density of 717 mA·cm⁻², outperforming earlier systems.

Cu-based materials, widely used in CO₂ER, also show strong performance for methanol production. Yang et al. reported Cu selenide nanoparticles achieving 77.6% FE and 41.5 mA·cm⁻² at just 285 mV overpotential [90]. Se atoms, especially in unsaturated states, were key to performance enhancement.

Cu single-atom catalysts on MXene were fabricated by etching a Ti₃(Al_{1-x}Cu_x)C₂ MAX phase. XAS and DFT confirmed unsaturated Cu sites lowered the energy barrier for *CHO formation, yielding 59.1% FE with good stability [91]. Li et al. explored dual doping (Ag and S) in Cu₂O/Cu, achieving 67.4% FE and 122.7 mA·cm⁻² in an ionic liquid/H₂O electrolyte. DFT showed S improved *CHO formation while Ag suppressed HER, enhancing methanol selectivity [92].

Surface modification with organic additives has proven effective in boosting ethylene selectivity in CO₂ER. Cu dendrites modified with 1-octadecanethiol, increasing surface hydrophobicity (contact angle: 17° → 153°) [93]. This hydrophobicity, along with a hierarchical structure, enhanced CO₂ access and limited H⁺ transport, increasing FEs for CH₄ (0% → 7%), C₂H₄ (9% → 56%), and ethanol (4% → 17%), though with slightly lower current density.

Cu surfaces were coated with a thin polyaniline (PANI) layer, which suppressed HER and enhanced $\ast\text{CO}$ coverage and interaction, promoting C–C coupling [94]. CuNPs with PANI reached 80% FE for C_{2+} products and over 40% for C_2H_4 . Li et al. studied arylpyridinium-derived additives on Cu and found ethylene selectivity followed a volcano trend related to the ratio of atop-bound to bridge-bound CO [95]. DFT showed CO dimerization between these sites had the lowest energy barrier. With optimized electron-donating groups, ethylene FE reached 72% at -0.83 V and $232\text{ mA}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$.

Beyond organic additives, DFT and machine learning were used to identify efficient Cu-based alloy catalysts [96]. Screening over 228,000 adsorption sites across 244 Cu-containing intermetallics, they predicted sites with optimal CO adsorption energy ($\Delta E_{\text{CO}} \approx -0.67$ eV). It was concluded that Cu–Al should be a top candidate, and experiments confirmed that dealloyed Cu–Al on PTFE achieved 80% ethylene FE at $400\text{ mA}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$. This work highlights the power of computation and AI in accelerating catalyst discovery.

Ethylene is typically the major product in CO₂ER, that is why catalyst design is crucial to enhance the FE of C_{2+} oxygenates. Bimetallic catalysts combining Cu with metals like Ag, Au, or Zn have shown tendency to increase C_{2+} oxygenates output [97,98]. For example, Cu–Ag catalysts with varying ratios were developed, where the $\text{Cu}_{0.14}\text{Ag}_{0.86}$ catalyst achieved 41% FE for ethanol at -0.67 V vs. RHE, outperforming pure Cu (29%) [97]. DFT calculations suggested that Ag disrupted uniformity of Cu, promoting ethanol formation. Cu_3Ag_1 was created [99], where electron transfer from Ag to Cu promoted the stabilization of alcohol-intermediate $\ast\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_3$, yielding 63% FE for alcohols at -0.95 V vs. RHE.

Cu_nAg_m NPs were synthesized, where the addition of Ag enhanced acetate production, achieving a 21.2% FE at -1.33 V vs. RHE [100]. Combining Cu catalysts with carbon-based materials further boosts the FE of C_{2+} oxygenates. CuO-derived nanorods were modified with N-doped graphene quantum dots (NGQ), reaching 53.4% FE for C_{2+} alcohols at -0.9 V vs. RHE [101], thanks to the synergistic effect of NGQ and Cu. Similarly, Wang et al. used nitrogen-doped carbon (N-C) layers on Cu NPs, achieving 52% FE for ethanol at -0.68 V vs. RHE, with N-C aiding electron transfer and stabilizing reaction intermediates [102]. Additionally, Cu SACs synthesized with a Cu–Li method achieved a remarkable 91% FE for ethanol at -0.7 V vs. RHE, with the carbon surface's hydroxyl groups stabilizing Cu clusters for high selectivity [80].

CuSX catalysts with double-sulfur vacancies was explored, where DFT calculations showed that these vacancies stabilized the $\ast\text{OCCO}$ dimer, facilitating C_3 product formation. The CuSX catalysts achieved a 15.4% FE

for n-propanol at -1.05 V vs. RHE after 10 cycles, though the FE decreased with further cycles due to double-sulfur vacancies site degradation [103].

1.2.2.Cu foam deposition

Copper electrochemical deposition from acidic sulfate solution offers several advantages. It enables high-purity copper deposition with control over thickness, grain size, and morphology by adjusting simple parameters. This process is cost effective, scalable and based on well-known processes. Electrochemical copper deposition allows formation of various copper structures – from smooth films to porous foams – depending on deposition conditions.

The catalytic performance of metal is highly dependent on electrolysis conditions, particularly its surface structure, morphology and electrochemically active surface area [37,104]. Traditional polycrystalline copper electrodes have relatively low ES_r , resulting in limited efficiency. In contrast, nanostructured copper electrodes demonstrate significantly enhanced electrochemical activity for CO_2 reduction. Copper foams, which can be readily produced via electrodeposition is well-suited for electrocatalytic applications. The pore size and wall morphology of these foams can be precisely tuned by manipulating deposition parameters such as current density, temperature, pH, and electrolyte composition [105].

Typically, an acidic copper sulfate bath is employed for the electrodeposition of Cu foams [106,107]. The porous morphology primarily results from the competing hydrogen evolution reaction. As the overpotential increases, more hydrogen bubbles are generated during electrodeposition, which enhances the porosity of the Cu foam and leads to a higher electrochemically active surface area. However, two significant issues arise when copper is deposited at very high cathodic overpotentials. First, the rapid deposition leads to fragile dendritic structures, resulting in low mechanical strength of the foam walls. Second, the uneven current distribution—concentrated on the dendritic deposits—leads to poor surface coverage of the electrode material [108].

For the practical application of 3D Cu foam in CO_2 reduction, further research is necessary to enhance the effective surface area while preserving adequate mechanical stability. Additionally, dendritic structures tend to overgrow into thick, low-porosity films, which can obstruct gas-liquid transport—an essential factor in electrochemical processes [109]. Consequently, optimizing the fabrication process of 3D Cu foams remains a significant challenge.

To enhance the specific surface area and thereby the effectiveness and activity of porous Cu electrodes, it is essential to reduce both the pore size and the size of the branches within the foam walls [104]. These microstructural features can be influenced by incorporating specific substances, known as additives, into the electrodeposition bath [110–112].

First of all to reduce pore size in copper foams the use of bubble stabilizers such as acetic acid was suggested [110], it has been shown to effectively prevent bubble coalescence, resulting in smaller pores. Additionally, introducing chloride ions into the electrolyte significantly alters the foam wall structure, notably reducing the size of the copper branches. This effect is attributed to the role of Cl^- ions in accelerating the copper reduction process [111]. Polyethylene glycol (PEG), commonly used as a leveling agent and suppressant in sulfuric acid copper plating, has also been found to enhance the morphology of foam deposits, even under conditions of high cathodic polarization [112].

1.3. Surface area evaluation methods

The performance of catalyst highly depends on its surface structure, morphology and electrochemically active surface area. Conventional polycrystalline Cu electrodes have relatively small surface areas, thus its efficiency in converting CO_2 is low. Three-dimensional, nano-branched Cu electrodes or foams can be fabricated through electrodeposition in competitive reaction between hydrogen evolution and copper deposition. Which results in a network of interconnected and isolated pores uniformly distributed throughout the copper matrix [113]. These high- ES_r structures are widely used in various applications, particularly in CO_2 reduction processes [114].

The relevant active surface area for a given application depends on the length scale at which the surface contributes to the process. Electrochemically active surface area (ES_r)—is the portion of the surface that facilitates charge transfer to species in the electrolyte during electrochemical reactions [115]. It is influenced by surface roughness and the extent to which the electrolyte can penetrate the porous structure. A comprehensive overview of methods for determining the electrochemically active surface area of various materials has been provided by Trasatti and Petrii [116].

Electrochemical ES_r determination methods can be divided in two groups. The first involves measuring the charge associated with the deposition or removal of a chemisorbed monolayer of species, such as hydrogen or oxygen for noble metals. For a broader range of metals, including copper, metal underpotential deposition (UPD) can be employed, assuming the deposition

forms a monolayer [5,117–122]. The second group involves measuring the electrical double-layer capacitance of the electrode. This method quantifies the wetted area available for electrochemical reactions, which corresponds to the ES_r .

It is well-known that Tl, Pb, and Cd can be deposited on copper surfaces under underpotential deposition conditions [123,124], and these processes can be used to evaluate of the electrochemically active surface area of copper [5]. A study of Tl and Cd UPD on copper was performed to refine this technique for copper ES_r evaluation [125]. The optimal Tl^+ ion concentration in solution and the conditions necessary for maximum surface coverage were determined. However, similar studies using the Cu/Cd UPD system yielded significantly higher ES_r values than those obtained using the Tl-based method. This led to the conclusion that the Cu/Cd method may not be suitable for accurately determining ES_r .

What is more, the monolayer formation method is considered to be more sensitive than methods based on double-layer charging. It is because the charge involved in UPD is typically an order of magnitude higher. Even so underpotential deposition method has some limitations, such as uncertainties in identifying the endpoint for metal adsorption, the unknown distribution of UPD species on the surface, partial charge transfer during adatom deposition, and the potential formation of more condensed monolayers, multilayers, or clusters due to new phase development [116]. Despite these challenges, the UPD method remains widely used for evaluating the electrochemically active surface area of copper samples. In recent studies, the Pb UPD process has been applied more frequently than Tl UPD [123,124] for ES_r evaluation of both non-porous [120,125–127] and porous Cu structures [5].

Monolayer oxidation of copper in alkaline solutions has been used to determine the electrochemically active surface area of both porous and non-porous copper electrodes [5,114]. This method is effective for metals that exhibit clear regions of oxide monolayer formation and reduction [116], but this is not always the case for copper samples [125]. When copper is oxidized in alkaline media under applied potential, different oxides and hydroxides are formed. During the oxidation scan, the first current peak corresponds to the formation of Cu_2O and for a narrow range of OH^- molarity (0.1–1 M) and scan rates (50–100 $mV \cdot s^{-1}$), it can be assumed that oxidation results in the formation of a monolayer film [5]. Though, research has shown that under these conditions, Cu_2O formation on the copper surface does not stop at the monolayer stage, and the process is irreversible, leading to changes in the surface morphology. As a result, this method is not suitable for accurately determining the ES_r of copper [125].

The surface area of porous metal structures is highly influenced by the manufacturing method used. To date, quantitative data on the electrochemically active surface area of these porous electrodes remains inconsistent, with reported values of the surface roughness factor (f_R), defined as the ratio between ES_r and the geometric area (S_G) of the sample, ranging from 200 to 800 [123,128,129], depending on the method employed. This variation highlights the lack of consensus among researchers regarding the most appropriate method for determining ES_r in porous copper nanostructures.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

2.1. Electrode preparation

A polycrystalline copper foil of 1 cm² geometric area was used as a substrate for sample preparation (Figure 2). Firstly, a Cu layer of 8 μm thickness was deposited from the acidic sulphate solution to prepare a “plain” electrode with a surface roughness index of $f_R \sim 2$ [123]. Secondly, Cu 3D structures were electrodeposited on the plain electrode. The electrolyte compositions and electrodeposition parameters are listed in Table 1. The following substances were used as additives to the plating solution 0.5 M CH₃COONH₄, 0.0001 M PEG (2000) and HCl in the concentration range 0.001 M to 0.2 M. Samples were deposited for 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 s.

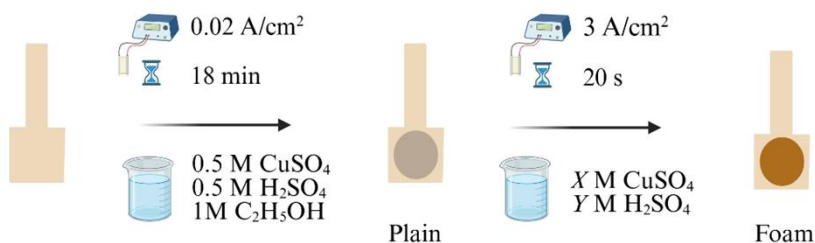


Figure 2. Simplified scheme of Cu electrode deposition.

Analytical-grade chemicals and deionised water were used for the preparation of all electrolytes applied.

Table 1. Composition of the Cu deposition electrolytes and plating conditions.

Electrode	Electrolyte			Deposition time, s	Current density, A·cm ⁻²
	CuSO ₄ , M	H ₂ SO ₄ , M	C ₂ H ₅ OH, M		
Plain	0.5	0.5	1.0	1080	0.02
Foam	0.2	1.5	-	20	3.0

2.2. Electrochemical Measurements

All electrochemical measurements were carried out at ambient temperature in a three-electrode electrochemical cell using a Pt counter electrode, Ag/AgCl or Hg/HgSO₄ reference electrodes, and a potentiostat/galvanostat AUTOLAB 302. All electrolytes were purged with Ar gas for no less than 20 min prior to measurements. All potentials in the text are reported versus a standard hydrogen electrode (SHE).

2.3. Underpotential deposition (UPD)

Tl and Pb UPD measurements were performed using 1 M Na₂SO₄ + 0.5 mM Tl₂SO₄ and 0.01 M HClO₄ + 1 mM PbCl₂ electrolytes, respectively. Metal monolayers were formed at a potential value (*E*) 10 mV more positive than thermodynamically possible metal deposition potentials. The UPD deposition time of both metals in the case of the plain Cu electrode was set to 200 s in accordance with the previous studies [125], while for Cu 3D structures, the maximum surface coverage state by Tl and Pb monolayers was determined to be no less than 900 s. In the next step, the formed UPD layers were anodically dissolved at a potential scan rate of 10 mV·s⁻¹. The amount of charge consumed for anodic dissolution of Tl or Pb monolayers, *Q_a*, was calculated by integrating the areas under the anodic current peaks according to the following equation:

$$Q_a = \frac{1}{v} \int_{E_2}^{E_1} j dE, \quad (1)$$

where *v* is scan rate (V·s⁻¹), *j* is current density (μA·cm⁻²), and *E* is applied potential (V) [126]. All current density values mentioned in the text refer to the geometric area of the samples.

In order to calculate the surface roughness factor (*f_R*), Equation (2) was applied [123]. The theoretical amounts of charge (*Q_{Tl}* and *Q_{Pb}*) corresponding to a monolayer of Tl or Pb on 1 cm² of Cu surface used in the calculations were 112 μC cm⁻² [123] and 250 μC cm⁻² [130], respectively.

$$f_R = \frac{Q_a}{Q_{Pb(Tl)}}. \quad (2)$$

The determination of the different facets on the studied surfaces was based on the integration of the charge involved in the cathodic curve of the lead UPD CVs. The CVs of the lead UPD on copper were carried out using an electrolyte solution of 0.1 M of KClO₄ + 2 mM of NaCl + 2 mM of PbCl₄·3H₂O + 1 mM HClO₄ [131]. In accordance with previous studies [132], the Pb UPD deposition time was set to 900 s. After deposition the cyclic voltammograms were performed between -0.11 V and +0.17 V at a scan rate of 5 mV s⁻¹.

The curves and peaks in the lead UPD CVs were fitted to a Gaussian mathematical function using Origin software, to determine the distribution of facets on the different surfaces. The peak potential values in the lead UPD CVs recorded on individual Cu facets [131] were used to assess the facet distribution on copper surfaces deposited from different solutions.

2.4. Double-layer capacitance measurements

The double-layer capacitance measurements were performed in a 0.1 M NaOH electrolyte. Cyclic voltammograms (CV) were recorded at different scan rates in non-Faradaic regions, which were set to be $-0.5\text{ V}—0.4\text{ V}$ and $-0.57\text{ V}—0.42\text{ V}$ for plain and 3D electrodes, respectively. The double-layer capacitance values were determined by plotting the capacitive current values obtained at -0.45 V for the plain electrode and -0.50 V for the 3D electrode against the scan rate. The slope of the resulting linear relationship provided the double-layer capacitance value (C). ES_r and f_R values were calculated according to the equations:

$$ES_r = \frac{C}{C_{sp}}, \quad (3)$$

$$f_R = \frac{ES_r}{S_G}, \quad (4)$$

where ES_r is the electrochemically active surface area, cm^2 ; C is the copper electrode double-layer capacitance, mF ; C_{sp} is the specific double-layer capacitance of copper in an alkaline solution of 0.02 mF cm^{-2} [133]; f_R is the surface roughness factor; and S_G is the geometrical surface area of an electrode, cm^2 .

EIS measurements were performed at the open circuit potential with the FRA2 module applying a signal of 10 mV amplitude in the frequency range of 20 kHz to 0.005 Hz . The data obtained were fitted and analysed using the EQUIVCRT programme of Boukamp [134].

All electrochemical experiments were performed at least in triplicate.

2.5. Structure and phase composition characterization

A Helios Nanolab 650 dual beam system (FEI) was used in the secondary electron mode at an accelerating voltage of 3 kV to study the morphology of the coatings. The porosity of the Cu 3D coatings was assessed by visual analysis of the SEM images.

The surface roughness and morphology of the samples were analyzed using a 3D optical profiler (Contour GT-K, Bruker Nano GmbH, Berlin, Germany) operating in non-contact mode with white light and phase shift interferometry. Surface area measurements were carried out using $50\times$ optics to scan a $500 \times 500\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ region. These measurements were used to assess surface characteristics, including roughness. Data collection and surface analysis were performed using Vision64 software.

The phase composition of the Cu electrode and the grain size were evaluated using XRD SmartLab, Rigaku X-ray diffractometer (Rigaku, Japan,

2011). A grazing incidence method with the angle of incidence of $\omega = 0.5^\circ$ was applied.

N₂ adsorption isotherms at 77K were used to measure the surface area of the sample by the Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) method using a Quantachrome Instruments NOVA touch 2LX analyser. Total surface area in the relative pressure range 0.15 - 0.4 were calculated using multi-point BET. Prior to analysis, the sample was outgassed under nitrogen flow at 80.0°C for 15 min, 120.0°C for 30 min and 300.0°C for 180 min at 5°C/min temperature rise. The isotherms were measured for both adsorption and desorption, with 31 relative pressure points for each.

2.6. Measurement of mechanical properties

Microhardness measurements were performed on Hysitron Ti Premiere (Bruker) micro indentation device using Omniprobe piezoelectric transducer. Berkovich type diamond indenter was used as a probe. Displacement controlled trapezoid load function was used for indentation, hardness (H) and reduced modulus (E_r) were measured at 1 μm , 5 μm and 10 μm displacements. A 3x3 grid of indentations 200 μm apart were performed for every selected displacement. Measurement is performed by loading the surface and analyzing the release curve. The stiffness (SF) of the object was fitted directly from the curve.

2.7. Modification of facet distribution

The electrochemical compact Cu layer re-faceting was performed in 0.1 M NaCl electrolyte at 500 $\text{mV}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ between copper reduction potential -0.76 V and selected oxidation potential 1.24 V [131]. The potential cycling was stopped at the reduction potential of -0.76 V. After modification of the facets, the electrode was consecutively cycled in the potential region prior to the oxidation of copper and with a scan rate of 500 mV s^{-1} to remove traces of copper chloride or copper oxide passivating the surface.

2.8. CO₂ electrochemical reduction evaluation

A gas-tight two compartment (H type) glass cell was used for CO₂ reduction experiments (Figure 3). The anode was Pt plate, cathodes were different Cu electrodes with nominal surface area of 0.63 cm^2 , electrode potential was measured with Hg/HgSO₄ reference electrode. The anodic and cathodic compartments were separated by an anion-exchange membrane (Nafion 117,

Aldrich). Both compartments were filled with 65 ml of 0.1 M KHCO_3 . Before each measurement electrolyte was saturated with CO_2 gas (99.998%, Elme Messer) for 20 minutes at 30 ml min^{-1} rate to reach $\text{pH}=7$. All experiments were performed at 298 K and constant stirring. CO_2 were continuously pumped during the CO_2 reduction process at a rate of 30 ml min^{-1} . The gas outlet of the cathodic compartment was connected to a gas chromatograph (GC-2030, Shimadzu) for periodical sampling of hydrocarbons. The GC was equipped with a dielectric-barrier discharge ionization detector (BID), helium was carrier gas. The GC was calibrated regularly using standard gas mixture (Elme Messer) under standard conditions (1 atm, 298 K). A typical CO_2 electroreduction experiment at a constant applied voltage spanned over 120 minutes. A total of six gas aliquots (1 cm^3 each) were measured. They were injected into the GC every 15 minutes. The first injection was performed 5 minutes after the start of the CO_2 reduction reaction; this ensures adequate flushing of the transfer line of atmospheric contaminants. The GC data collected in this work were translated to Faradaic efficiencies.

$$FE = \frac{e_{\text{output}}}{e_{\text{input}}} \cdot 100\% = \frac{y \cdot z}{\frac{Q}{F}} \cdot 100\% = \frac{y \cdot z \cdot F}{Q} \cdot 100\% \quad (5)$$

Where Q is measured charge, C , F is Faraday's constant, $96485 \text{ C} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$, y is recorded amount of product, mol, z is number of electrons required to obtain 1 molecule of product [135].

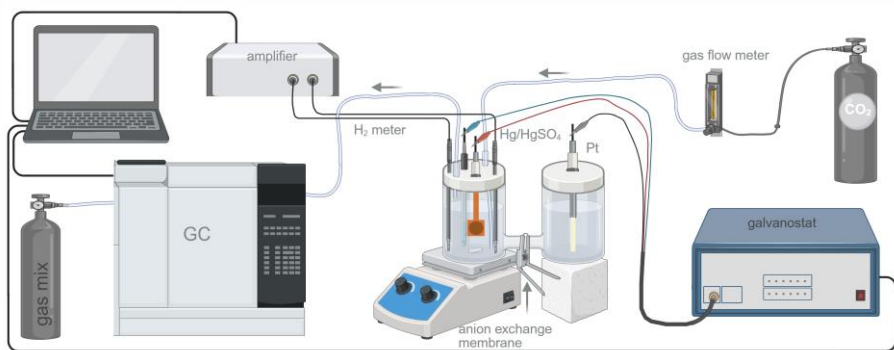


Figure 3. Scheme of equipment for investigating CO_2 electrochemical reduction.

Production of H_2 during CO_2 reduction was analysed with H_2 sensor (Unisense). Calibration of the sensor was performed using standard H_2 and Ar mixture. H_2 concentration in CO_2 reduction gas mixture was monitored every second throughout the measurement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. ES_r determination of porous Cu 3D nanostructures

3.1.1. SEM and Optical Profilometry

While for non-porous Cu electrodes the determination of ES_r is not a problem, for highly-porous, nanostructured 3D electrodes not all known methods can be successfully applied. The problem arose when we noticed that similar objects characterised by different researchers applying distinct methods had significantly different results [123,128,129].

To assess the applicability of electrochemically active surface area determination methods for porous Cu 3D nanostructures (foams), a specific experimental design was developed. The initial Cu electrode, with the known f_R value ($f_R \sim 2.2$) [123] and which is referred to as “plain” one, was used as a basis for Cu 3D structure electrodeposition.

Non porous Cu surface can be examined applying various methods, including physical and electrochemical, and these methods usually yield very similar results. The surface roughness and topography of the plain sample, which was Cu layer electrodeposited from an acidic sulphate solution, was evaluated using 3D optical profiler in non-contact mode by white light and phase shift interferometry. The obtained optical image of the plain sample is presented in Fig. 4A, while the applied software yielded $f_R \sim 2.21$, what was very close to the indicated above.

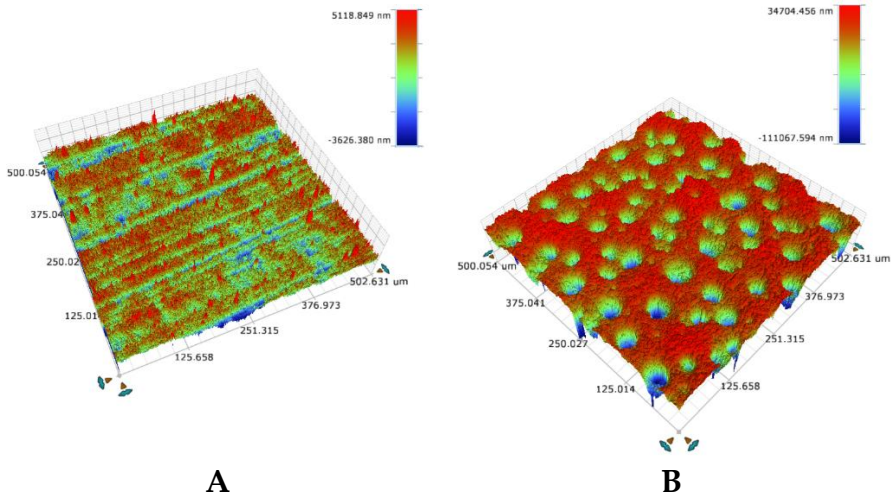


Figure 4. Optical images of the surface topography of the plain Cu (A) and Cu 3D structure (B).

The porous 3D Cu electrode, which was used as the research object for ES_r evaluation, was obtained by Cu electrodeposition under extremely high cathodic current density (up to 3 A cm^{-2}) in an electrolyte with high acidity. It is proven that formation of the foam structure is caused by the competitive reaction of Cu deposition and hydrogen evolution, resulting in formation of 3D morphology having very unique pore size distribution with highly porous ramified (dendritic) walls [136,137]. The surface pore size, wall width and foam thickness depend on the conditions of electrodeposition and the electrolysis regime [138]. SEM images of the surface morphology of deposited Cu 3D electrode, as well as cross section of it, are presented in Fig. 5.

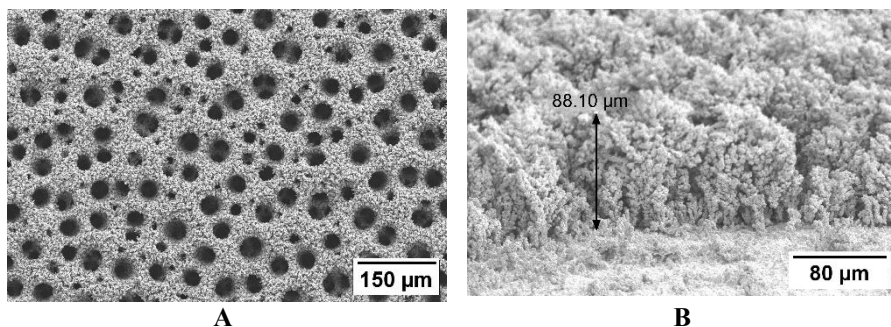


Figure 5. SEM images of Cu 3D foam electrode morphology (A) and its cross section (B).

Optical profiling and SEM images yielded information on the deposited 3D Cu structure, indicating that the average pore density was $\sim 2.0 \times 10^4 \text{ cm}^{-2}$, pore size dimensions varied between 5 and 30 μm , while the average thickness of the foam layer was $\sim 88 \mu\text{m}$. It is evident that the three-dimensional foam provides a large electrochemically active surface area. However, the optical profilometry measurements yielded an average f_R value of ~ 7.9 , which is evidently inadequate for the Cu 3D electrode. Therefore, it can be concluded that 3D optical profilometry can only be applied to evaluate the pore density of 3D Cu samples (Fig. 4B).

3.1.2. UPD Measurements

Application of UPD processes for ES_r evaluation of Cu samples was initiated with the studies on plain electrodes. The cyclic voltammograms representing Tl and Pb UPD deposition/dissolution processes on plain Cu electrodes are shown in Fig. 6 and 7 (black curves), respectively. Integration of the anodic charge under the current peaks in the potential ranges between -0.30 V and -0.130 V for Tl and -0.060 V and -0.020 V for Pb yielded information on the

Q_a and consequently on f_R values of the plain (initial or standard) Cu electrode. Both, f_R values 1.8 ± 0.1 and 2.5 ± 0.3 obtained by Tl and Pb UPD measurements respectively are close to the standard ~ 2.2 value, determined by the other authors [123], indicating suitability of these methods for ES_r evaluation of non-porous Cu.

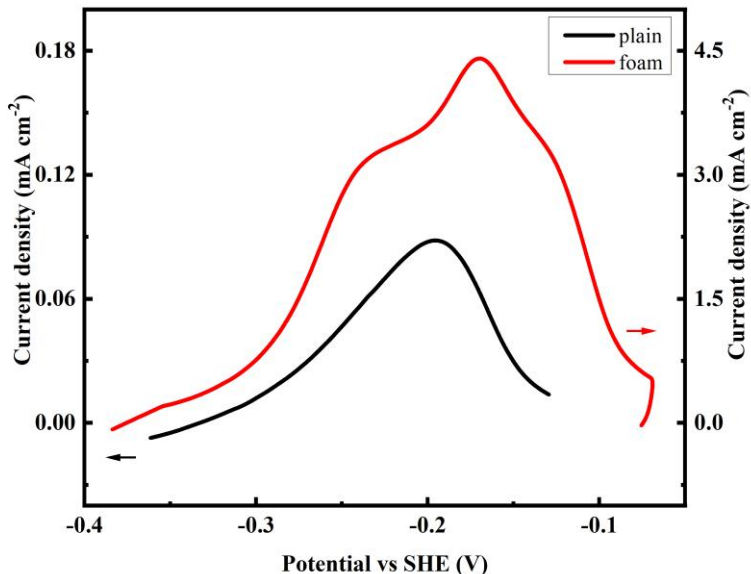


Figure 6. Anodic dissolution of Tl UPD of plain copper electrode (black curve) and anodic stripping of Tl UPD layer from 3D copper electrode (red curve) in 1 M Na_2SO_4 + 0.5 mM Tl_2SO_4 electrolyte, potential scan rate $v = 10 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$. Arrows in the graph shows to which axis it belongs to.

The presence of a porous Cu structure, which results in a large surface area, can potentially cause additional hindrance for the adsorption of Pb and Tl on such complex spatial surfaces. Hence, it was logical to determine the conditions that yield the maximum surface coverage of Tl and Pb underpotential deposition (UPD) layers by applying potentiostatic deposition conditions. This was achieved by selecting the highest charge values that corresponded to the dissolution of adsorbed Tl and Pb ions on the porous Cu electrode. Experiments revealed that the maximum surface coverage for both metals was achieved when the duration of the underpotential deposition (UPD) process was equal to or longer than 900 seconds (Fig. 8).

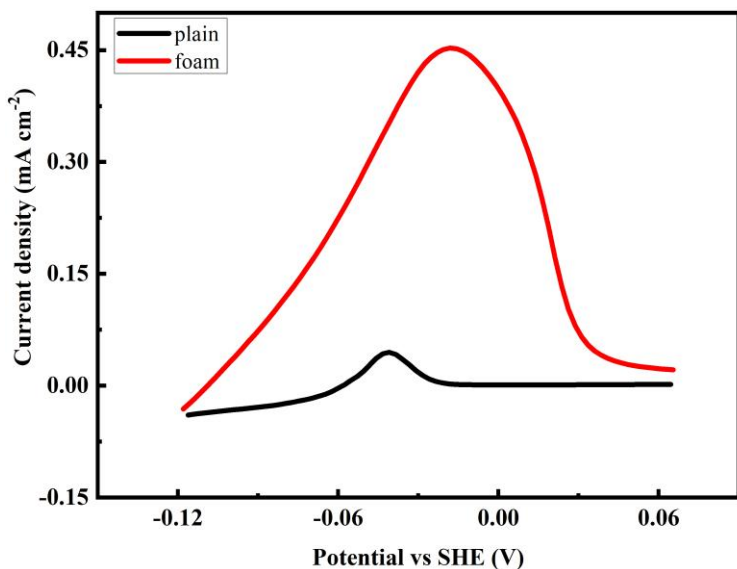


Figure 7. Anodic dissolution of Pb UPD on plain copper electrode (black curve) and anodic stripping of Pb UPD layer from 3D copper electrode (red curve) in 0.01 M HClO₄ + 1 mM PbCl₂ electrolyte. Potential scan rate v —10 mV s⁻¹.

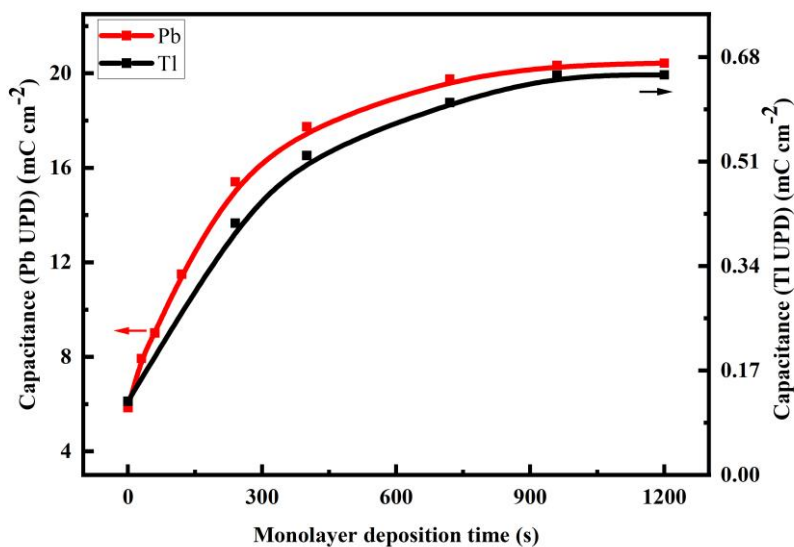


Figure 8. Monolayer deposition time influence on double layer capacitance measured value: red—Pb UPD and black—Tl UPD.

Table 2. Surface roughness factors of Cu electrodes evaluated by different methods.

Method	Surface	Surface Roughness Factor
Pb UPD	Plain	2.5 ± 0.3
	Foam	80 ± 2
Tl UPD	Plain	1.8 ± 0.1
	Foam	116 ± 2
Double-layer capacitance by Cyclic voltammetry	Plain	1.8 ± 0.1
	Foam	814 ± 29
Double-layer capacitance by Impedance	Plain	2.1 ± 0.2
	Foam	986 ± 36
Optical profiler	Plain	2.2
BET	Foam	251

The main challenge in calculating the charge corresponding to the deposited metal lies in accurately correcting for background processes such as double layer charging and properly identifying the potential at which the formation or dissolution of a monolayer of metal atoms is completed. The shape of the anodic dissolution peaks observed for Tl and Pb UPD layers on 3D Cu electrodes is relatively simple and consistently yielded repeatable results. The only slight difference in the shape of anodic curves is that one for Tl is not fully symmetrical as that corresponding Pb UPD (Fig. 6). This phenomenon may be attributed to the varying bonding strength of Tl on different crystal planes of Cu. However, it does not have any significant impact on the final results obtained. The potential ranges where the metal monolayer dissolution takes place are quite evident. The anodic charge within the potential ranges of -0.370 to -0.070 V for Tl and -0.110 to -0.023 V for Pb was evaluated using the methods described in the Experimental section for determining Cu ES_r . The resulting f_R values for the 3D Cu structures are listed in Table 2. As mentioned previously [123], it is widely acknowledged that the f_R values are influenced by the measurement method employed as well as the operational conditions. Similar observations can be made based on the results obtained from the investigation of Cu 3D structures reported herein. The obtained f_R values for Cu 3D samples using the Pb UPD method (around 80 ± 2) and the Tl UPD method (around 116 ± 2) suggest that the ES_r values for Cu 3D structures are lower when using the Pb UPD reaction compared to Tl. This difference can be attributed to the slower kinetics of Pb UPD on the Cu surface, as previously stated [128]. Additionally, the presence of a porous Cu 3D structure can influence the maximum surface coverage state in the case of Pb UPD.

3.1.3. Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) method

BET surface area refers to the specific surface area of a material, typically a powder or porous solid, as determined by the Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) method. The BET method calculates surface area by analyzing gas molecule adsorption onto the material's surface, typically using nitrogen gas at cryogenic temperatures. The BET method is widely used to characterize materials in various scientific fields, including catalysis.

However, the amount of material required for BET analysis is considerable. Therefore, it was necessary to measure the copper (Cu) foam as a powder by scraping it off the prepared electrodes. One hundred electrodes had to be prepared to collect a sufficient amount of powder. The BET surface area of the carefully prepared 3D Cu foam powder was approximately 8 m²/g (surface area = 7.917 m²/g; correlation coefficient $r = 0.999734$; C constant = 6.9519). The average surface roughness factor of the 3D Cu electrode was measured to be $f_R = 251$ (Table 2).

3.1.4. Double-Layer Capacitance

3.1.4.1. Voltammetric measurements

A double layer capacitance is influenced by the surface area of the electrode. Consequently, measuring this electrochemical parameter can serve as a means to estimate the electrochemically active surface area of solid metal electrodes [139]. The ES_r of an electrode can be estimated by means of double layer capacitance measurements using cyclic voltammetry and EIS. Usually, CV curves are recorded in the double layer charging region at various scan rates.

The shape of the curves for plain and 3D Cu electrodes are very similar, therefore Fig. 9A depicts only CV curves for the latter electrode obtained in 0.1 M NaOH solution in the non-Faradaic region (-0.57 V - -0.42 V). The obtained capacitive current values were plotted against the scan rate Fig. 9B and the slope of the obtained linear dependence yield the double layer capacitance values, which were 23.8 ± 2 μ F and 10.4 ± 0.58 mF for the plain and 3D Cu electrodes, respectively. ES_r and f_R values were calculated according to eqs. (3) and (4) and are listed in Table 2. It can be observed that for the plain Cu electrode CV-based double layer capacitance measurements yielded f_R value of 1.8 ± 0.1 , which is very close to the one determined by UPD method. In contrast, for Cu 3D electrodes, the double layer capacitance measurements resulted in significantly higher f_R values of 814 ± 29 compared to the values obtained through UPD measurements, which ranged between 80 ± 2 and 116 ± 2 (Table 2).

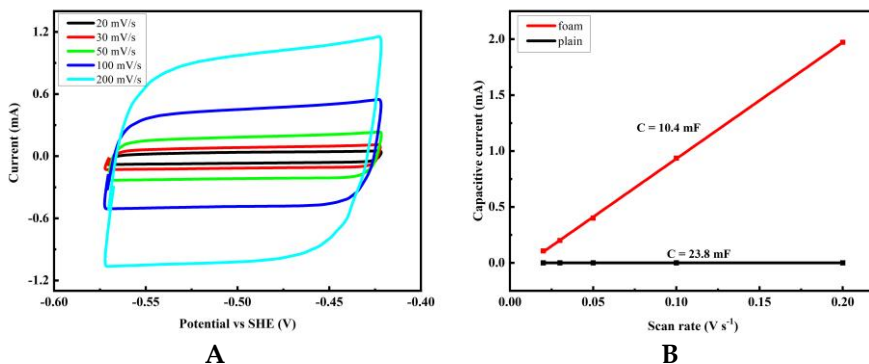


Figure 9. (A) Voltammograms of 3D Cu foam in the non-Faradaic region recorded at different scan rates and (B) linear dependence of capacitive current on scan rate.

3.1.4.2. EIS Study

Validity of double layer capacitance results obtained by CV was verified by EIS measurements. EIS spectra as Nyquist and Bode plots of the plain and Cu 3D samples recorded in 0.1 M NaOH solution are presented in Fig.10. A single semicircle is evident in the Nyquist plot of the plain Cu electrode (Fig. 10). Two different equivalent circuits models (Fig. 11A and B), which have been widely used for analysis of impedance spectra of Cu and Cu porous electrodes [129,140], were applied. The circuit model utilized for the plain Cu electrode (Fig. 11A) encompasses the interaction of three components: the solution resistance (R_s) in series with a combination of the electrode resistance to the Faradaic process (R_{ct}) in parallel with the constant phase element (CPE_{dl}), which represents the double layer capacitance. In contrast, the Nyquist plots of the Cu 3D electrode exhibit two semicircles. In Bode plots the region between 10^2 and 10^4 Hz provides information on the Cu 3D layer parameters, while the low frequency region can be assigned to charge transfer process (Fig. 10B). The equivalent circuit employed for the Cu 3D electrode, as shown in Fig. 11B, consists of a series resistance R_s (representing the electrolyte resistance), resistance R_c , and a parallel combination of the constant phase element CPE_c (representing transport properties within the electrodeposited Cu 3D layer) and another parallel pair comprising of resistance R_{ct} and CPE_{dl} (associated with the charge transfer reactions) [130]. The chosen equivalent circuits demonstrated good agreement between the experimental data and the simulated data.

For the data fitting, all the capacitances in the equivalent circuits had to be replaced by constant phase elements (CPE) [141] to adapt for non-ideal behaviour. CPE instead of capacitors were actually used in the equivalent

circuit models to account for inhomogeneous properties of the layers. *CPE* is defined by the admittance Y and the power index number n : $Y=Y_o(j\omega)^n$. The term n shows how far the interface is from an ideal capacitor. $Y_o(CPE_c)$ and $Y_o(CPE_{dl})$ become C_c and C_{dl} for $n = 1$. Table 3 shows that the term $n(CPE)$ for the Cu samples plain and foam has a value > 0.5 and initially it is close to 1 suggesting a capacitive response from the electrolyte/coating interface.

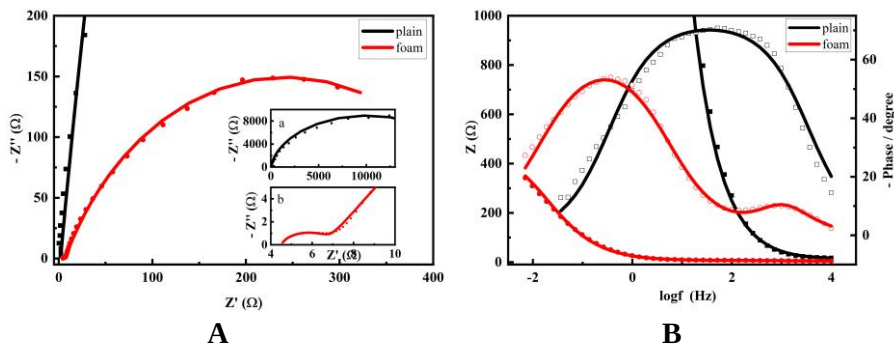


Figure 10. EIS data was recorded in a 0.1 M NaOH solution for both plain Cu and 3D Cu foam, presented as Nyquist (A) and Bode (B) plots. The insets (a) and (b) in (A) correspond to the Nyquist plots at low and high frequencies, respectively.

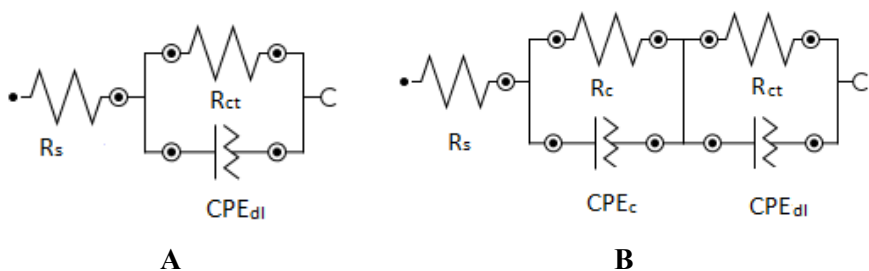


Figure 11. The circuit model used for EIS data fitting: the plain Cu electrode (A) and the 3D Cu foam electrode (B).

By applying the equivalent circuits to fit the impedance spectra, a set of fitting parameters was obtained and is presented in Table 3. The results obtained demonstrate that the values of R_{ct} of investigated samples were in the range of 20 – 23 kΩ for plain Cu electrode and within 470 – 600 Ω for Cu 3D electrode. The double layer capacitance CPE_{dl} is found to be about 22 μF for the plain Cu electrode and about 12 mF for the Cu foam electrode, which is comparable to the values obtained from CV-based double layer capacity measurements (23.8 μF for the plain Cu electrode and 10.4 mF for the Cu foam). Consequently, EIS measurements yielded f_R values of 2.1 ± 0.2 for the plain and 986 ± 36 for Cu 3D structured electrodes.

Table 3. EIS parameters for plain Cu and Cu foam obtained using equivalent circuits shown in Figure 8.

Sample	R_s , Ω	R_c , Ω	$Y_0(CPE_c) /$ 10^{-6} $\Omega^{-1} s^n$	n (CPE_c)	R_{ct} , Ω	$Y_0(CPE_{dl}) /$ 10^{-3} $\Omega^{-1} s^n$	n (CPE_{dl})
Plain	13	-	-	-	23000	$22.4 \cdot 10^{-3}$	0.8
Foam	5	2.1	214	0.89	471	12	0.79

The results obtained suggest that in the case of plain or non-porous Cu electrodes, the electrochemically active surface area values are not affected by the determination method. However, for Cu 3D structures, this parameter shows significant dependence on the evaluation mode. Double layer capacitance measurements result in considerably higher ES_r values compared to the UPD technique.

3.1.5. Suitability of ES_r Determination Methods

The results obtained suggest that in the case of plain or non-porous Cu electrodes, the electrochemically active surface area values are not affected by the determination method applied in this study. However, for Cu 3D structures, this parameter shows significant dependence on the evaluation mode. Double-layer capacitance measurements result in considerably higher ES_r values compared to the UPD technique.

Table 4. Surface roughness factors (f_R) and porosity parameters of 3D copper foam electrodes deposited at a 3 A cm^{-2} current density and different deposition times.

Deposition time, s	Average pore size, μm	Average pore density, cm^{-2}	f_R , by double-layer capacitance	f_R , by Tl UPD
5	7.3 ± 0.33	$3.2 \cdot 10^6 \pm 1.1 \cdot 10^7$	90 ± 12	24 ± 4
10	16.5 ± 0.81	$1.2 \cdot 10^6 \pm 4.0 \cdot 10^8$	290 ± 19	40 ± 9
15	21.5 ± 1.08	$8.0 \cdot 10^5 \pm 1.8 \cdot 10^6$	600 ± 26	76 ± 10
20	25.3 ± 1.26	$4.0 \cdot 10^5 \pm 1.4 \cdot 10^6$	814 ± 29	116 ± 12
25	28.8 ± 1.38	$3.0 \cdot 10^5 \pm 1.1 \cdot 10^6$	900 ± 38	126 ± 13

In order to establish the possible reasons for this phenomenon, additional measurements were carried out. The pore sizes and wall structures of the foams are tunable by adjusting the deposition conditions [136]. Considering this, Cu 3D samples were produced by varying the deposition time from 5 up to 25 s and were analysed by applying Tl UPD and voltametric double-layer capacitance measurements.

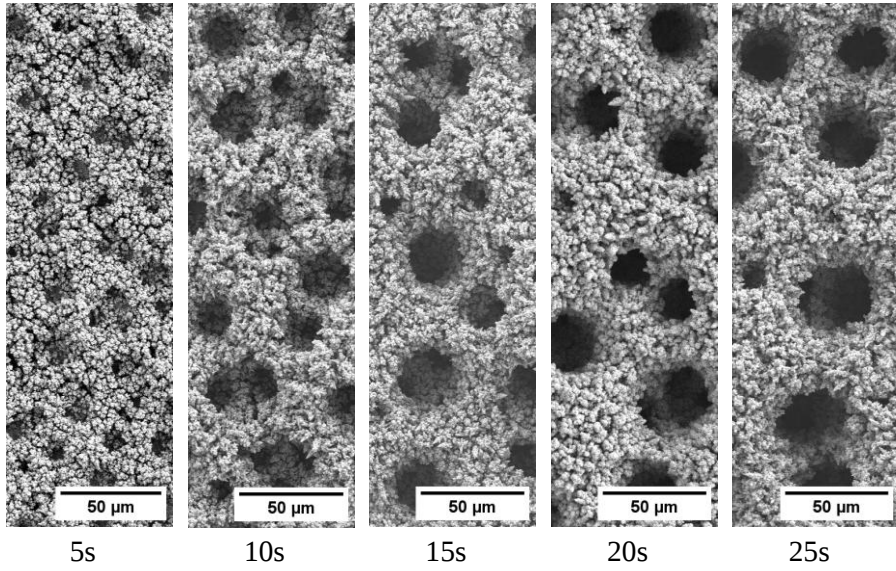


Figure 12. SEM images showing the morphology of 3D Cu foam electrodes obtained with different deposition times.

SEM images of the surface morphology of the deposited Cu foam electrodes obtained with different deposition times are presented in Fig. 12. Generally, the surface morphology of these samples, except for pore density and size, does not differ significantly between them, while, the determined surface roughness factors (f_R) and porosity parameters of electrodeposited Cu 3D electrodes are listed in Table 4.

It can be observed that the increase in deposition time resulted in an increase in the size and a reduction in the density of pores in the Cu 3D layer. The surface area of this type of electrode is determined by the number and size of holes formed by detached hydrogen bubbles as well as by the wall width between them [136]. Application of both ES_r determination methods revealed an increase in the f_R value of Cu foam with the increase in deposition duration; meanwhile, the double-layer capacitance measurements yielded higher f_R values compared to UPD measurements for all investigated samples.

As the Cu 3D layer grows, its inner or spatial structure becomes increasingly complicated. This may be the main reason for the variation in ES_r observed when using different determination methods. In addition, a minimal three-fold difference between f_R values was observed for the samples deposited at 5 s, while for all the successive ones, a more than seven-fold difference in f_R was found. The latter issues are probably caused by some limitations of the UPD-based ES_r determination method.

Despite the fact that the maximum surface coverage of the porous Cu electrode by Tl and Pb adatoms in the UPD layer was achieved (Figure 8), it was presumed that the formation of a continuous and integral monolayer did not occur due to the complex spatial structure of the samples. Consequently, significantly lower f_R values for Cu foams were obtained. Therefore, double-layer capacitance measurements are recommended for the evaluation of the electrochemically active surface area of porous Cu 3D structures.

3.2. Electrodeposition of Cu 3D structures

3.2.1. Electrolyte without additives

Usually, an acidic Cu sulphate bath is used for Cu foam electrodeposition [25,106]. The morphology of the porous structure is mainly caused by the competitive reaction between hydrogen evolution and Cu deposition. Increasing the overpotential increases the evolution of H_2 bubbles during electrodeposition and is therefore beneficial for the porosity of the Cu foam and consequently for large values of ES_r . However, these structures have two major problems that arise due to the rapid Cu deposition at extremely high cathodic overpotential. The first is the low mechanical strength due to fragile Cu dendrites in the foam walls, while the second is the poor surface coverage of the electrode materials due to the current concentration on Cu dendritic deposits during the electrodeposition process [108].

In order to put Cu 3D foam samples into practical use for CO_2 reduction, additional studies were carried out with the aim to increase the effective surface area while maintaining sufficient mechanical stability of the structure. In addition, dendritic structures can be easily overgrown into a thick film with very low porosity, making it difficult for gas-liquid transport through as required in electrochemical application [109]. Therefore, it is a real problem to optimise the Cu 3D formation process. We started our studies with samples deposited in an electrolyte without any additives.

Typically, Cu 3D crystalline structures (foams) are deposited from acidic sulphate solution using high current densities. The process was carried out on Cu substrates using a published method [25,106,108]. Typical SEM images of top views of Cu foams deposited at 3 A cm^{-2} are shown in Fig. 12. The evolution of hydrogen gas at an electrode surface is significant during Cu electrodeposition when current densities higher than $> 0.5\text{ A cm}^{-2}$ are maintained [114]. The evolution of hydrogen gas hinders the electrodeposition of Cu directly on the cathode by temporarily preventing contact between the Cu cathode and the electrolyte containing Cu sulphate. Eventually, a thin film

of electrolyte surrounding a bubble of H_2 comes into contact with the cathode, completing the electrochemical circuit and allowing Cu to be electrodeposited [105]. The resulting foam is an interconnected network of Cu pores patterned by H_2 bubbles (Fig. 12). Meanwhile, the deposited structure was composed of ramified dendrites extending in all directions, which cross-linked with each other, resulting in a loose structure with empty spaces. The number and size of the holes, as well as the wall width between them, depend on the conditions of electrodeposition and the electrolysis regime.

The hydrogen evolution reaction during the electroplating process creates two types of pores [105]. The first type are macropores (or holes) formed by detached hydrogen bubbles. The origin of the second type of pores are hydrogen bubbles generated at the tops of the agglomerates of Cu grains during the growth process (the current density distribution effect) [105]. Therefore, due to the intensive H_2 evolution resulting in discontinuous pore size distribution, together with the formation of dendritic walls, the Cu 3D structure assumes a large surface area.

The numerical values of ES_r were determined from the voltametric double layer capacitance measurements using cyclic voltammetry, while the determined f_R values vary between 300 and 900 depending on the Cu 3D sample formation time (Table 4).

3.2.2. The influence of additives on Cu 3D layer formation

The additives used to improve the micro- and nanostructural properties of Cu 3D electrodes are usually the same as those used in bright copper electroplating [111–114]. As the morphology of the porous structure is mainly caused by the competitive reaction between hydrogen evolution and Cu deposition, it has been shown that additives such as acetic acid, NH_4^+ , Cl^- ions or PEG have a good effect in preventing bubble coalescence and hence pore size reduction [4,108,112]. It is also known that the addition of chloride ions to the deposition solution dramatically reduces the size of the copper branches. However, despite numerous investigations on the effect of additives on the deposition process of Cu 3D structures [4,108,111–114], there are no reliable data on their influence on the deposit morphology, ES_r values and mechanical stability.

Ammonium acetate, hydrochloric acid and PEG were used as additives to the acidic sulphate electrolyte to determine their influence on the ES_r values of electrodeposited Cu 3D structures. SEM images of top views of Cu foam samples deposited in solutions with ammonium acetate and PEG additives are shown in Fig. 13, while those deposited with hydrochloric acid are shown in

Fig. 14, respectively. Meanwhile, the values of the surface roughness factors of deposited samples are listed in Table 5. All the deposits showed the porous foam structure, however, the average pore size and density, as well as a degree of crystallite compactness in the foam walls looked different.

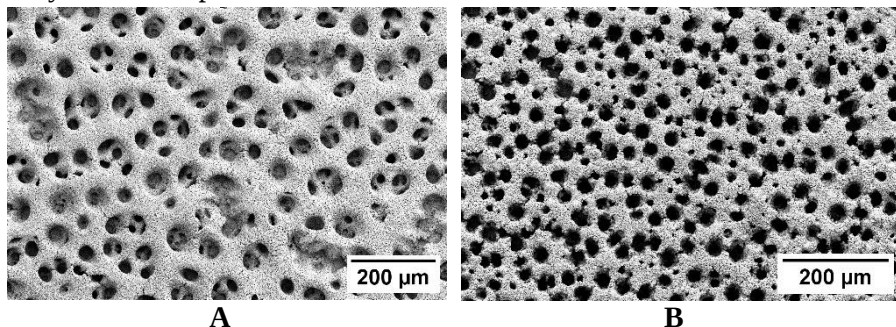


Figure 13. SEM images of 3D Cu structures that were electrodeposited from an acidic sulphate solution containing additives $\text{CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$ (A) and PEG (B).

Despite the reports that NH_4^+ ions are an agent to improve the porosity of Cu foam, since they produce H_2 gas during the cathodic reaction and inhibit bubble coalescence in an aqueous solution [108], we have not observed any significant influence of ammonium acetate on the morphology of the deposited Cu foam (Fig. 13A). In addition, the values of ES_r of these samples were even lower with respect to those deposited in solution without additives. Similar conclusions can be drawn for the samples deposited in solution containing PEG. Besides, some structural defects such as cracks in the walls of these samples can be observed (Fig. 13B). On the basis of the results obtained, further studies were carried out without the aforementioned additives.

Table 5. The effect of acidic sulphate electrolyte additives on the electrochemically active surface area values of the Cu 3D layer (surface roughness, f_R).

Electrolyte additives	Surface roughness factor, f_R
-	814 ± 29
0.5 M $\text{CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$	576 ± 116
0.0001 M HCl	622 ± 119
0.001 M HCl + 0.0001 M PEG	567 ± 63
0.05 M HCl	2512 ± 247

The most obvious and effective influence on morphology and ES_r values was observed when chloride ions were added to the deposition solution. If comparatively low concentrations of Cl^- (0.1 mM) do not significantly affect the ES_r values of Cu 3D deposited samples, the addition of 50 mM increases

this figure more than threefold (Table 5). Therefore, the detailed analysis of the influence of HCl on the morphology and properties of deposited Cu foam structures was investigated.

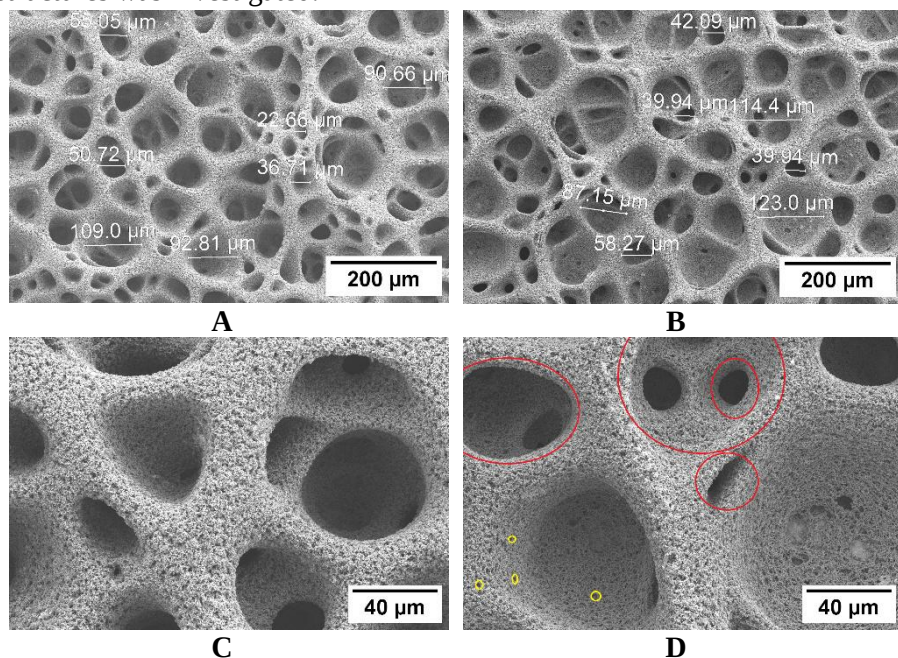


Figure 14. SEM images of 3D Cu structures, deposited in solutions containing HCl as additive: A, C – 10 mM; B, D – 50 mM. Red mark – first type pores; yellow – second type pores.

3.2.3. Effect of Cl^- ions on the Cu foam structure and properties

It is known that the trace amount of Cl^- could have an obvious catalytic effect on Cu deposition because these ions are able to modify the mechanism of electron transfer through a Cl^- bridge, greatly increasing the exchange current density and lowering the overpotential of the $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^+$ reaction, which is the rate-controlling step of the Cu reduction reaction [142]. From the data presented in Table 5, it is clear that with the addition of 50 mM HCl in the acidic sulphate solution, it is possible to form a structure with significantly higher values of ES_r , compared to the sample deposited in solution without Cl^- ions. The next step was to investigate how this increase relates to the structure of the deposited Cu 3D layers.

The macropores or holes (first type pores) of the samples deposited in solutions without HCl were smaller and more uniform in size (14-34 μm , average 25 μm , Fig. 5A), but with a high average pore density ($4.0 \cdot 10^5$). Meanwhile, the addition of HCl resulted in the formation of coalesced holes with a dispersed hole size (22-129 μm) and a lower number of holes per cm^2

of geometric surface area (Fig. 14A, 14B). The influence of the Cl^- concentration in the deposition solution on the porosity parameters and ES_r values of the deposited Cu 3D structures is presented in Table 6. The increase in Cl^- concentration resulted in an increase in the mean values of the first type pore size and a decrease in the mean values of the pore density. At the same time, an increase in the ES_r values was observed for the deposited samples. The highest f_R values (2614 ± 294) showed the Cu 3D structure deposited in solution containing 100 mM HCl. However, the samples deposited in the presence of the higher concentration of HCl (100 and 200 mM), showed the presence of structural defects on the top layer of the deposited samples and were therefore not further investigated.

Table 6. Porosity parameters and f_R values of 3D Cu samples deposited from solutions containing different amount of HCl.

HCl concentration in deposition solution, mM	Surface roughness factor, f_R	Average pore size, μm	Average pore density, cm^{-2}
0	814 ± 29	25.3 ± 1.26	$4.0 \cdot 10^5 \pm 1.4 \cdot 10^6$
0.1	622 ± 119	27.4 ± 1.35	$8.4 \cdot 10^5 \pm 3.9 \cdot 10^6$
10	1792 ± 503	33.8 ± 1.71	$2.6 \cdot 10^4 \pm 1.3 \cdot 10^5$
20	1979 ± 141	53.1 ± 2.67	$2.2 \cdot 10^4 \pm 1.2 \cdot 10^5$
50	2512 ± 247	65.4 ± 2.88	$1.7 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.0 \cdot 10^6$
100	2614 ± 294	79.6 ± 4.01	$1.1 \cdot 10^4 \pm 5.6 \cdot 10^6$
200	2458 ± 403	61.4 ± 3.08	$1.8 \cdot 10^4 \pm 6.4 \cdot 10^6$

Analysis of the Cu 3D structures also showed a decrease in the proportion of holes formed by coalesced H_2 bubbles with increasing HCl concentration. Meanwhile, analysis of the interior of these holes showed that the dimensions of the second type of pores in the walls were lower and their density was higher for the sample deposited in solution containing a higher amount of HCl (Fig. 14C, 14D). The walls of the pores and holes were also very porous, consisting of dispersed small aggregates of Cu crystallites, and their formation depended on the presence of Cl^- in the electrolyte. The addition of Cl^- ions dramatically reduces the size of the copper branches and the dimensions of the Cu crystallite aggregates in the branch, whose average size was 215 and 115 nm for samples deposited in solution without Cl^- (Fig. 15A) and with Cl^- (Fig. 15B), respectively. It can be observed that the compactness of the agglomerates of Cu crystallites formed along the holes was also increased, as the dendrites were reduced in size and closely stacked when the sample was deposited in the presence of Cl^- (Fig. 15B).

The presence of Cl^- ions in the deposition solution significantly affects not only the dimensions of the branches but also the thickness of the deposited Cu

layer. The latter parameter was determined from the cross-sectional SEM images shown in Fig. 16.

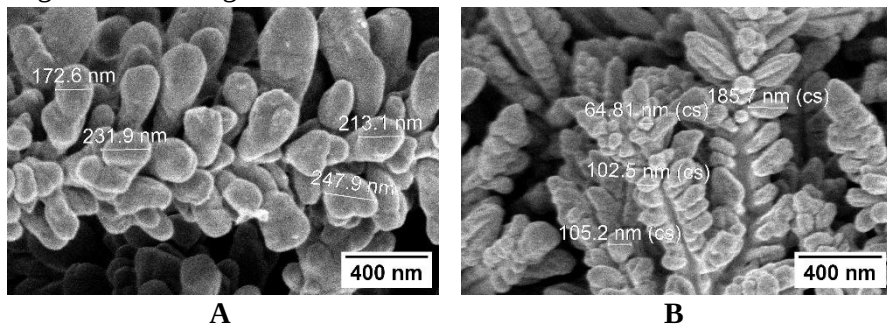


Figure 15. SEM images of 3D Cu layers dendritic branches deposited in solutions without (A) and with 50 mM of Cl^- (B).

The average thickness of the Cu 3D layer deposited in Cl^- free solution at 3 A cm^{-2} is close to $\sim 88 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (Fig. 16A), while the thickness of the Cu sample deposited under the same conditions in the presence of 50 mM Cl^- reaches $\sim 120 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (Fig. 16B). The thickness of the Cu 3D layers can even reach $\sim 200 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ when higher HCl concentrations (100 or 200 mM) were applied, but such deposits showed a lot of structural defects. It is also evident from the presented cross-sectional images that Cu 3D layer deposited in Cl^- containing solution have a significantly denser structure. The pore size distribution and the compactness of the agglomerates of Cu crystallites formed between the holes determine the uniformity of the such structures, which show high ES_r values with respect to samples deposited in solution without Cl^- additives.

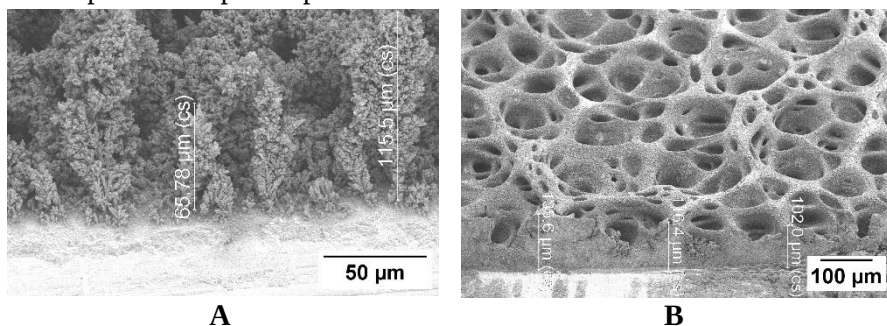


Figure 16. SEM images of the cross-section of 3D layers of Cu deposited in solutions that did not contain Cl^- (A) and contained 50 mM Cl^- (B).

Therefore, it can be stated that the specific surface area of Cu electrodes is determined by the size of the second-type pores and Cu grain agglomerates in the walls of the holes. The presence of chloride in the solution has a dual effect: it both reduces the size of the pores and dendritic branches, and

facilitates the transport of electroactive species through the interior of the structure. This, in turn, increases the value of ES_r .

3.2.4. Phase composition and the grain size

It has been found that no difference is seen in the XRD patterns of Cu samples deposited in solutions without and with Cl^- ions, nor is any influence shown by the Cl^- concentration on the phase composition and lattice parameters. Therefore, only one diffractogram corresponding to the sample deposited in solution with Cl^- ions is presented in Figure 17 and shows that the Cu deposits have a face-centred cubic (fcc) structure with high crystallinity, with peaks corresponding to the (111), (200) and (220) crystal facets. Furthermore, dominant crystallographic orientation of polycrystalline copper deposits were not exhibited. The small peaks observed alongside the Cu peaks were attributed to the Cu_2O phase. It is important to note that Cu foam samples immediately after electrodeposition forms an oxide, this indicates that porous material is highly sensitive to surface oxidation.

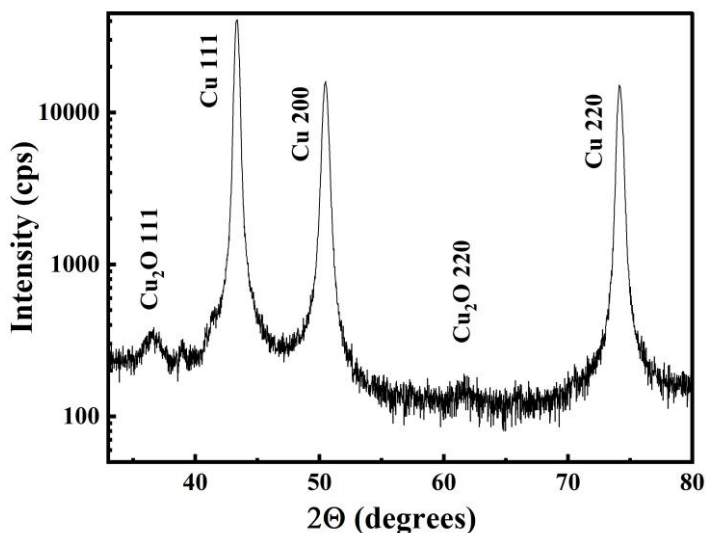


Figure 17. XRD pattern of Cu 3D structure deposited in solution containing Cl^- ions.

A polycrystalline Cu 3D material is composed of crystallites that 'stick' together and can vary in size from a few nanometers to several millimeters, as it can be observed in Figures 13-16. In the field of XRD, a crystallite is considered to be the smallest single crystal or part of a grain with no lattice defects, in which coherent scattering of X-rays takes place [143,144]. In some cases, the grain may coincide with the crystallite. XRD measurements were

used to determine the grain size values of the Cu 3D structures. The grain size values of the samples deposited in solutions without and with Cl^- ions were found to be very close and vary within the range $16.8 - 17.3 \pm 5$ nm.

3.2.5. Mechanical properties

As the foam materials are composed of a solid thin-walled matrix and hollow cells, the mechanical properties of such objects are related to the way in which the constitutive particles (crystallite aggregates) are arranged in the structure of the material [145,146]. The stiffness (SF) is a parameter, which corresponds to the extent to which the material resists deformation in response to an applied force. SF values were obtained from microhardness measurements of the specimens studied, carried out by loading the surface and analysing the release curves.

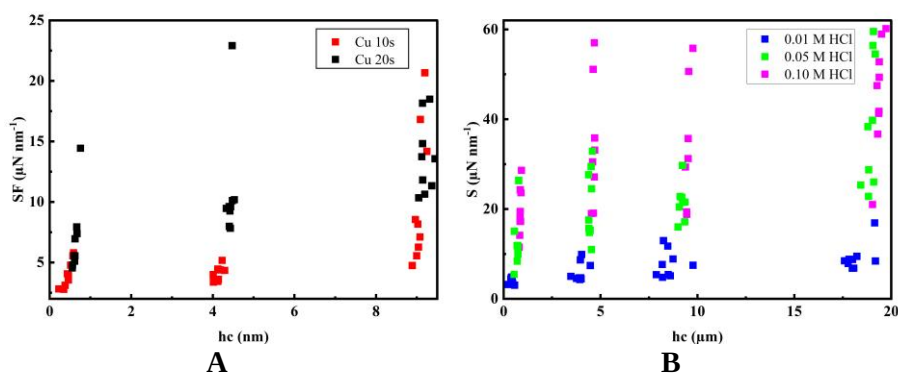


Figure 18. The stiffness (SF) values at various contact depth (hc) of Cu 3D electrodes deposited on different conditions: blue – with 0.01 M HCl, 20 s deposition; green – 0.05 M HCl, 20 s; pink – 0.10 M HCl, 20 s; red – no additive, 10 s; black – no additive, 20 s.

Two experiments were carried out. The first involved the Cu 3D samples being deposited in a solution without additives for 10 or 20 seconds. The second involved the samples being deposited in solutions containing different amount of HCl. The SF values were fitted from the unloading curves and are summarised in Figure 18. As can be seen, the samples deposited for 20 s are more resistant to deformation than those deposited for 10 s. At all three applied loads, the SF values of the latter sample (red points) are close to $5\text{--}7 \mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$, while those of the sample deposited for 20 s (black points) are close to $10\text{--}15 \mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$.

The mechanical properties of deposited Cu 3D structures are also influenced by the Cl^- ions concentration in the deposition solution. The lowest SF values were exhibited by the samples deposited in the presence of 10 mM

HCl (blue points in Figure 18B), which were close to the values of the samples deposited in a chlorine-free solution. Adding 50 or 100 mM HCl resulted in the deposition of 3D Cu samples with SF values of 25–30 $\mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$ (see green and pink points in Figure 18B). As previously mentioned, samples deposited in a solution with a Cl^- concentration exceeding 50 mM exhibit serious structural defects that limit the further use of the aforementioned Cu 3D foams. It is also evident that the properties of the sample change with depth. This may be related to structural peculiarities of the porous structure.

The results of investigation of mechanical properties of the deposited Cu foams are in agreement with the SEM analysis (see Figure 14). This indicates that a certain concentration of HCl in the deposition solution favours the formation of structures with a higher density. These structures are more resistant to deformation and have a significantly higher electrochemically active surface area compared to samples deposited in solution without Cl^- ions.

3.3. Electrochemical reduction of CO_2 to C_2 hydrocarbons

3.3.1. Microstructural characterization of modified Cu foams

A key challenge for practical application of CO_2ER is the development of advanced catalyst. However, the potential of Cu nanofoams with high surface area in electrocatalytic application for CO_2 reduction has not been studied enough. We focused on Cu 3D based catalysts and strategies how to improve their catalytic performance towards C_2 selectivity.

Cu foam electrodes were deposited from acidic sulphate solutions which varied in concentrations of H_2SO_4 and CuSO_4 components, as well as the presence of additives Cl^- ions using 3.0 A cm^{-2} current density and 20 s deposition time. Working electrodes (CuI – CuVIII) were deposited for further investigations and the nomenclature of samples is presented in Table 7.

In order to understand so-called structure–activity relation is mandatory to obtain a more detail and accurate image of electrocatalyst. Typical SEM images of surface morphology of Cu foams deposited in solutions without and with Cl^- ions at different magnification scales are shown in Figures 19 and 20.

The macro topography of Cu 3D structures deposited in the presence of Cl^- ions was very similar for all the samples that were investigated, therefore, only one sample from this group is presented in Fig. 20. Meanwhile, Fig. 19 shows images indicating apparent structural differences for samples deposited in solutions without additives.

The formation of the foam structure has been proven to be caused by the competitive reaction of Cu deposition and hydrogen evolution reaction, resulting in 3D morphology with unique pore size distribution and highly porous dendritic walls [147–149]. The HER creates two types of pores [150]. The first type is macropores, or holes, formed by detached hydrogen bubbles. The second type originates from hydrogen bubbles generated at the tops of copper grain agglomerates during growth. Meanwhile, the walls of the deposited 3D structures are composed of ramified dendrites that extend in all directions and cross-link with each other. This results in a loose structure with empty spaces, as seen in Fig. 19D.

The number and size of the macropores, as well as the width of the walls between them, depend primarily on the presence of Cl^- ions rather than the ratio of sulfate to sulfuric acid in the depositing solution. Table 8 summarizes the results of electrolyte composition's effect on porosity parameters.

Table 7. Composition of the Cu 3D deposition electrolytes.

Electrode	Electrolyte		
	CuSO_4 , M	H_2SO_4 , M	HCl, M
CuI Foam	0.2	1.5	-
CuII	0.2	0.8	
CuIII	0.4	1.5	
CuIV	0.4	0.8	
CuV	0.2	1.5	0.05
CuVI	0.2	0.8	
CuVII	0.4	1.5	
CuVIII	0.4	0.8	

The macropores of the samples deposited in solutions without HCl were smaller and more uniform in size. Their average size ranged from 25 to 45 μm (Figures 19 A, 19 B). In contrast, adding HCl resulted in coalesced holes with various hole sizes (22-129 μm) with an average size of 65 – 80 μm (Figure 20). The CuI sample deposited in a solution without Cl^- ions had the lowest average macropore size (25.3 μm) and the highest average pore density ($4.0 \cdot 10^5$). Meanwhile, the other investigated samples had similar values for this parameter, ranging from $1 \cdot 10^4$ to $2 \cdot 10^4$.

As-deposited copper foam walls exhibit a dendritic morphology with numerous secondary and higher-order branches (Figures 19C, 19D and 20). The average length and diameter of the primary branches depend on the concentrations of acid and sulfate, as well as the presence of Cl^- ions in the deposition solution. Cu foam walls formed in a solution without Cl^- ions consist of branches that range in length from 7 to 14 μm and in width from 3

to 4 μm . A more spatially dense structure with smaller branches was observed for the CuI sample (Figure 19C), which was deposited in a solution containing 1.5 M H_2SO_4 and 0.2 M CuSO_4 . In contrast, Cu foams with larger branches were obtained in solutions containing 0.4 M CuSO_4 (e.g., sample CuIII, Figure 19D).

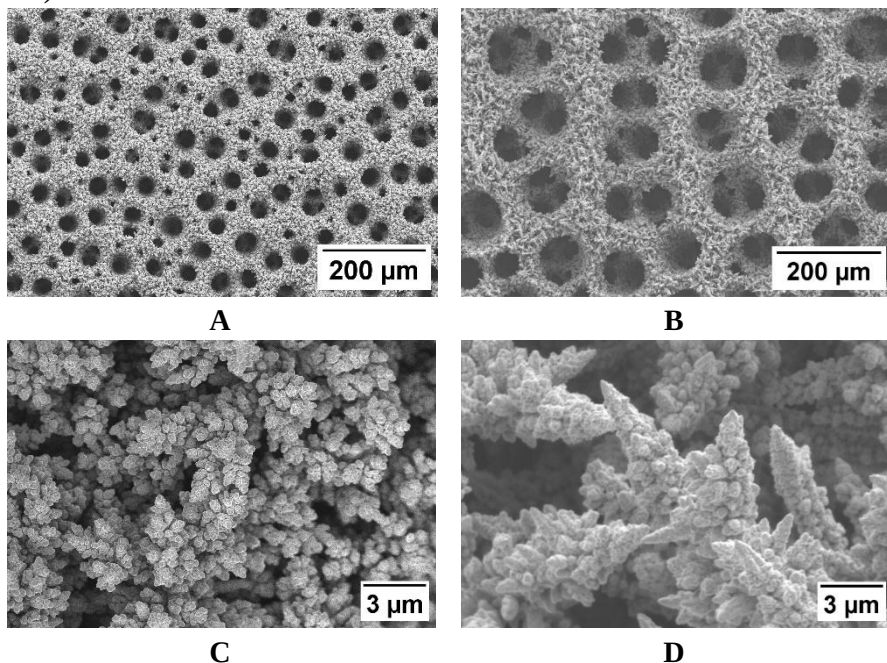


Figure 19. SEM images of CuI (A and C) and CuIII (B and D) electrodes at different magnifications.

Adding Cl^- ions to an acidic sulfate solution accelerates the metal deposition reaction. This results in more effective filling of the foam walls with Cu deposits compared to the absence of Cl^- ions. As can be seen in the SEM image in Figure 20, the additive dramatically reduces the size of the Cu crystallite aggregates forming the branches of the foam. The length and width of these branches are 1.2–2.4 μm and 200–300 nm, respectively. As the dendrite branches decreased in size, they became tightly packed, increasing the foam wall's compactness. High-magnification images confirm the nanostructured nature of the pore walls, an essential factor in determining ES_r values of Cu foam sample.

The electrodeposited Cu 3D structures have a large surface area. A precise knowledge of this parameter is crucial for comparing the behavior of various catalytic systems. In applications involving electrochemical reactions, the electrochemically active surface area (ES_r) is the key parameter because it is the area that transfers charge to species in solution [52]. ES_r depends on how

well the electrolyte accesses the pores and is influenced by surface roughness. According to the results of our previous studies dedicated to investigating the suitability of different ES_r determination methods for porous 3D Cu structures, we applied double-layer capacitance measurements using cyclic voltammetry for this purpose. The obtained surface roughness factor values f_R (the ratio of ES_r to the geometric area of the sample, S_G) are listed in Table 8.

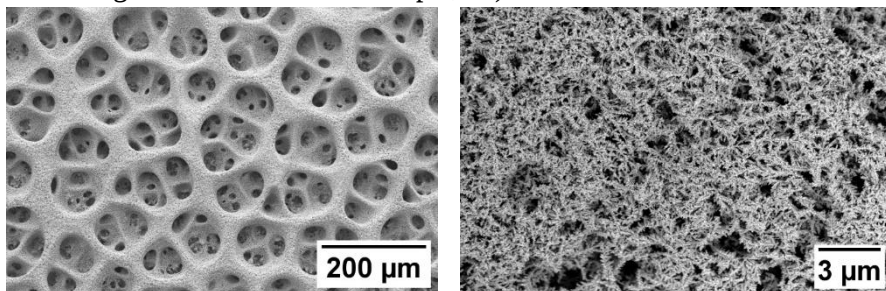


Figure 20. SEM images of CuV electrode at different magnifications.

Table 8. Morphological parameters of Cu 3D electrodes.

Electrode	Surface roughness factor (f_R)	Average pore size, μm	Average pore density, cm^{-2}
CuI	814 ± 29	25.3 ± 1.26	$4.0 \cdot 10^5 \pm 1.4 \cdot 10^6$
CuII	1035 ± 83	45.3 ± 1.81	$1.0 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.2 \cdot 10^6$
CuIII	817 ± 65	40.0 ± 1.83	$1.0 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.1 \cdot 10^6$
CuIV	911 ± 74	45.0 ± 2.16	$1.1 \cdot 10^4 \pm 3.8 \cdot 10^6$
CuV	2512 ± 247	65.4 ± 2.88	$1.7 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.0 \cdot 10^6$
CuVI	1614 ± 154	73.0 ± 3.21	$1.2 \cdot 10^4 \pm 6.2 \cdot 10^6$
CuVII	1786 ± 168	79.4 ± 3.73	$1.7 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.9 \cdot 10^6$
CuVIII	2444 ± 219	64.0 ± 2.98	$1.6 \cdot 10^4 \pm 4.2 \cdot 10^6$

The pore size distribution and compactness of the Cu crystallite agglomerates that form the walls between the holes determine the uniformity of these structures and the ES_r values of the samples. For Cu foams deposited in solution without Cl^- additives, the f_R values varied between 800 and 1000. Additionally, a higher concentration of CuSO_4 in the deposition solutions (samples CuII and CuIV) increases the reduction of Cu ions relative to hydrogen evolution, wall thickness, and branch dimensions, as well as the f_R values of these samples. In contrast, the f_R values of samples deposited in solutions with Cl^- additives were two to three times higher than those of samples deposited in solutions without Cl^- ions. These values varied between 1600 and 2500. The specific surface area of Cu electrodes appears to be determined by the size of Cu grain agglomerates in the walls and the layer's average thickness. The presence of Cl^- ions in the solution reduces the size of dendritic branches and, according to our previous studies [150], increases the

average thickness of the Cu 3D layer from $\sim 88 \mu\text{m}$ for samples deposited without Cl^- ions to $\sim 120 \mu\text{m}$.

3.3.2. Activity and selectivity of CO_2 reduction

Linear sweep voltammetry tests were performed with the investigated Cu foam electrodes in a 0.1 M KHCO_3 solution saturated with either Ar or CO_2 . The polarization curves were measured and are presented for one sample from each group in Figure 21A. Cathodic current densities increase progressively as the applied potential increases for both electrodes exposed to saturated solutions. However, within the negative potential range, it is clear that the Cu foam electrodes in the CO_2 -saturated medium exhibit higher cathodic current densities than in the Ar-saturated medium. Under an Ar atmosphere, the cathodic current is dominated by the H_2 evolution reaction [22,23,25], while the increased current density is entirely due to the electrochemical reduction of CO_2 in media saturated with this gas. Comparing the polarization curves of the first group (CuI–CuIV) and the second group (CuV–CuVIII) indicates that CO_2 reduction is faster on Cu electrodes deposited in the presence of Cl^- ions. The higher observed reaction rates on these electrodes can be attributed to the increased ES_r compared to samples deposited in a solution without additives (Table 8).

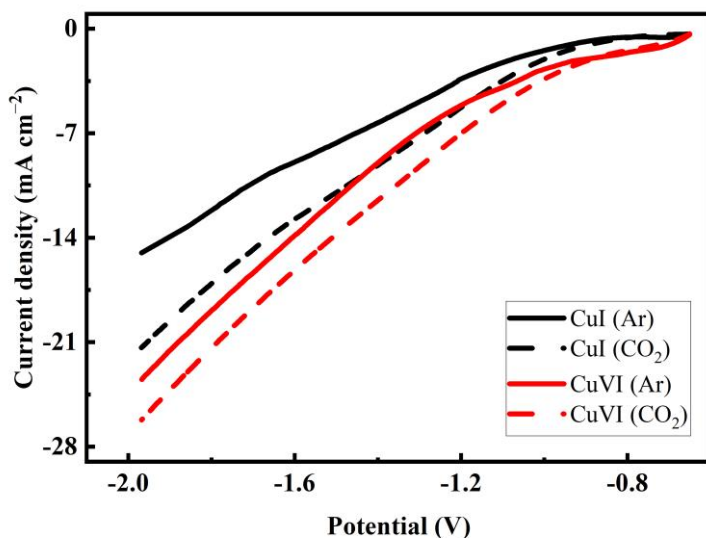


Figure 21. Linear sweep voltammetry curves of Cu 3D electrodes (CuI – black curve; CuVI – red curve) in Ar (solid line) and CO_2 (dashed line) saturated 0.1 M KHCO_3 solution, at 5 mV s^{-1} scan rate.

Recent studies have shown that a Cu electrode converting CO₂ to hydrocarbons and oxygenates requires a potential in the range of -0.8 V to -1.8 V [16,151]. Thus, the activity and selectivity of the investigated Cu foam samples as CO₂ reduction catalysts were tested at fixed potential values of -1.01 V, -1.36 V, and -1.78 V, and the CO₂ reduction process was carried out for 120 min under potentiostatic conditions. The chronoamperometric curves for the Cu 3D electrodes are presented in Figure 22. No significant changes were observed in the current densities for both electrodes, deposited in solutions without and with Cl[−] ions, indicating the durability of the electrodes during the 2 h of cathodic performance. The fixed cathodic current densities of all investigated Cu electrodes are shown in Table 9. The major gaseous products of CO₂ reduction (CH₄, C₂H₄, and C₂H₆) were analyzed using online gas chromatography, and H₂ was analyzed using a special sensor.

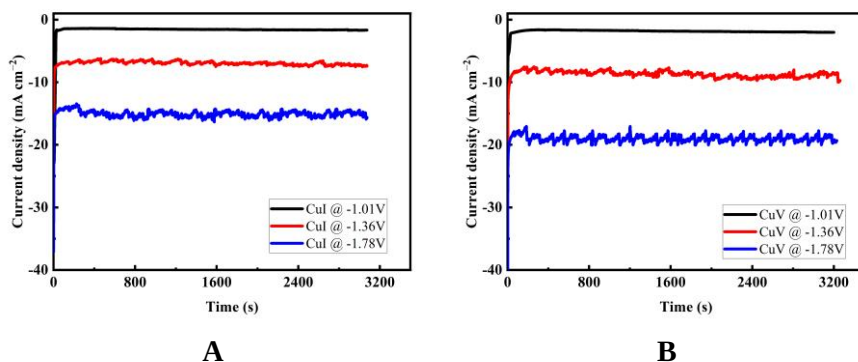


Figure 22. Current density over time curves of CuI (A) and CuV (B) electrodes at different potentials in a 0.1 M KHCO₃ solution saturated with CO₂.

Among the Cu foam samples deposited in solutions containing Cl[−] ions, the majority exhibited higher average geometric current densities (j_g —current per geometrical area of electrode (0.63 cm^2)) than samples deposited in solutions without the Cl[−] additive. At a fixed potential of -1.36 V, the j_g values of Cu electrodes deposited in a Cl[−]-free solution varied between 7.2 and $8.4 \text{ mA}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$. In contrast, the j_g values of samples deposited in the presence of Cl[−] ions ranged from 8.9 to $13.0 \text{ mA}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$. The higher reaction rates of CO₂ reduction observed on the electrodes deposited in the presence of Cl[−] ions can be attributed to the higher ES_r values of the samples. However, when the j_g values at the aforementioned potential are compared separately for Cu samples deposited from different types of electrolytes (with and without Cl[−]), the maximum j_g values correspond to the CuI and CuVII samples, which do not have the highest ES_r values in each group. Similar tendencies were observed for the other two applied CO₂ reduction potentials.

To assess the overall electrode performance, it is useful to consider the normalized current density by ES_r values of the electrode (j_{sr}). This allows one to compare the activity of catalysts with different roughness factors f_R and determine whether higher catalytic activity results from a higher average turnover frequency or an increased number of active sites.

Table 9. Current density values normalized to geometric surface area (j_g) and ES_r (j_{sr}) for different Cu 3D electrodes at -1.01 V, -1.36 V and -1.78 V potentials in 0.1 M KHCO_3 solution saturated with CO_2 .

Electrode	Potential, V	j_g , $\text{mA}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$	j_{sr} , $\mu\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$
CuI	-1.01	-2.16	-4.21
	-1.36	-8.38	-16.34
	-1.78	-16.57	-32.30
CuII	-1.01	-2.00	-3.14
	-1.36	-7.19	-11.03
	-1.78	-15.27	-23.45
CuIII	-1.01	-2.05	-3.88
	-1.36	-7.51	-14.58
	-1.78	-15.29	-29.65
CuIV	-1.01	-2.43	-4.23
	-1.36	-7.86	-13.69
	-1.78	-15.81	-27.54
CuV	-1.01	-3.29	-2.08
	-1.36	-8.86	-5.60
	-1.78	-17.10	-10.81
CuVI	-1.01	-3.52	-3.46
	-1.36	-10.62	-10.44
	-1.78	-20.84	-20.49
CuVII	-1.01	-4.87	-4.33
	-1.36	-13.02	-11.57
	-1.78	-24.71	-21.96
CuVIII	-1.01	-3.22	-2.09
	-1.36	-10.51	-6.82
	-1.78	-18.11	-11.76

Comparing the j_{sr} values of samples deposited from different electrolytes reveals that Cu foam electrodes deposited from the solutions without Cl^- additives are generally more active than those deposited in the presence of Cl^- ions. The j_{sr} values of the former varied from 11.0 to 16.3 $\mu\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$ at a fixed potential of -1.36 V, while the j_{sr} values of the latter varied from 5.6 to 11.6 $\mu\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$. Cu foam samples deposited in a solution containing 1.5 M H_2SO_4

and 0.2 M CuSO₄ (sample CuI) or 0.8 M H₂SO₄ and 0.2 M CuSO₄ (sample CuIII) exhibited the highest activity for CO₂ reduction. Regarding the activity of Cu foam samples in CO₂ER, the samples with the highest f_R values were the least active in both groups, regardless of whether they were deposited with or without Cl⁻ ions. These results suggest that ES_r is not the decisive factor in determining the CO₂ cathodic reduction activity of Cu foam electrodes.

The selectivity of electrocatalytic processes is often described in terms of Faradaic efficiency, which is the fraction of the electrical current that goes toward producing a specific substance during steady-state electrolysis. The gaseous products of CO₂ reduction were analyzed online, and the corresponding FE values were determined once the concentrations reached stable levels. The soluble products were not analyzed in this study.

The potential required for CO₂ reduction is very close to that of the hydrogen evolution reaction. This means that the HER competes with CO₂ reduction, negatively impacting energy efficiency and product selectivity [21,152]. Current efficiencies of H₂ production on the investigated Cu electrodes were determined to range between 40% and 55% and were slightly higher at the more negative potential value of -1.78 V. Accordingly, no C₂ or CH₄ gaseous products were detected on any of the Cu foam electrodes tested at the initial potential of -1.01 V. Therefore, the detailed analysis of CO₂ gaseous reduction products at this potential was not performed.

Figure 23 illustrates the Faradaic efficiency distribution of gaseous products for various Cu foam electrodes at potential values of -1.36 V and -1.78 V. Methane was detected as a reaction product only at a polarization potential of -1.78 V. FE values for this compound were related to the electrolyte composition in which the sample was deposited. Cu electrodes deposited in a solution without additives appeared to be better catalysts for CH₄ formation. The FE peak value was 5.6% for the CuII sample, whereas the FE value for the Cu electrodes deposited in the presence of Cl⁻ ions was 1.2% for the CuVIII sample. C₂ products were generated on all of the investigated Cu foam electrodes under both -1.36 V and -1.78 V potentiostatic conditions. However, FE values were higher at -1.36 V than at -1.78 V. All of the electrodes subjected to cathodic polarization at -1.36 V generated a gaseous mixture of C₂ hydrocarbons (C₂H₄ and C₂H₆), and the obtained results are further discussed in more detail.

A comparison of the activity and selectivity of the two types of Cu electrodes reveals that those deposited in a Cl⁻ free electrolyte are more active and have a structure that favors the formation of C₂ gaseous compounds. FE values for C₂ production in the first group of electrodes ranged from 12.5% to 28%. In contrast, analogous values for Cu structures deposited from an

electrolyte containing a Cl^- additive varied from 10% to 18%. Comparing C_2 gaseous product generation efficiencies in each group shows that in the first group, the CuI electrode at -1.36 V had the highest FE (28%) for C_2 gaseous products, while the CuII electrode had the lowest (12.5%). In the second group, the CuVI and CuVIII electrodes produced C_2 gaseous species most efficiently (FE ~ 17 –18%), while the CuVII electrode was the least efficient (10%). FE values for CO_2 reduction at a potential of -1.78 V did not exceed 12% for either group of samples. However, the decrease is more significant for the first group of electrodes.

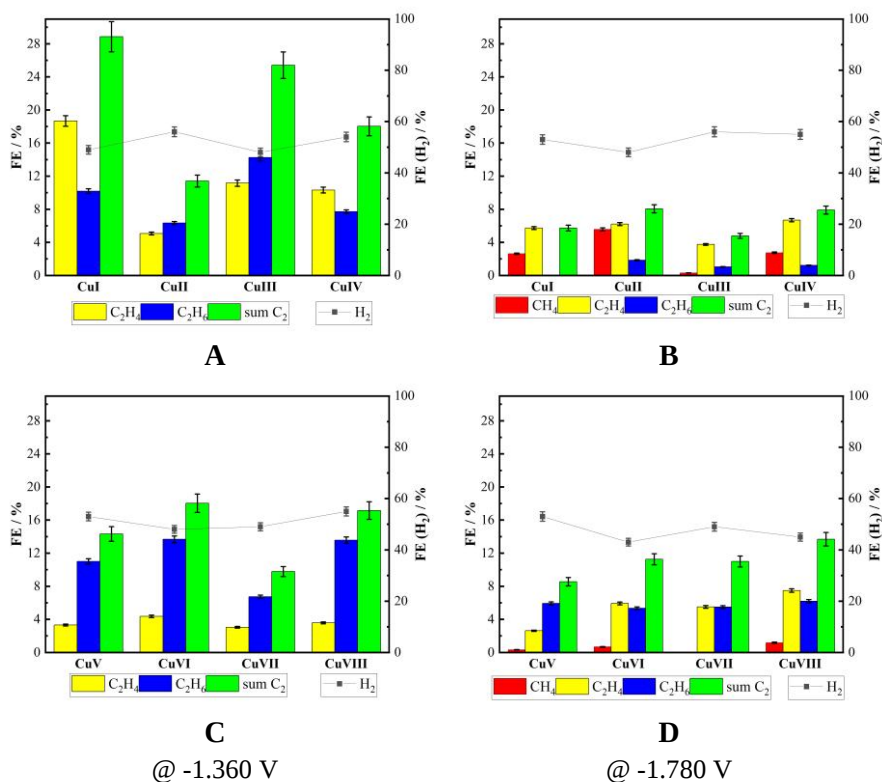


Figure 23. Faradaic efficiency values for gaseous CO_2 reduction products at potentials -1.360 V (A, C) and -1.780 V (B, D) in 0.1 M KHCO_3 solution saturated with CO_2 .

A comparison of the ratios of the C_2 gaseous compounds generated reveals that C_2H_6 dominates over C_2H_4 production at the second group's electrodes at a potential of -1.36 V (Figure 23C). For the first group's electrodes, however, this ratio is nearly equal, except for the CuI sample, which favors C_2H_4 formation (see Figure 23A).

Several authors have come to similar conclusions, indicating that increasing the surface roughness of the Cu electrode contributes to the C-C

coupling reaction and results in a selective production of a C₂ hydrocarbon mixture instead of methane [151,153]. However, our results show that the first group of Cu foam samples are more efficient at producing C₂ gaseous compounds, despite having lower f_R values than the second group of samples. Even when comparing FE values between the first group of electrodes, the electrode with the lowest f_R value (CuI) has the highest FE of C₂ gaseous compound production. This suggests that simply looking at the ES_r values of Cu foam electrodes is not enough; the microstructural characteristics of the samples should be examined and their influence evaluated in more detail. This also implies that other structural factors, such as preferred faceting, grain boundaries, and spatial arrangement of Cu 3D structures, may significantly affect the CO₂ reduction process.

3.3.3. The structure-properties relationship

3.3.3.1. Crystal facet effect

It is difficult, if not impossible, to unambiguously derive which structural elements on a polycrystalline catalyst surface, especially if it is a porous 3D structure, are contributing to the observed catalytic activity. This is because the measured catalytic activity is always a sum of activities resulting from different structures. Since morphology, microstructure, and crystal facets are the main structural parameters affecting the catalytic performance of investigated electrodes, we have attempted to assess the potential impact of each of them on CO₂ reduction and C₂ gaseous product yields.

X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements are usually applied to evaluate the preferred crystal orientation of metal electrodes. However, the results for Cu foam samples are rather contradictory [149,154,155]. Conventional Bragg–Brentano geometry for XRD experiments has limited use for thin metal foam films because it is difficult to differentiate the metal foam’s contribution to peak intensity from that of the underlying metal substrate [129,156]. Meanwhile, several authors have demonstrated that Pb UPD can estimate the contribution of different facets or crystallographic domains in multifaceted Cu surfaces by decoupling peaks in cyclic voltammograms [5,126,131].

To establish a reference, the characterization of the Cu foam electrodes was started with the following Pb UPD experiment. Previous work established that an 8 μm Cu layer, electrodeposited from an acidic sulfate solution and serving as a plain electrode for the formation of the Cu foam structure, exhibited a (100) preferred crystallite orientation [150]. Figure 24A (black curve) shows the Pb UPD cyclic voltammogram of the aforementioned electrode in a solution of 0.1 M KClO₄ + 2 mM NaCl + 2 mM PbCl₄·3H₂O + 1 mM HClO₄.

In the anodic region, a sharp peak appears at -0.092 V. According to references [126,131], this potential is close to the Pb stripping potential on the Cu(100) facet. Electrochemical faceting of metals, based on applying different periodic potential routines, is an attractive procedure for developing textured metal surfaces [126,157]. Consecutive oxidation and reduction cycles at $500 \text{ mV}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ from -1.0 V to 2.0 V in a 0.1 M NaCl solution were performed with the aforementioned Cu plain electrode. The aim of this experiment was to reface the Cu electrode and evaluate the facet distribution using the Pb UPD technique. The most noticeable change in the stripping of the re-faceted sample is that it displays an intensive, broad peak with a maximum at -0.045 V and a shoulder at -0.094 V (Figure 24A, red line). The presence of the latter indicates the existence of several single-facet peaks, which were decoupled using mathematical Gaussian functions. The obtained results are presented in Figure 24B. The smaller, convoluted peak at -0.094 V coincides with the peak corresponding to the initially present Cu(100) facets. Meanwhile, the broad peak at -0.075 V is close to the peak related to the Cu(111) facets, which appeared as a result of the re-faceting procedure.

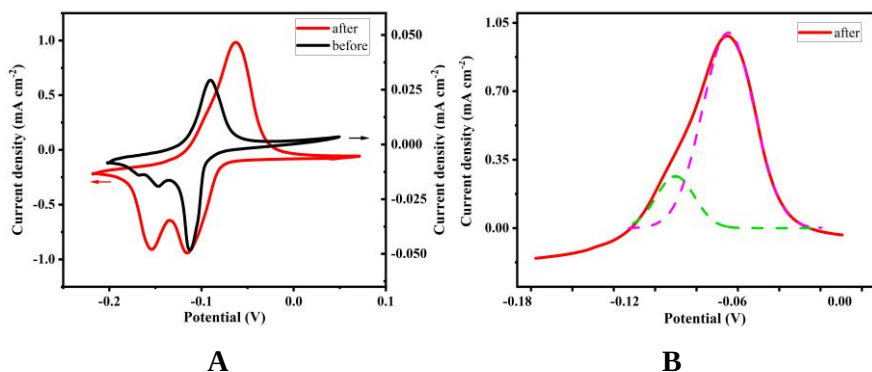


Figure 24. CV of Pb UPD deposition/dissolution on Cu plain electrode before (black curve) and after (red curve) re-faceting in 0.1 M NaCl solution **(A)** and **(B)** deconvoluted anodic dissolution curve of the re-faceted sample (green curve corresponds to Cu(100) and/or Cu(110) facets, pink curve corresponds to Cu(111) facet).

Similar studies on Cu 3D electrodes note that the porous structure and large surface area of these samples require special consideration when performing Pb UPD measurements. Based on our experience applying these measurements to evaluate the ES_r of Cu 3D structures [132], we determined that to maximize the surface coverage of Pb UPD layers, potentiostatic deposition of Pb UPD should be used for at least 900 s. Figures 25 and 26, A and B, show the anodic dissolution (voltametric Pb stripping) curves of the Pb

UPD layers formed on the investigated Cu foam electrodes, together with an example of deconvolution Figures 25 and 26B.

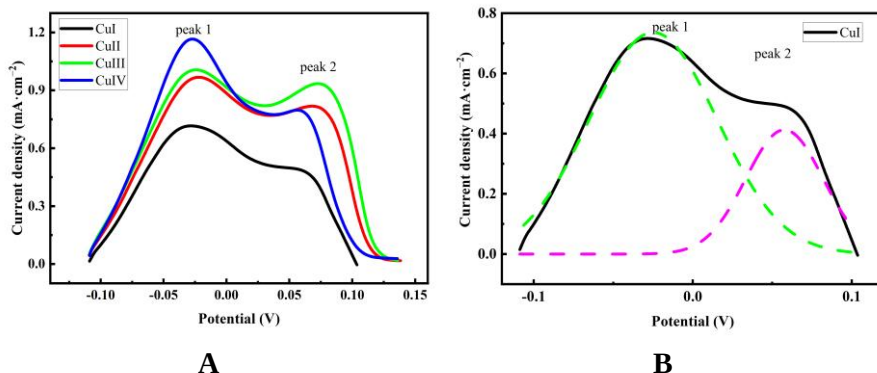


Figure 25. Stripping of the Pb UPD from Cu electrodes without Cl^- in the deposition solution (A) and deconvolution of the Pb UPD peak of the CuI electrode (B). Lines in the Figure 24B: green curve corresponds to Cu(100) and/or Cu(110) facets, pink curve corresponds to Cu(111) facet.

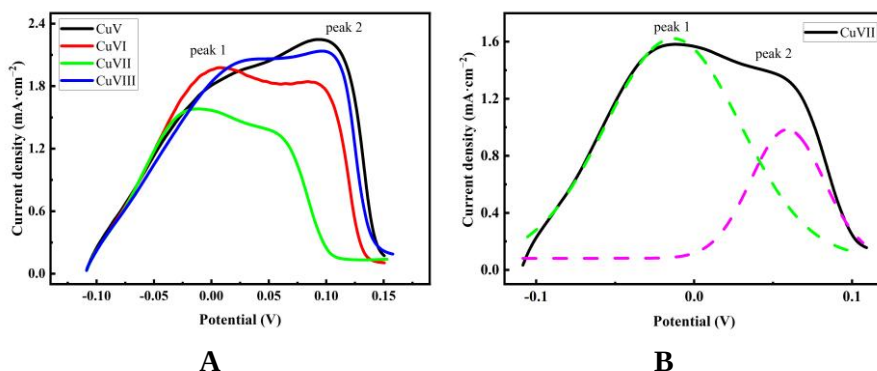


Figure 26. Stripping of Pb UPD from Cu electrodes with Cl^- in the deposition solution (A) and deconvolution of the Pb UPD peak of the CuVII electrode (B). Lines in the Figure 25B: green curve corresponds to Cu(100) and/or Cu(110) facets, pink curve corresponds to Cu(111) facet.

Several patterns can be observed from the presented curves. First, unlike the Pb UPD dissolution curve of a non-porous electrode, the dissolution curves of Cu 3D electrodes shift to the positive potential range. The extent of the shift is related to the values of the sample ES_r and is more significant for samples with higher ES_r values. Next, the anodic dissolution curves of the Pb UPD layer of foam samples are clearly asymmetrical, consisting of at least two peaks that correspond to planes of two different orientations. According to the literature, Pb from Cu(111) facets dissolves last, i.e., at the most positive potentials, while Cu(100) and Cu(110) dissolve at more negative potentials

[126,131]. Since XRD measurements detected the presence of Cu(111) facets in the Cu foam samples [150], it can be assumed that the second anodic peak in the more positive potential region of the stripping curves corresponds to Cu(111) facets. The first peak may correspond to (100) and/or (110), but separating them was not the focus of this study. While (111) facets, unlike (100) and (110) facets, are not favorable for C₂ product formation during the CO₂ER process, the main objective of this study was to evaluate the contribution of (111) facets to the overall facet composition and determine their potential impact on the reduction product composition. The integrated charge or fraction area of the facet peaks was estimated after deconvolution, and the obtained values are listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Ratio between deconvoluted peaks integrated areas of Pb UPD dissolution.

Electrode	Integrated peak 1	Integrated peak 2	peak1:peak2
	area	area	
	@-0.02 V	@0.06 V	
CuI	78.55 ± 3.14	21.35 ± 0.90	3.7 : 1
CuII	71.84 ± 3.23	28.16 ± 1.30	2.6 : 1
CuIII	69.00 ± 2.70	31.00 ± 1.21	2.2 : 1
CuIV	72.45 ± 3.04	27.55 ± 1.16	2.6 : 1
	@0.10V	@0.02 V	
CuV	82.17 ± 3.78	17.83 ± 0.82	4.6 : 1
CuVI	82.78 ± 3.48	17.22 ± 0.73	4.8 : 1
CuVII	75.31 ± 3.31	24.69 ± 1.09	3.0 : 1
CuVIII	86.00 ± 3.87	14.00 ± 0.63	6.1 : 1

When comparing the Cu(111) facet input for C₂ product selectivity, it can be observed that the most effective electrode for C₂ compound production, CuI, possesses the lowest number of (111) facets among the samples deposited in solution without an additive. Unfortunately, the differences in facet distribution among the samples are not significant enough to explain the variation in the activity and selectivity of Cu foam in the CO₂ER process. Nevertheless, a clear correlation exists between the crystalline structure of the Cu foam electrodes and the CO₂ reaction products with respect to CH₄ production. The low proportion of Cu(111) facets may explain the low CH₄ yields, particularly for samples deposited in the presence of Cl⁻ ions.

3.3.3.2. Grain boundaries and defects

Defective site atoms are typically in an unsaturated coordination state; therefore, according to several studies, defects, including grain boundaries, play an important role in facilitating the C-C coupling in the CO₂ER process [23,151,158,159]. Consequently, increasing the density of grain boundaries

can significantly improve the activity and selectivity of the catalyst. From this perspective, comparing the fine structure of Cu 3D electrodes is appropriate.

In the field of XRD, the crystallite is considered to be the smallest single crystal or part of the grain that has no lattice defects and in which coherent scattering of X-rays takes place [143,144]. In certain cases, the grain may coincide with the crystallite. The grain size values of the Cu 3D structures were determined in our previous work based on XRD measurements, and it was found that the grain size values of the samples deposited in solutions without and with Cl^- ions are very close and vary in the range of $16.8\text{--}17.3 \pm 5$ nm [150].

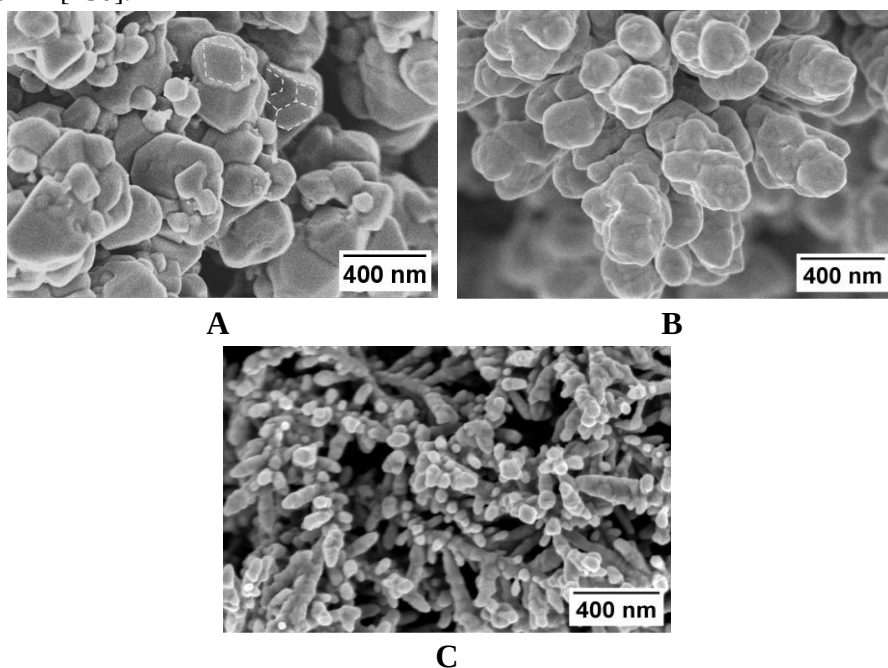


Figure 27. SEM images of high magnification (100 000x) of CuI (A), CuII (B) and CuV (C) electrodes.

High-magnification (100,000 $\times$) SEM images of Cu foam samples deposited in solution with and without chloride (Cl^-) ions, presented in Figure 27, reveal that the 3D Cu material is composed of crystallites that “stick” together and can vary in size from a few tens to several hundred nanometers. Comparing the fine structure of the CuI and CuII samples, which exhibited different activity and selectivity for CO₂ER, shows that the size of the large particles comprising both samples does not differ significantly, ranging from 250 to 300 nm. However, some CuI crystallites are covered with smaller particles up to 120 nm in diameter, which significantly increases the number of grain boundaries. Additionally, the crystallographic features of the CuI

sample (Figure 27A) are clearly visible, indicating the edges of the crystallites and the planes they form. These features are highlighted for several crystallites in Figure 27A. Meanwhile, the CuII sample is composed of crystallites without clearly pronounced crystallographic features (Figure 27B). Despite the fact that the CuV sample is composed of branched, elongated crystallites with an average length of 72 nm and a diameter of 67 nm (Figure 27C), this structure is less effective in CO₂ gaseous product yields than the CuI sample.

The fine structural characteristics observed in the investigated copper foam samples suggest that the CuI sample may have a higher density of structural defects than the other samples. This crystal structure could increase the number of active sites that promote CO₂ER. Additionally, catalysts with multiple edges and cores appear to be more effective at promoting C₂ gaseous compound formation. This may explain why the CuI electrode exhibits higher efficiency in generating C₂ gaseous products.

3.3.3.3. Effect of crystallite dimensions and geometry on C₂ yields

Several studies on CO₂ER behavior have indicated that the process depends on the surface geometry of Cu catalysts [115,152,160] and that morphological features, such as pore size and shape, affect catalytic activity and selectivity [114,149]. However, our data suggest that macropore size and density have minimal impact on CO₂ER yields. For instance, samples CuI and CuIII, which were deposited in an electrolyte without Cl⁻ ions, exhibit the highest FE values in this group of foams and possess reverse porosity parameters (Table 8).

Therefore, attention should be paid to the parameters of the crystallite aggregates forming the foam wall structure. When comparing the structural characteristics of the most and least efficient catalysts from the group of samples deposited in solution without the Cl⁻ additive, a few key factors should be considered. The CuI sample's walls are composed of compactly packed crystallite aggregates that form branches with dimensions ranging from 4 to 7 μm in length and 2 to 3 μm in width. The gaps between the branches in this sample range from 0.5 to 1.0 μm, making the 3D structure narrow and dense (Figure 19C). In contrast, the CuII sample consists of larger aggregates ranging from 7 to 14 μm in length and 4 to 5 μm in width, with gaps between branches ranging from 1.5 to 2 μm (Figure 19D). Due to the larger aggregates forming the foam walls and the larger gaps between the branches, one might suppose that the CuII sample's spatial structure is less compact than the CuI sample's.

It is known that C-C coupling is the most important step in the formation of C₂ compounds and that higher pH values in the reaction zone favor this reaction [25,161]. If structural features hinder the entry of HCO₃⁻ into the

reaction zone, the pH of the reaction medium remains elevated, which leads to C-C bonding and the formation of C_2 products [25,153]. One might suppose that the denser spatial structure of the CuI electrode, compared to the CuII electrode, is more favorable for maintaining higher pH values in the pre-electrode layer and thus supporting C_2 gaseous compound formation. This interpretation may explain why the FE value of C_2 gaseous products for the CuI sample is as high as 28%, while for the CuII sample, it is only 12%.

The presence of Cl^- ions in the deposition solution of Cu foam structures reduces the size of dendritic branches and at the same time significantly increases ES_r values with respect to samples deposited without the additive. The former conditions result in producing a dense spatial structure with the gaps between individual branches between 0.3 and 0.6 μm (Figure 20). However, these samples are not as effective as that of CuI for C_2 gaseous compound production. The lower values of j_{sr} for foams deposited in the presence of Cl^- with respect to the CuI sample may indicate partial use of the potential active sites of the structure due to its microstructural features. In addition, caution should be exercised when comparing CO₂ER performance between catalysts with different roughness factors because they will reach mass transport limitations at different rates. However, significant mass transport limitations can be reached for samples with extremely high spatial density and hence high ES_r values when too little CO₂ reaches the electrode surface. Mass transport modeling studies have largely explained this phenomenon, showing that an ideal compromise between pH increase and CO₂ supply at the electrode surface gives optimal C_2 selectivity on rough electrodes [151]. Therefore, one might suppose that the gap size between individual branches of foams deposited in the presence of Cl^- may be too small to be effective for production of C_2 compounds.

The presented examples demonstrate the significant influence of the size of Cu foam branches, gaps between them, and the resulting spatial structure on its effectiveness in reducing CO₂ to C_2 gaseous compounds. A special configuration of branches typical for samples deposited in solution without Cl^- additive and containing a lower (0.2 M) concentration of CuSO₄ forms a denser spatial structure that favors C_2 gaseous product formation during CO₂ER on Cu foam electrodes.

3.3.4. Cu foam electrode stability

When talking about the interrelation between the catalyst's structure and activity, both the facet dependency as well as potential-and/or reaction induced morphological and structural changes have to be considered for given electrocatalytic process. Since the electrocatalytic properties have a noticeable dependence on the surface structure, the reconstruction behaviour of Cu metal greatly impacts its CO₂ reduction performance [9,27,36]. Several studies have shown that the initial well defined morphology and highly active sites tend to be lost during electrocatalysis because of surface reconstruction, resulting in catalytic performance degradation [31,32].

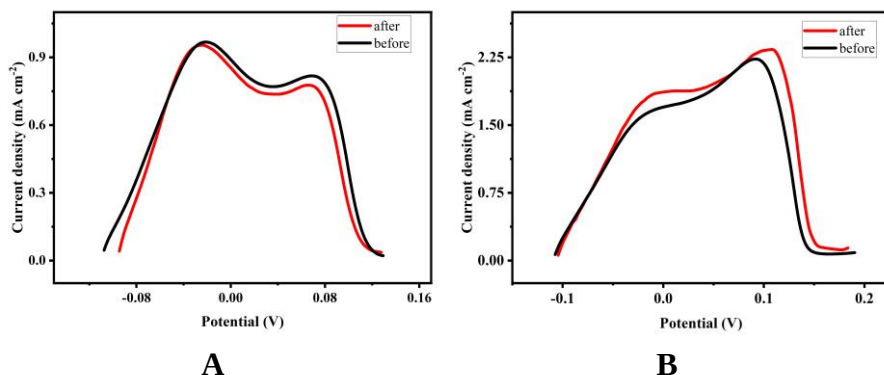
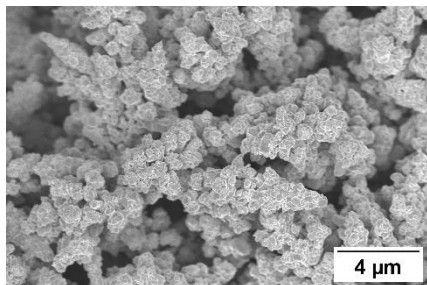


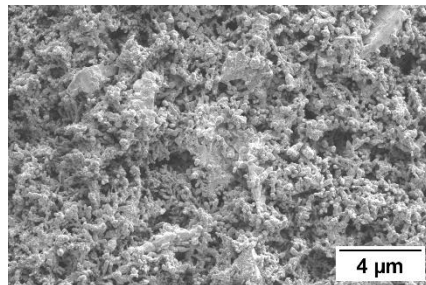
Figure 28. Pb UPD layer stripping from Cu electrodes before and after 2h CO₂ electrochemical reduction at -1.36 V in a 0.1 M KHCO₃ solution saturated with CO₂: A – CuI electrode; B – CuVI electrode.

In order to investigate the stability of Cu foam structures in the process of electrochemical CO₂ reduction we have performed an ex-situ SEM and Pb UPD analysis of Cu 3D electrodes after 2 hours potentiostatic polarization in CO₂ saturated KHCO₃ solution. Pb UPD layer stripping curves for the Cu foam samples deposited in solutions with and without Cl⁻ ions (Figure 28) before and after CO₂ reduction process generally are identical, therefore it can be stated that there were observed no significant facet reconstruction of investigated structures.

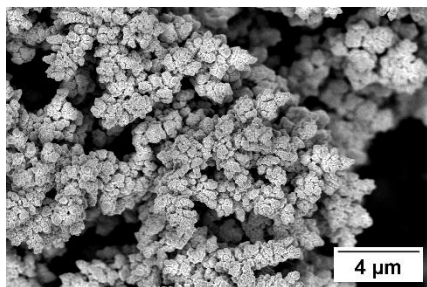
As can be seen from SEM images (Figure 29) Cu foam retains its dendritic morphology even after undergoing electrochemical CO₂ reduction, indicating structural stability and potential reusability of the catalyst.



CuI before

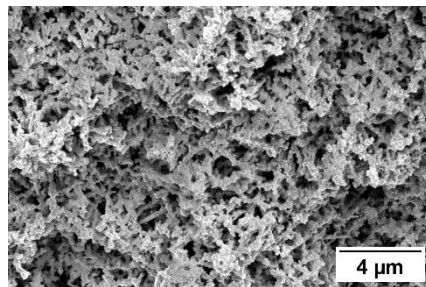


CuV before



CuI after

A



CuV after

B

Figure 29. SEM images of Cu 3D electrodes before and after CO₂ reduction at -1.36 V in a 0.1 M KHCO₃ solution saturated with CO₂: A – CuI electrode; B – CuVI electrode.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Pb or Tl UPD monolayer deposition techniques yield reliable results for the evaluation of the electrochemically active surface area (ES_r) of non-porous Cu electrodes. Meanwhile, for highly porous 3D structures, these methods are unsatisfactory, mainly due to the complex spatial structure of the sample and the inability to form a real monolayer. Of the considered techniques for ES_r evaluation of Cu 3D structures, double-layer capacitance determination through voltammetric measurements is the most suitable due to its simplicity.
2. The aim to maximise the ES_r and together with ensuring an adequate mechanical stability of the electrodeposited Cu foams were achieved by using Cl^- ions as additives to the acid sulphate electrolyte. Up to three-fold increase in ES_r was achieved by introducing 50 mM of HCl. Meanwhile, ammonium acetate and polyethylene glycol additives showed no positive effect on the properties of the electrodeposited Cu 3D structures.
3. The positive effect of Cl^- ions during the electrodeposition of Cu foam electrodes is related to their specific influence on microstructural characteristics. These characteristics include the size of the micropores in the walls of the holes and the size of the crystallite aggregates that form dendritic branches. These structural changes result in a larger electrochemically active surface area, and the higher density obtained in the presence of Cl^- ions ensures the mechanical stability of the 3D structure.
4. The structural diversity of Cu 3D samples electrodeposited from acidic sulfate solutions with varying concentrations of the principal components (H_2SO_4 , CuSO_4 , and Cl^- ions) enabled the evaluation of the structure-property relationship of catalyst activity and selectivity toward C_2 compound production during CO_2 electrochemical reduction.
5. The pore size and density of Cu 3D electrodes have little influence on C_2 yield during electrochemical reduction of CO_2 , while the Cu foam sample deposited in a solution containing 1.5 M H_2SO_4 and 0.2 M CuSO_4 appeared to be the most effective catalyst for producing C_2 compounds.
6. The higher catalytic activity and selectivity toward C_2 compound formation during CO_2ER on a Cu 3D electrode are primarily due to the size of the nanostructured branches and the gaps between them. This spatial structure likely favors the maintenance of higher pH values in the pre-electrode layer, supporting the C-C coupling process. The higher catalytic activity and selectivity of this electrode may also be related to its lower Cu(111) facet input to the overall facet distribution and higher structural defect density.

7. Cu 3D electrodes with roughness factor (f_R) values exceeding 1500, which is characteristic of samples deposited in the presence of Cl^- ions, are less effective in C_2 production during CO₂ER than samples deposited without an additive and with f_R values ~ 800 . This is due to the shape and dimensions of the elongated crystallites and the notably smaller gaps between the individual branches of samples with the high values of f_R . These features create a spatial structure that is less accessible to electrochemically active species.

SANTRAUKA

IVADAS

Norėdami sumažinti šiltnamio efektą sukeliančių dujų išmetimą ir pereiti prie tvaresnių energijos sistemų, vyriausybės, pramonė ir kiti siekia nenaudoti anglies, naftos ir gamtinių dujų. Jų vietą užima atsinaujinantys energijos šaltiniai, tokie kaip saulės, vėjo ir hidroenergija. Tačiau daugelio atsinaujinančių šaltinių nepastovumas kelia svarbų iššūkį: kaip efektyviai kaupti energiją, kad būtų galima ją naudoti tada, kai nešviečia saulė ar nepučia vėjas. Tuo tikslu, energijos kaupimas galėtų būti vykdomas naudojant elektrocheminę CO₂ redukciją, perteklinę atsinaujinančią elektros energiją paverčiant kuru, kuris būtų naudojamas prireikus.

Elektrocheminė CO₂ redukcija taip pat galėtų būti taikoma siekiant kontroliuoti kylančią pasaulinę temperatūrą. Iš įvairių CO₂ redukcijai naudojamų katalizatorių varis išsiskiria gebėjimu redukuoti CO₂ į produktus turinčius dvi ar daugiau anglies (C-C) jungčių. Be to, varis yra gana pigus ir lengvai prieinamas. Elektrocheminės CO₂ redukcijos metu susidaro įvairių produktų, įskaitant C₁ produktus (pvz., skruzdžių rūgštį, CO ir metaną) ir C₂₊ produktus (pvz., etileną, etanolį ir propanolį) [1]. C₂ junginiai yra ypač patrauklūs dėl savo didelio energijos tankio, svarbių pritaikymų gaminant ilgos grandinės angliavandenilių degalus, plastiką, chemines medžiagas ir kitas pramonines medžiagas, taip pat dėl paprasto suspaudimo, saugojimo ir transportavimo [2,3]. Etilenas yra plačiausiai pasaulyje gaminama organinė cheminė medžiaga, naudojama kaip pagrindinė žaliava polietilenui, polistirenui ir kitiems polimerams gaminti. Jis taip pat yra įvairių cheminių medžiagų, pvz., etileno oksido (naudojamo antifrizuose ir poliesteriuose), etilendichlorido (naudojamo PVC gamyboje) ir vinilacetato, pirmtakas. Be to, etilenas natūraliai egzistuoja kaip augalų hormonas, reguliuojantis vaisių nokimą ir kitus vystymosi procesus. Etanas yra pagrindinė gamtinių dujų sudėtinė dalis ir daugiausia naudojamas etileno gamybai garų krekingo būdu. Dėl didelio degumo ir kaloringumo jis taip pat gali būti naudojamas kaip kuro šaltinis, ypač stovyklavimo viryklėse. Etanas taip pat naudojamas acetileno ir etilenglikolio gamybai. Etanolis turi įvairių panaudojimo būdų tokių kaip kuras, tirpiklis ir cheminis tarpinis produktas, kuris gali būti konvertuojamas į etileną.

Lygūs, polikristaliniai arba vienkristaliniai vario elektrodai pasižymi mažu kataliziniu aktyvumu. Tuo tarpu nanostruktūrizuoti vario elektrodai buvo plačiai tyrinėjami, nes jų atvirų porų struktūra pasižymi dideliu aktyvumu elektrocheminei CO₂ redukcijai. Porėtų elektrodų elektrokatalizinį veikimą

stipriai lemia elektrochemiškai aktyvus paviršiaus plotas (ES_r), kuris CO_2 redukcijos kontekste turi įtakos tiek reakcijos aktyvumui, tiek selektyvumui [4]. Todėl tiksli ES_r vertė yra itin svarbi. Šio parametro aiškus supratimas yra būtinas patikimam skirtingų katalizinių sistemų palyginimui. Vis dėlto daugelis tyrimų, susijusių su CO_2 redukcija naudojant trimates vario elektrodų struktūras, arba neįvertino ES_r , arba naudojo matavimo metodus, kurių tinkamumas porėtoms elektrodų struktūroms kelia abejonių [5].

Vario elektrodo elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto didinimą riboja mechaninis elektrodo stabilumas. Literatūroje vis dar trūksta išsamių tyrimų apie vario nusodinimo parametrų poveikį tiek elektrochemiškai aktyviam paviršiaus plotui, tiek mechaniniam 3D vario katalizatorių struktūrų stabilumui.

Gali būti, kad aktyviojo paviršiaus ploto padidinimas yra ribojamas mechaninio elektrodo stabilumo, tada efektyvumą galima gerinti kitais būdais. Vienas iš jų – kryptinga kristalografinė orientacija. Vario atveju (100) kristalinis paviršius yra palankesnis didesnei C_2 produktų išeigai. Vis dėlto duomenų apie Cu 3D putų paviršių kristalografinę orientaciją ir jos valdymo metodus yra nedaug, todėl šiai sričiai reikalingi tolesni tyrimai.

DARBO TIKSLAS

Įvertinti Cu 3D putų elektrodų struktūros-savybių tarpusavio ryšį elektrochemiškai redukuojant CO_2 į C_2 angliavandenilius.

DARBO UŽDAVINIAI

1. Palyginti Cu elektrodų elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto matavimo metodus ir nustatyti tinkamiausią metodą itin porėtų trimačių (3D) Cu putų įvertinimui.
2. Optimizuoti elektrocheminio nusodinimo parametrus Cu 3D elektrodų gamybai, siekiant maksimaliai padidinti jų elektrochemiškai aktyvų paviršiaus plotą ir užtikrinti pakankamą mechaninį stabilumą.
3. Įvertinti rūgštaus vario sulfato tirpalo pagrindinių sudedamųjų dalių koncentracijų ir galimų priedų įtaką elektrochemiškai nusodintų Cu 3D sluoksnių struktūriniams parametrams ir jų kataliziniam aktyvumui CO_2 redukcijai.
4. Nustatyti Cu 3D elektrodų porėtumo, paviršiaus ploto, kristalitų dydžio, kristalinės struktūros ir kristalografinės orientacijos įtaką CO_2 redukcijos produktų selektyvumui.

5. Įvertinti Cu putų elektrodo stabilumą CO₂ elektrocheminės redukcijos metu.

MOKSLINIS NAUJUMAS

Pirmą kartą įrodyta, kad daugelio mokslininkų naudojamas Pb UPD ir kiti analogiški (pagrįsti UPD principu) elektrochemiškai aktyvaus Cu paviršiaus ploto nustatymo metodai, nėra tinkami porėtų 3D Cu elektrodų charakterizavimui. Patikimiausi rezultatai tokiems elektrodams analizuoti yra gaunami taikant dvigubo elektros sluoksnio elektrocheminius matavimus.

Nustatyta, kad Pb UPD metodas yra tinkamas Cu kristalinių, sudarančių 3D elektrodus, kristalografinių plokštumų orientacijos (hkl) įvertinimui. Parodyta, kad patikimiausi rezultatai pasiekiami voltamperometrinėmis sąlygomis nutirpinant potenciostatinėmis sąlygomis suformuotą Pb UPD sluoksnį.

Parodyta, kad parinkus tinkamus Cu 3D elektrodų elektrolitinio nusodinimo parametrus (srovės tankį bei rūgštaus sulfatinio elektrolito sudėtį) elektrochemiškai aktyvų elektrodo paviršių (ES_r) galima padidinti iki 3 kartų. Deja, CO₂ elektrocheminės redukcijos proceso intensyvumas nėra tiesiogiai proporcingas elektrodo ES_r vertėms, ypač, kai jų šiurkštumo koeficientai yra didesni už 1000.

Esminis struktūrinis Cu 3D elektrodų faktorius, įtakojantis C₂ produktų susidarymą yra kristalinių agregatų dydis bei erdvinis jų išsidėstymas, sudarantis palankias sąlygas prie elektrodo esančios terpės šarminių pH verčių palaikymui, kas yra palanku C-C jungčių bei C₂ produktų susidarymui.

Nustatyta, kad Cu 3D elektrodai pasižymi ženkliai mažomis CO₂ redukcijos produkto metano išeigomis (maksimali ~5%) dėl dominuojančio Cu(100) ir/ar Cu(110) elektrodą sudarančių kristalinių orientacijos.

GINAMIEJI TEIGINIAI

- Porėtų Cu 3D elektrodų elektrochemiškai aktyvus paviršiaus plotas gali būti apskaičiuotas naudojant tik elektrocheminius dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimus.
- Cu 3D elektrodų, kurie buvo nusodinti iš skirtingos sudėties tirpalų, mikrostruktūros ypatumai įgalino nustatyti struktūros-savybių tarpusavio ryšį elektrochemiškai redukuojant CO₂.
- Norint pasiekti maksimalias C₂ junginių išeigas CO₂ elektrocheminės redukcijos metu reiktų naudoti Cu 3D elektrodus, nusodintus elektrolite be priedų, kurių paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficientai neviršytų ~800.

- C_2 junginių išeigas vykstant CO_2 elektrocheminei redukcijai apsprendžia Cu 3D elektrodų struktūros kristalitų agregatų forma, dydis bei erdvinis jų išsidėstymas.

AUTORIAUS INDĖLIS

Autorius suprojektavo elektrocheminę celę, sukonstravo vario elektrodų elektrocheminio nusodinimo įrangą ir pagamino visus vario elektrodus. Autorius pritaikė Pb ir Tl UPD metodus, atliko visus susijusius matavimus, įskaitant dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimus, vyraujančių kristalografinių plokštumų analizę naudojant Pb UPD ir smalių atskyrimą. Autorius modifikavo lygaus elektrodo vyraujančių kristalinių plokštumų pasiskirstymą ir pritaikė CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos įrangą. Autorius taip pat atliko CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos išeigos matavimus, naudodamas dujų chromatografiją ir H_2 jutiklį. Elektrocheminio impedanso spektroskopijos matavimus atliko dr. Laima Gudavičiūtė, BET matavimus atliko dr. Skirmantė Tutlienė FTMC Cheminės inžinerijos ir technologijų skyriuje. Dr. Asta Grigucevičienė atliko Optinio profilometro matavimus, Laurynas Staišiūnas išmatavo mechanines savybes FTMC Elektrocheminės medžiagotyros skyriuje. SEM matavimus atliko prof. Algirdas Selskis, o XRD matavimus – prof. Remigijus Juškėnas FTMC Medžiagų struktūrinės analizės skyriuje. Autorius išanalizavo visus rezultatus, nubraižė paveikslus ir grafikus bei parengė publikacijas. Autorius šią disertaciją parašė savarankiškai ir tinkamai citavo visus išorinius šaltinius.

EKSPERIMENTO METODIKA

2.1. Elektrodo paruošimas

Mėginiai buvo nusodinti ant 1 cm^2 geometrinio ploto polikristalinės vario folijos (2 pav., žr. 27 p.). Pirmiausia iš rūgštaus vario sulfato tirpalo buvo nusodintas $8\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ storio Cu sluoksnis, kuris pavadintas „lygus“ (angl. plain) elektrodas, kurio paviršiaus šiurkštumo indeksas $f_R \sim 2$ [123]. Tada, ant lygaus elektrodo buvo elektrocheminiu būdu nusodintos Cu 3D struktūros, kurios pavadintos „putos“ (angl. foam). Elektrolitų sudėtys ir elektrodų nusodinimo parametrai pateikti 1 lentelėje (žr. 27 p.). Kaip priedai į nusodinimo tirpalą buvo naudojamos šios medžiagos: $0,5\text{ M CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$, $0,0001\text{ M PEG}(2000)$ ir HCl, kurių koncentracija buvo nuo $0,001\text{ M}$ iki $0,2\text{ M}$. Bandiniai buvo nusodinami 5, 10, 15, 20 arba 25 s.

Visiems taikytiems elektrolitams paruošti naudotos analitinės klasės cheminės medžiagos ir dejonizuotas vanduo.

2.2. Elektrocheminiai matavimai

Visi elektrocheminiai matavimai buvo atliekami kambario temperatūroje trijų elektrodų elektrocheminėje celėje, naudojant Pt pagalbinį elektrodą, Ag/AgCl arba Hg/HgSO₄ palyginamuosius elektrodus ir potenciostatą/galvanostatą AUTOLAB 302. Prieš atliekant matavimus iš elektrolitų buvo pašalintos aplinkos dujos su Ar dujomis ne trumpiau kaip 20 min. Visi potencialai tekste pateikiami pagal standartinį vandenilio elektrodą (SHE).

2.3. UPD matavimai

Tl ir Pb monosluoksnio nusodinimo iki termodinaminio potencialo (UPD) matavimai atlikti naudojant atitinkamai $1\text{ M Na}_2\text{SO}_4 + 0,5\text{ mM Tl}_2\text{SO}_4$ ir $0,01\text{ M HClO}_4 + 1\text{ mM PbCl}_2$ elektrolitus. Metalų monosluoksniai susidarė, kai potencialo vertė buvo 10 mV didesnė už termodinamiškai galimus metalų nusodinimo potencialus. Abiejų metalų UPD nusodinimo trukmė lygaus Cu elektrodo atveju buvo nustatyta 200 s pagal ankstesnius tyrimus [125], o Cu 3D struktūrų atveju didžiausia paviršiaus padengimo Tl ir Pb monosluoksniais būseną nustatyta ne anksčiau nei po 900 s . Kitame etape suformuoti UPD sluoksniai buvo anodiškai ištirpinti, kai potencialo skenavimo greitis buvo $10\text{ mV}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$. Anodiniam Tl arba Pb monosluoksnių tirpimui sunaudoto krūvio kiekis Q_a buvo apskaičiuotas integruojant plotus po anodinės srovės smailėmis pagal šią lygtį:

$$Q_a = \frac{1}{v} \int_{E_2}^{E_1} j dE, \quad (1)$$

kur v - skenavimo greitis ($V \cdot s^{-1}$), j - srovės tankis ($\mu A \cdot cm^{-2}$), o E - potencialas (V) [126]. Srovės tankio vertė apskaičiuota į geometrinę elektrodo plotą.

Paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficientui (f_R) apskaičiuoti taikyta (2) lygtis [123]. Skaičiavimuose naudoti teoriniai krūvio kiekiai (Q_{Tl} and Q_{Pb}), atitinkantys Tl arba Pb monosluoksnį ant 1 cm^2 Cu paviršiaus, buvo atitinkamai $112 \mu C \text{ cm}^{-2}$ [123] ir $250 \mu C \text{ cm}^{-2}$ [130].

$$f_R = \frac{Q_a}{Q_{Pb(Tl)}}. \quad (2)$$

Skirtingų kristalinių plokštumų nustatymas tiriamuose paviršiuose buvo pagrįstas švino UPD. Švino UPD ant vario buvo nusodinami naudojant $0,1 \text{ M KClO}_4 + 2 \text{ mM NaCl} + 2 \text{ mM PbCl}_2 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O} + 1 \text{ mM HClO}_4$ elektrolito tirpalą [131]. Remiantis ankstesniais tyrimais [132], Pb UPD nusodinimo trukmė buvo nustatyta 900 s. Po nusodinimo buvo užrašytos ciklinės voltamperogramos potencialų intervale tarp $-0,11 \text{ V}$ ir $+0,17 \text{ V}$ esant 5 mV s^{-1} skenavimo greičiui.

Švino UPD ciklinės voltamogramos smailės buvo išskaidytos naudojant Gauso matematines funkcijas, kad būtų galima nustatyti smailių pasiskirstymą ant skirtingų kristalinių plokštumų. Skirtingų kristalinių plokštumų Pb UPD smailių potencialų vertės [131] buvo naudojamos identifikuojant kristalinių plokštumų pasiskirstymą ant Cu 3D elektrodų.

2.4. Dvigubojo sluoksnio talpos matavimai

Dvigubojo sluoksnio talpos matavimai buvo atliekami $0,1 \text{ M NaOH}$ elektrolite. Ciklinės voltamogramos (CV) buvo užrašytos esant skirtingiems skenavimo greičiams nefaradinėse srityse, kurie buvo nustatyti atitinkamai $-0,5 \text{ V}$ – $-0,4 \text{ V}$ ir $-0,57 \text{ V}$ – $-0,42 \text{ V}$ atitinkamai lygiams ir 3D elektrodams. Dvigubojo sluoksnio talpos vertės buvo nustatytos iš priklausomybės tarp srovės vertės prie $-0,45 \text{ V}$ potencialo lygaus elektrodo ir $-0,50 \text{ V}$ potencialo 3D elektrodo atveju ir skenavimo greičio. Gautos tiesinės priklausomybės nuolydis rodo dvigubo sluoksnio talpos vertę (C). ES_r ir f_R vertės apskaičiuotos pagal lygtis:

$$ES_r = \frac{C}{C_{sp}}, \quad (3)$$

$$f_R = \frac{ES_r}{S_G}, \quad (4)$$

kur ES_r – elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus plotas, cm^2 ; C – dvigumojo sluoksnio talpa, mF ; C_{sp} – savitoji vario dvigumojo sluoksnio talpa

šarminiame tirpale, $0,02 \text{ mF cm}^{-2}$ [133]; f_R – paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficientas; S_G – geometrinis elektrodo paviršiaus plotas, cm^2 .

EIS matavimai buvo atliekami naudojant atviros grandinės potencialą, FRA2 moduliui siunčiant 10 mV amplitudės signalą $20 \text{ kHz} - 0,005 \text{ Hz}$ dažnių diapazone. Gauti duomenys buvo pritaikyti ir analizuojami naudojant Boukamp programą EQUIVCRT [134].

Visi elektrocheminiai eksperimentai buvo kartojami bent tris kartus.

2.5. Struktūros bei fazinės sudėties apibūdinimas

Dangų morfologijai tirti buvo naudojama „Helios Nanolab 650“ dviejų spindulių sistema (FEI) antrinių elektronų režimu, esant 3 kV greitinimo įtampai. Cu 3D dangų porėtumas buvo įvertintas vizualiai analizuojant SEM atvaizdus.

Mėginių paviršiaus šiurkštumas ir morfologija toliau buvo analizuojami naudojant 3D optinį profilometrą (Contour GT-K, Bruker Nano GmbH, Berlynas, Vokietija), veikiantį nekontaktiniu režimu, naudojant baltą šviesą ir fazės poslinkio interferometriją. Paviršiaus ploto matavimai atlikti naudojant $50\times$ optiką, nuskaityta $500 \times 500 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ sritis. Šie matavimai buvo naudojami paviršiaus savybėms, įskaitant šiurkštumą, įvertinti. Duomenys buvo renkami ir paviršiaus analizė atliekama naudojant „Vision64“ programinę įrangą.

Cu elektrodo fazinė sudėtis ir dalelių dydis buvo įvertinti naudojant XRD SmartLab, Rigaku rentgeno spindulių difraktometrą (Rigaku, Japonija, 2011 m.). Taikytas slystančio kampo metodas, kai kampas $\omega = 0,5^\circ$.

N_2 adsorbcijos izotermomis 77 K temperatūroje bandinio paviršiaus plotas išmatuotas Brunauerio-Emmett-Tellerio (BET) metodu, naudojant Quantachrome Instruments NOVA touch 2LX analizatorių. Bendras paviršiaus plotas santykinio slėgio intervale nuo $0,15$ iki $0,4$ buvo apskaičiuotas taikant daugiataškinį BET metodą. Prieš analizę mėginys buvo išvalytas azoto srautu $15 \text{ min. } 80,0^\circ\text{C}$, $30 \text{ min. } 120,0^\circ\text{C}$ ir $180 \text{ min. } 300,0^\circ\text{C}$ temperatūroje, temperatūrai kylant 5°C/min . Buvo išmatuotos adsorbcijos ir desorbcijos izotermos, kiekvienai iš jų nustatytas 31 santykinio slėgio taškas.

2.6. Mechaninių savybių tyrimas

Mikrokietumo matavimai buvo atliekami Hysitron Ti Premiere (Bruker) mikroindentoriumi, naudojant Omniprobe pjezoelektrinį keitiklį. Zondu naudotas Berkovičiaus tipo deimantinis indentorius. Įdubimui naudota poslinkiu valdoma trapecijos formos apkrovos funkcija, kietumas (H) ir redukuotasis modulis (E_r) matuoti esant $1 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$, $5 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ir $10 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ poslinkiams.

Kiekvienam pasirinktam poslinkiui buvo atliktas 3x3 įdubimų tinklelis, nutolusių vienas nuo kito 200 μm atstumu. Matavimai atlikti apkraunant paviršių ir analizuojant atleidimo kreivę. Objekto standumas (*SF*) buvo įvertintas pagal kreivę.

2.7. Kristalinių plokštumų pertvarkymas

Elektrocheminis lygaus Cu sluoksnio kristalinių plokštumų pertvarkymas (modifikavimas) buvo atliktas 0,1 M NaCl elektrolite, esant 500 mV·s⁻¹ skenavimo greičiui, tarp vario redukcijos potencialo -0,76 V ir pasirinkto oksidacijos potencialo 1,24 V [131]. Elektrodo poliarizavimas buvo sustabdytas esant -0,76 V redukcijos potencialui. Po modifikavimo elektrodas buvo poliarizuojamas potencialų intervale iki vario oksidacijos 500 mV s⁻¹ skenavimo greičiu, kad būtų pašalinti paviršių pasyvuojančio vario chlorido ar vario oksido likučiai.

2.8. CO₂ elektrocheminės redukcijos matavimai

Elektrocheminei CO₂ redukcijai buvo naudojama dujoms nelaidi dviejų skyrių (H tipo) stiklinė celė (3 pav., žr. 31 p.). Anodas buvo Pt plokštelė, katodai - skirtingi Cu elektrodai, kurių geometrinis paviršiaus plotas 0,63 cm², elektrodų potencialas matuotas Hg/Hg₂SO₄ palyginamuoju elektrodu. Anodinį ir katodinį skyrius skyrė anijonų mainų membrana (Nafion 117, Aldrich). Abu skyriai buvo pripildyti 65 ml 0,1 M KHCO₃. Prieš kiekvieną matavimą elektrolitas 20 minučių buvo prisotinamas CO₂ dujomis (99,998 %, Elme Messer) 30 ml min⁻¹ srautu, kad būtų pasiektas pH = 7. Visi eksperimentai buvo atliekami 298 K temperatūroje ir nuolat maišant. Vykstant CO₂ redukcijos procesui, CO₂ buvo nuolat leidžiamas 30 ml min⁻¹ srautu. Katodinio skyriaus dujų išleidimas buvo prijungtas prie dujų chromatografo (GC-2030, Shimadzu), kur periodiškai atliekami angliavandenilių matavimai. GC su BID detektoriumi, nešančiosios dujos – helis. GC buvo reguliariai kalibruojamas naudojant standartinį dujų mišinį (Elme Messer) standartinėmis sąlygomis (1 atm, 298 K). Tipinis CO₂ elektoredukcijos eksperimentas, esant pastoviai įtampai, truko 120 minučių. Išmatuoti šeši dujų mėginiai (po 1 cm³) kiekvienam tiriamam elektrodui. Dujų mėginiai įleidžiami į GC kas 15 minučių. Pirmasis įpurškimas atliktas praėjus 5 minutėms nuo CO₂ redukcijos reakcijos pradžios; taip buvo užtikrintas tinkamas atmosferos teršalų išvalymas iš perdavimo linijos. Šiame darbe surinkti GC duomenys buvo perskaiciuoti į faradėjinį efektyvumą pagal žemiau pateiktą lygtį (FE).

$$FE = \frac{e_{output}}{e_{input}} \cdot 100\% = \frac{y \cdot z}{\frac{Q}{F}} \cdot 100\% = \frac{y \cdot z \cdot F}{Q} \cdot 100\% \quad (5)$$

kur Q – išmatuotas krūvis, C; F – Faradėjaus konstantas, $96485 \text{ C} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$; y – išmatuotas produkto kiekis, mol; z – elektronų kiekis reikalingas susidaryti vienai molekulei produkto [135].

H_2 kiekis CO_2 redukcijos metu buvo matuojamas naudojant H_2 jutiklį (Unisense). Jutiklio kalibravimas buvo atliekamas naudojant standartinį H_2 ir Ar mišinį. H_2 koncentracija CO_2 redukcijos dujų mišinyje buvo stebima kas sekundę viso CO_2 redukcijos tyrimo metu.

REZULTATAI IR JŲ APTARIMAS

3.1. Porėtų Cu 3D nanostruktūrų ES_r matavimas

3.1.1. SEM ir optinis profilometras

Nors neporėtų Cu elektrodų atveju ES_r nustatymas nėra problema, tačiau labai porėtų, nanostruktūrizuotų 3D elektrodų atveju ne visi žinomi metodai gali būti sėkmingai pritaikyti. Problema iškilo, kai pastebėjome, kad skirtingi tyrėjai, taikydami skirtingus metodus, gavo labai skirtingus rezultatus [123,128,129].

Siekiant įvertinti elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto nustatymo metodų taikymą porėtoms Cu 3D nanostruktūroms (putoms), buvo atliktas specialus tyrimas. Pradinis Cu elektrodas, kurio f_R vertė yra žinoma ($f_R \sim 2$) [123] ir kuris vadinamas „lygiu“, buvo naudojamas kaip pagrindas Cu 3D struktūros nusodinimui.

Neporėto Cu paviršiaus tyrimui galima taikyti įvairius metodus, įskaitant fizinius ir elektrocheminius, ir šie metodai paprastai duoda labai panašius rezultatus. Lygaus mėginio, kuris buvo Cu sluoksnis, elektrochemiškai nusodinto iš standartinio rūgštaus sulfato tirpalo, paviršiaus šiurkštumas ir topografija buvo įvertinti naudojant 3D optinį profilometrą bekontaktiniu režimu, naudojant baltą šviesą ir fazės poslinkio interferometriją. Gautas lygaus mėginio optinis vaizdas pateiktas 4A pav. (žr. 32 p.), o taikoma programinė įranga apskaičiavo $f_R \sim 2,21$, kas buvo labai artima anksčiau nurodytai vertei.

Porėtas 3D Cu elektrodas, kuris buvo naudojama kaip ES_r vertinimo tyrimo objektas, buvo gautas elektrochemiškai nusodinant Cu iš stipriai rūgštinio elektrolito, naudojamas itin didelį katodinės srovės tankį (iki 3 A cm^{-2}). Įrodyta, kad putų struktūros susidarymas yra sąlygojamas konkurencinės Cu nusodinimo ir vandenilio išsiskyrimo reakcijos, dėl kurios susidaro 3D morfologija, turinti labai unikalų porų dydžio pasiskirstymą su labai porėtomis šakotomis (dendritinėmis) sienelėmis [136,137]. Paviršiaus porų dydis, sienelių plotis ir putų storis priklauso nuo elektrocheminio nusodinimo sąlygų ir elektrolizės režimo [138]. Cu 3D elektrodo paviršiaus morfologijos SEM vaizdai, taip pat ir skerspjūvis pateikti 5 pav. (žr. 33 p.).

Optinio profilometro ir SEM vaizdai suteikė informacijos apie nusodinto 3D Cu struktūrą, parodydami, kad vidutinis porų tankis buvo $\sim 2,0 \cdot 10^4 \text{ cm}^{-2}$, porų dydis svyravo nuo 5 iki 30 μm , o vidutinis putų sluoksnio storis buvo $\sim 88 \mu\text{m}$. Akivaizdu, kad trimatės putos pasižymi dideliu elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus plotu. Tačiau optinio profilometro matavimai parodė, kad

vidutinė f_R vertė yra $\sim 7,9$, o tai akivaizdžiai neatitinka Cu 3D elektrodams būdingo dydžio. Todėl galima daryti išvadą, kad 3D optinė profilometrija gali būti taikoma tik 3D Cu mėginių porų tankio vertinimui (4B pav., žr. 32 p.).

3.1.2. UPD matavimai

UPD procesų taikymas Cu mėginių ES_r vertinimui buvo pradėtas atliekant tyrimus su lygiais elektrodais. Ciklinės voltamogramos, atspindinčios Tl ir Pb UPD nusodinimo/ištirpinimo procesus ant lygių Cu elektrodų, pateiktos atitinkamai 6 (žr. 34 p.) ir 7 (žr. 35 p.) paveiksluose (juodosios kreivės). Anodinės smailės integravimas pagal srovės tankį potencialo diapazone nuo $-0,30$ V iki $-0,130$ V Tl atveju ir nuo $-0,060$ V iki $-0,020$ V Pb atveju suteikė informacijos apie Q_a ir, atitinkamai, apie f_R vertes lygiam (pradiniam arba standartiniam) Cu elektrodui. Abi f_R vertės $1,8 \pm 0,1$ ir $2,5 \pm 0,3$, gautos atitinkamai Tl ir Pb UPD matavimais, yra artimos standartinei $\sim 2,2$ vertei, kurią nustatė kiti autoriai [123], o tai rodo, kad šie metodai yra tinkami neporėto Cu ES_r vertinimui.

Porėta Cu struktūra, dėl kurios susidaro didelis paviršiaus plotas, gali sukelti papildomų kliūčių Pb ir Tl adsorbcijai ant tokių sudėtingų erdvinės struktūros paviršių. Todėl buvo logiška nustatyti sąlygas, kuriomis pasiekiamas maksimalus Tl ir Pb paviršiaus padengimas UPD sluoksniais, taikant potenciostatines nusodinimo sąlygas. Tai buvo pasiekta pasirinkus didžiausias krūvio talpos vertes, atitinkančias adsorbuotų Tl ir Pb jonų tirpimą nuo porėto Cu elektrodo. Eksperimentai parodė, kad maksimalus abiejų metalų paviršiaus padengimas buvo pasiektas, kai UPD proceso trukmė buvo lygi arba ilgesnė nei 900 sekundžių (8 pav., žr. 35 p.).

Pagrindinis uždavinys apskaičiuojant krūvio talpą, atitinkančią nusodintą metalą, yra tiksliai pakoreguoti foninius procesus, pvz., dvigubo sluoksnio įkrovą, ir tinkamai nustatyti potencialą, kuriuo baigiamas metalų atomų monosluoksnio susidarymas arba ištirpimas. Tl ir Pb UPD sluoksnių ant 3D Cu elektrodų anodinio tirpimo pikai yra palyginti paprastos formos ir nuosekliai duoda pakartojamus rezultatus. Vienintelis nedidelis anodinių kreivių formos skirtumas yra tas, kad Tl kreivė nėra visiškai simetriška, kaip atitinkama Pb UPD kreivė (6 pav., žr. 34 p.). Šis reiškinys gali būti siejamas su skirtingu Tl ryšio stiprumu skirtingose Cu kristalų plokštumose. Tačiau tai neturi jokio reikšmingo poveikio galutiniams rezultatams. Potencialo diapazonai, kuriuose vyksta vieno sluoksnio metalo tirpimas, yra gana akivaizdūs. Anodinis krūvis potencialų diapazone nuo $-0,370$ V iki $-0,070$ V Tl ir nuo $-0,110$ iki $-0,023$ V Pb atveju buvo įvertintas naudojant eksperimentinėje dalyje aprašytus Cu ES_r nustatymo metodus. Gautos f_R

vertės 3D Cu struktūroms yra pateiktos 2 lentelėje (žr. 36 p.). Kaip minėta anksčiau [123], plačiai pripažįstama, kad f_R vertės įtakoja taikomas matavimo metodus ir sąlygos. Panašios išvados gali būti daromos remiantis šioje disertacijoje pateiktais Cu 3D struktūrų tyrimo rezultatais. Gautos f_R vertės Cu 3D mėginiams, naudojant Pb UPD metodą (apie 80 ± 2) ir Tl UPD metodą (apie 116 ± 2), rodo, kad ES_r vertės Cu 3D struktūroms yra mažesnės, kai naudojamas Pb UPD metodas, palyginti su Tl. Šis skirtumas gali būti priskirtas lėtesnei Pb UPD kinetikai Cu paviršiuje, kaip nurodyta anksčiau [128]. Be to, porėta Cu 3D struktūra gali turėti įtakos maksimaliam paviršiaus padengimo lygiui Pb UPD atveju.

3.1.3. Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) metodas

BET paviršiaus plotas reiškia medžiagos, paprastai miltelių arba porėtos kietos medžiagos, savitąjį paviršiaus plotą, nustatytą pagal Brunauerio–Emmett–Tellerio (BET) metodą. BET metodu paviršiaus plotas apskaičiuojamas analizuojant dujų molekulių adsorbciją ant medžiagos paviršiaus, paprastai naudojant azoto dujas kriogeninėse temperatūrose. BET metodas plačiai naudojamas medžiagoms charakterizuoti įvairiose mokslo srityse, įskaitant katalizę.

Tačiau BET analizei reikalingas medžiagos kiekis yra nemažas. Todėl buvo būtina išmatuoti Cu putų paviršiaus plotą miltelių pavidalu, mechanškai nuimant jį nuo paruoštų elektrodų. Norint surinkti pakankamą miltelių kiekį, reikėjo paruošti šimtą elektrodų. Kruopščiai paruoštų 3D Cu putų miltelių BET paviršiaus plotas buvo maždaug $8 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ (paviršiaus plotas = $7,917 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$; koreliacijos koeficientas $r = 0,999734$; C konstanta = $6,9519$). Vidutinis 3D Cu elektrodo paviršiaus šiuurkštumo koeficientas buvo $f_R = 251$ (2 lentelė, žr. 36 p.).

3.1.4. Dvigubo sluoksnio talpa

3.1.4.1. Voltamperometriniai matavimai

Dvigubo sluoksnio talpą veikia elektrodų paviršiaus plotas. Todėl šio elektrocheminio parametro matavimas gali būti naudojamas kaip priemonė elektrochemiškai aktyviam kietųjų metalinių elektrodų paviršiaus plotui įvertinti [139]. Elektrodo ES_r galima įvertinti matuojant dvigubo sluoksnio talpą ciklinės voltamperometrijos ir EIS metodais. Paprastai CV kreivės registruojamos dvigubo sluoksnio įkrovimo srityje esant įvairiems skenavimo greičiams.

Lygių ir 3D Cu elektrodų kreivių forma yra labai panaši, todėl 9A paveiksle (žr. 38 p.) pavaizduotos tik pastarųjų elektrodų CV kreivės, gautos 0,1 M NaOH tirpale potencialų intervale (-0,57 V – -0,42 V), kur nevyksta krūvio pernaša ar cheminės reakcijos (angl. non-Faradaic). Gautos talpos srovės vertės buvo atidėtos pagal skenavimo greitį 9B paveiksle (žr. 38 p.), o gautos linijinės priklausomybės nuolydis davė dvigubo sluoksnio talpos vertes, kurios buvo atitinkamai $23,8 \pm 2 \mu\text{F}$ ir $10,4 \pm 0,58 \text{ mF}$ lygiam ir 3D Cu elektrodams. ES_r ir f_R vertės buvo apskaičiuotos pagal lygtis (3) ir (4) ir pateiktos 2 lentelėje (žr. 36 p.). Matyti, kad lygaus Cu elektrodo CV pagrindu atlikti dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimai davė f_R vertę $1,8 \pm 0,1$, kuri yra labai artima UPD metodu nustatytai vertei. Priešingai, Cu 3D elektrodų dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimai davė žymiai didesnes f_R vertes – 814 ± 29 , palyginti su UPD matavimais gautomis vertėmis, kurios svyravo nuo 80 ± 2 iki 116 ± 2 (2 lentelė, žr. 36 p.).

3.1.4.2. EIS matavimai

Dvigubo sluoksnio talpos rezultatų, gautų CV metodu, patikimumas buvo patikrintas EIS matavimais. 10 paveiksle (žr. 39 p.) pateikti lygių ir Cu 3D putų bandinių EIS spektrai, užrašyti 0,1 M NaOH tirpale, Nyquisto ir Bode's diagramų pavidalu. Lygaus Cu elektrodo Nyquisto grafike (10A pav., žr. 39 p.) matomas vienas pusapskritimis. Taikyti du ekvivalentinės elektrinės grandinės modeliai (11A ir 11B pav., žr. 39 p.), kurie plačiai naudojami analizuojant Cu ir Cu aktyviųjų elektrodų impedanso spektrus [129,140]. Lygiam vario elektrodai taikytas grandinės modelis (11A pav., žr. 39 p.) apima trijų komponentų sąveiką: tirpalo varža (R_S), Faradėjinio proceso varža (R_{ct}) lygiagrečiai sujungta su pastoviosios fazės elementu (CPE_{dl}), parametras, charakterizuojantis dvigubojo sluoksnio talpos neidealumą. Cu 3D elektrodo Nyquisto diagramose matomi du pusapskritimiai. Bode diagramos atskleidžia Cu 3D putų sluoksnio parametrus 102-104 Hz srityje, o žemo dažnio sritis yra susijusi su krūvio perdavimo procesu (10B pav., žr. 39 p.). Kaip parodyta 11B paveiksle (žr. 39 p.), Cu 3D elektrodai naudojamą ekvivalentinę grandinę sudaro varža R_S (elektrolito varža), varžos R_c ir pastovios fazės elemento CPE_c lygiagretus derinys (rodantis transporto savybes elektrocheminiu būdu nusodintame Cu 3D sluoksnyje) bei kita lygiagreti pora, kurią sudaro varža R_{ct} ir pastovios fazės elementas CPE_{dl} (susijęs su krūvio pernašos reakcijomis) [130]. Pasirinktos ekvivalentinės grandinės parodė gerą eksperimentinių duomenų ir sumodeliuotų duomenų atitikimą.

Visas talpas ekvivalentinėse grandinėse reikėjo pakeisti pastovios fazės elementais (CPE) [141], kad būtų galima prisitaikyti prie neidealios elgsenos

derinant duomenis. Vietoj kondensatorių ekvivalentinių grandinių modeliuose buvo naudojami CPE , kad būtų atsižvelgta į nehomogeniškas sluoksnių savybes. Priimamasis Y ir laipsnio rodiklis n apibrėžia CPE : $Y = Y_0 (j\omega)^n$. n charakterizuoja talpos nukrypimą nuo idealaus kondensatoriaus. Jei $n = 1$, $Y_0(CPE_c)$ ir $Y_0(CPE_{dl})$ tampa atitinkamai C_c ir C_{dl} . Kaip parodyta 3 lentelėje (žr. 40p.), tiek lygių, tiek 3D putų Cu bandinių narys $n(CPE)$ turi didesnę nei 0,5 reikšmę ir iš pradžių yra artimas vienetui, o tai rodo, kad elektrolito ir dangos sąsaja turi talpinę reakciją.

Impedanso spektrams įvertinti buvo pritaikytos ekvivalentinės grandinės. Tokiu būdu buvo gauti parametrai pateikti 3 lentelėje (žr. 40 p.). Rezultatai rodo, kad tirtų bandinių R_{ct} vertės buvo 20-23 k Ω lygiam Cu elektrodui ir 470-600 Ω Cu 3D putų elektrodui. Nustatyta, kad dvigubo sluoksnio talpa CPE_{dl} yra apie 22 μF lygiojo Cu elektrodo ir apie 12 mF Cu 3D putų elektrodo, t. y. panaši į vertes, gautas atlikus CV metodu dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimus (23,8 μF lygaus Cu elektrodo ir 10,4 mF 3D Cu putų elektrodo). Atlikus EIS matavimus gautos f_R vertės: $2,1 \pm 0,2$ lygiam elektrodui ir 986 ± 36 3D Cu putų elektrodui.

Tai leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad lygiams arba neporėtiems vario elektrodams elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto reikšmės nepriklauso nuo nustatymo metodo. Tačiau Cu 3D struktūroms šis parametras labai priklauso nuo taikomo vertinimo metodo. ES_r vertės yra gerokai didesnės, kai naudojami dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimai, lyginant su UPD metodu.

3.1.5. ES_r matavimo metodų tinkamumas

Gauti rezultatai rodo, kad lygių arba neporėtų Cu elektrodų atveju elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto vertės nepriklauso nuo taikomo tyrimo metodo. Tačiau Cu 3D struktūrų atveju šis parametras labai priklauso nuo vertinimo būdo. Dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimai duoda žymiai didesnes ES_r vertes, palyginti su UPD tyrimo metodais.

Siekiant nustatyti galimas šio reiškinių priežastis, buvo atlikti papildomi matavimai. Putų porų dydį ir sienelių struktūrą galima reguliuoti keičiant Cu nusodinimo sąlygas [136]. Atsižvelgiant į tai, Cu 3D mėginiai buvo pagaminti keičiant nusodinimo laiką nuo 5 iki 25 sekundžių ir buvo analizuojami taikant Tl UPD ir voltamperometrinį dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimo metodus.

12 pav. (žr. 41 p.) pateikti Cu putų elektrodų, nusodintų skirtingą laiką, paviršiaus morfologijos SEM vaizdai. Šių mėginių paviršiaus morfologija, išskyrus porų tankį ir dydį, labai nesiskiria, o nustatyti nusodintų Cu 3D elektrodų paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficientai ir poringumo parametrai yra pateikti 4 lentelėje (žr. 40 p.).

Galima pastebėti, kad nusodinimo trukmės padidėjimas lėmė Cu 3D sluoksnio porų dydžio padidėjimą ir tankio sumažėjimą. Šio tipo elektrodų paviršiaus plotas priklauso nuo vandenilio burbuliukų suformuotų skylių skaičiaus ir dydžio, taip pat nuo sienelių tarp jų pločio [136]. Taikant abu ES_r nustatymo metodus, buvo nustatytas Cu putų f_R vertės padidėjimas didėjant nusodinimo trukmei; tuo tarpu dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimai davė didesnes f_R vertes, palyginti su UPD matavimais visų tiriamų mėginių atveju.

Cu 3D sluoksniui augant, jo vidinė arba erdvinė struktūra tampa vis sudėtingesnė. Tai gali būti pagrindinė priežastis, dėl kurios naudojant skirtingus nustatymo metodus buvo pastebėti ES_r skirtumai. Be to, 5 sekundžių nusodinimo trukmės mėginiuose buvo pastebėtas mažiausiai triskart didesnis f_R verčių skirtumas, o visuose vėlesniuose mėginiuose f_R skirtumas buvo daugiau nei septynis kartus didesnis. Pastarosios problemos greičiausiai kyla dėl tam tikrų UPD pagrįsto ES_r matavimo metodo apribojimų.

Nepaisant to, kad buvo pasiektas maksimalus porėto Cu elektrodo paviršiaus padengimas Tl ir Pb UPD sluoksnyje (8 pav., žr. 35 p.), buvo daroma prielaida, kad dėl sudėtingos mėginių erdvės struktūros nesusiformavo ištisinis ir vientisas monosluoksnis. Todėl Cu putų f_R vertės buvo žymiai mažesnės. Dėlto porėtų Cu 3D struktūrų elektrochemiškai aktyvaus paviršiaus ploto vertinimui rekomenduojama naudoti dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimus.

3.2. Elektrodų nusodinimo sąlygos

3.2.1. Elektrolitas be priedų

Paprastai Cu putų elektrocheminiam nusodinimui naudojamas rūgštinis Cu sulfato tirpalas [25,106]. Porėtos struktūros morfologija daugiausia susidaro dėl vandenilio skyrimosi ir Cu nusodimo konkuruojančių reakcijų. Padidinus viršįtampį, padidėja H_2 burbuliukų susidarymas nusodinimo metu, todėl tai yra naudinga Cu putų poringumui ir, atitinkamai, didelėms ES_r vertėms. Tačiau šios struktūros turi dvi pagrindines problemas, kylančias dėl greito Cu nusodinimo esant itin dideliui katodiniams viršįtampiui. Pirmoji problema yra mažas mechaninis stipris dėl trapių Cu dendritų putų sienelių, o antroji – prastas elektrodų medžiagų paviršiaus padengimas dėl srovės koncentracijos Cu dendritiniuose nusodimuose elektrolizės proceso metu [108].

Siekiant praktiškai pritaikyti Cu 3D putų mėginius CO_2 redukcijai, buvo atlikti papildomi tyrimai, kurių tikslas buvo padidinti efektyvų paviršiaus plotą, išlaikant pakankamą struktūros mechaninį stabilumą. Be to, dendritinės

struktūros gali lengvai užaugti į storą plėvelę su labai mažu poringumu, dėl ko tampa sunku transportuoti dujas ir skysčius, kaip to reikalauja elektrocheminis taikymas [109]. Todėl Cu 3D formavimo proceso optimizavimas yra reali problema. Mes pradėjome tyrimus su mėginiais, nusodintais elektrolite be jokių priedų.

Paprastai Cu 3D kristalinės struktūros (putos) nusėda iš rūgštaus sulfato tirpalo naudojant didelį srovės tankį. Nusodinimas buvo atliekamas ant Cu pagrindo naudojant pateiktą metodą [25,106,108]. Būdingi SEM vaizdai, kuriuose matomi Cu putų, nusodintų esant 3 A cm^{-2} srovės tankiui, vaizdai iš viršaus, pateikti 12 pav. (žr. 41 p.). Vandenilio dujų susidarymas elektrodų paviršiuje yra svarbus Cu elektrocheminio nusodinimo metu, kai išlaikomas srovės tankis didesnis nei $> 0,5 \text{ A cm}^{-2}$ [114]. Vandenilio dujų susidarymas trukdo Cu nusodinimui tiesiogiai ant katodo, laikinai užkertant kelią Cu katodo ir Cu sulfato turinčio elektrolito kontaktui. Galiausiai plonas elektrolito sluoksnis, apgaubiantis H_2 burbulą, susiliečia su katodu, užbaigdamas elektrocheminę grandinę ir leidžiantis Cu nusėsti [105]. Susidariusi putą yra tarpusavyje sujungtas Cu porų tinklas, suformuotas H_2 burbulų (12 pav., žr. 41 p.). Tuo tarpu nusėdusi struktūra susideda iš visomis kryptimis išsišakojusių dendritų, kurie tarpusavyje susikryžmina, sukurdami laisvą struktūrą su tuščiomis erdmėmis. Skylių skaičius ir dydis, taip pat sienelių plotis tarp jų priklauso nuo elektrocheminio nusodinimo sąlygų ir elektrolizės režimo.

Vandenilio išsiskyrimo reakcija galvanizavimo proceso metu sukuria dviejų tipų poras [105]. Pirmasis tipas – tai makroporos (arba skylės), susidariusios dėl atsiskyrusių vandenilio burbuliukų. Antrojo tipo poros susidaro dėl vandenilio burbuliukų, susidarančių Cu dalelių aglomeratų viršūnėse augimo proceso metu (srovės tankio pasiskirstymo efektas) [105]. Todėl dėl intensyvaus H_2 skyrimosi, dėl kurio susidaro nevienodas porų dydžio pasiskirstymas, kartu su dendritinių sienelių susidarymu, Cu 3D struktūra įgyja didelį paviršiaus plotą.

Skaitinės ES_r vertės buvo nustatytos iš voltamperometrinio dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimų, o nustatytos f_R vertės svyruoja nuo 300 iki 900, priklausomai nuo Cu 3D mėginio formavimo laiko (4 lentelė, žr. 40 p.).

3.2.2. Priedų įtaką Cu 3D putų nusodinimui

Priedai, naudojami Cu 3D elektrodų mikrostruktūrinių ir nanostruktūrinių savybių gerinimui, paprastai yra tokie patys kaip ir naudojami vario galvanizavimui [111–114]. Kadangi porėtos struktūros morfologija daugiausia susidaro dėl vandenilio išsiskyrimo ir Cu nusodinimo

konkurencinės reakcijos, buvo įrodyta, kad priedai, tokie kaip acto rūgštis, NH_4^+ , Cl^- jonai arba PEG, turi teigiamą poveikį užkertant kelią burbuliukų susijungimui ir taip sumažinant porų dydį [4,108,112]. Taip pat žinoma, kad chlorido jonų pridėjimas į nusodinimo tirpalą smarkiai sumažina vario šakelių (dendritų) dydį. Tačiau, nepaisant daugybės tyrimų apie priedų poveikį Cu 3D struktūrų nusodinimo procesui [4,108,111–114], nėra patikimų duomenų apie jų įtaką nusodinimo morfologijai, ES_r vertėms ir mechaniniam stabilumui.

Amonio acetatas, druskos rūgštis ir PEG buvo naudojami kaip priedai rūgščiame sulfato elektrolite, siekiant nustatyti jų įtaką elektrochemiškai nusodintų Cu 3D struktūrų ES_r vertėms. Cu putų mėginių, nusodintų tirpaluose su amonio acetato ir PEG priedais, paviršiaus SEM atvaizdai pateikiami 13 pav. (žr. 44 p.), o nusodintų su druskos rūgštimi – 14 pav. (žr. 45 p.). Tuo tarpu nusodintų mėginių paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficientų vertės yra pateiktos 5 lentelėje (žr. 44 p.). Visi nusodinti mėginiai turėjo porėtą putų struktūrą, tačiau vidutinis porų dydis ir tankis, taip pat kristalitų tankis putų sienelėse skyrėsi.

Nepaisant pranešimų, kad NH_4^+ jonai yra medžiaga, gerinanti Cu putų porėtumą, nes jie katodinės reakcijos metu gamina H_2 dujas ir slopina burbuliukų susijungimą vandeniniame tirpale [108], mes nepastebėjome jokio reikšmingo amonio acetato poveikio nusodintų Cu putų morfologijai (13A pav., žr. 44 p.). Be to, šių mėginių ES_r vertės buvo dar mažesnės, palyginus su mėginiais, nusodintais tirpale be priedų. Panašios išvados gali būti daromos ir apie mėginius, nusodintus tirpale, kuriame yra PEG. Be to, šių mėginių sienelėse galima pastebėti tam tikrų struktūrinių defektų, pvz., įtrūkimų (13B pav., žr. 44 p.). Remiantis gautais rezultatais, tolesni tyrimai buvo atliekami be minėtų priedų.

Akivaizdžiausias ir veiksmingiausias poveikis morfologijai ir ES_r vertėms buvo pastebėtas, kai į nusodinimo tirpalą buvo pridėti chlorido jonai. Jei palyginti mažos Cl^- koncentracijos (0,1 mM) neturi didelio poveikio Cu 3D nusodintų mėginių ES_r vertėms, tai pridėjus 50 mM šis skaičius padidėja daugiau nei tris kartus (5 lentelė, žr. 44 p.). Todėl buvo atlikta išsami HCl įtakos nusodintų Cu putų struktūros morfologijai ir savybėms analizė.

3.2.3. Cl^- jonų įtaka Cu putų struktūrai ir savybėms

Yra žinoma, kad Cl^- pėdsakai gali turėti akivaizdų katalizinį poveikį Cu nusodinimui, nes šie jonai gali modifikuoti elektronų perdavimo mechanizmą per Cl^- tiltą, žymiai padidindami mainų srovės tankį ir sumažindami $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^+$ reakcijos viršįtampio potencialą, kuris yra Cu redukcijos reakcijos greitį kontroliuojantis etapas [142]. Iš 5 lentelėje (žr. 44p.) pateiktų duomenų matyti,

kad į rūgštinį sulfato tirpalą įdedant 50 mM HCl, galima suformuoti struktūrą, kurios ES_r vertės yra žymiai didesnės nei tirpale be Cl^- jonų nusodinto mėginio. Kitas žingsnis buvo ištirti, kaip šis padidėjimas susijęs su nusodintų Cu 3D sluoksnių struktūra.

Makroporos arba skylės (pirmojo tipo poros) mėginiuose, nusodintuose tirpaluose be HCl, buvo mažesnės ir vienodesnio dydžio (14–34 μm , vidutiniškai 25 μm , 5A pav., žr. 33 p.), bet pasižymi dideliu vidutinių porų tankiu ($4,0 \cdot 10^5 \text{ cm}^{-2}$). Tuo tarpu HCl pridėjimas lėmė susiliejusią skylių susidarymą, kurių dydis buvo nevienodas (22–129 μm), o skylių skaičius į geometrinį paviršiaus plotą cm^2 buvo mažesnis (14A, 14B pav., žr. 46 p.). Cl^- koncentracijos nusodinimo tirpale įtaka nusodintų Cu 3D struktūrų poringumo parametrui ir ES_r vertėms pateikta 6 lentelėje (žr. 46 p.). Cl^- koncentracijos padidėjimas lėmė pirmojo tipo porų dydžio vidutinių verčių padidėjimą ir porų tankio vidutinių verčių sumažėjimą. Tuo pačiu metu nusodintų mėginių ES_r vertės padidėjo. Didžiausios f_R vertės (2614 ± 294) buvo nustatytos Cu 3D struktūrai, nusodintai tirpale, kuriame buvo 100 mM HCl. Tačiau mėginiai, nusodinti esant didesnei HCl koncentracijai (100 ir 200 mM), turėjo struktūrinių defektų paviršiuje, todėl jie nebuvo toliau tirti.

Cu 3D struktūrų analizė taip pat parodė, kad didėjant HCl koncentracijai mažėjo sujungtų H_2 burbuliukų suformuotų skylių dalis. Tuo tarpu šių skylių vidaus analizė parodė, kad antrojo tipo porų sienelių matmenys buvo mažesni, o jų tankis buvo didesnis mėginyje, nusodintame tirpale, kuriame buvo didesnis HCl kiekis (14C, 14D pav., žr. 45 p.). Porų ir skylių sienelės taip pat buvo labai porėtos, sudarytos iš išsisklaidžiusių mažų Cu kristalų agregatų, o jų susidarymas priklausė nuo Cl^- buvimo elektrolite. Cl^- jonų pridėjimas smarkiai sumažina vario šakų (dendritų) dydį ir Cu kristalų agregatų matmenis šakoje, kurių vidutinis dydis buvo 215 nm mėginams, nusodintiems tirpale be Cl^- (15A pav., žr. 47 p.) ir 115 nm mėginams, nusodintiems tirpale ir su Cl^- (15B pav., žr. 47 p.). Galima pastebėti, kad Cu kristalų aglomeratų, susidariusių palei skyles, kompaktiškumas taip pat padidėjo, nes dendritai sumažėjo ir buvo glaudžiai susikaupę, kai mėginys buvo nusodintas esant Cl^- (15B pav., žr. 47 p.).

Cl^- jonų buvimas nusodinimo tirpale žymiai veikia ne tik šakų matmenis, bet ir nusodinto Cu sluoksnio storį. Pastarasis parametras buvo nustatytas iš skerspjūvio SEM atvaizdų, pateiktų 16 pav. (žr. 47 p.).

Vidutinis Cu 3D sluoksnio, nusodinto tirpale be Cl^- esant 3 A cm^{-2} srovės tankiui, storis yra artimas $\sim 80 \mu m$ (16B pav., žr. 47 p.), o Cu mėginio, nusodinto tomis pačiomis sąlygomis esant 50 mM Cl^- , storis siekia $\sim 120 \mu m$ (16B pav., žr. 47 p.). Cu 3D sluoksnių storis gali siekti net $\sim 200 \mu m$, kai naudojamos didesnės HCl koncentracijos (100 arba 200 mM), tačiau tokiuose

Cu 3D sluoksniuose pastebima daug struktūrinių defektų. Iš pateiktų skerspjūvio vaizdų taip pat matyti, kad Cu 3D sluoksnis, nusodintas Cl^- turinčiame tirpale, turi žymiai tankesnę struktūrą. Porų dydžio pasiskirstymas ir tarp skylių susidariusių Cu kristalitų aglomeratų tankumas lemia tokių struktūrų vienodumą, kurios pasižymi aukštomis ES_r vertėmis, palyginti su mėginiais, nusodintais tirpale be Cl^- priedų.

Todėl galima teigti, kad Cu elektrodų savitasis paviršius priklauso nuo antrojo tipo porų dydžio ir Cu dalelių aglomeratų skylių sienelėse. Chlorido buvimas tirpale turi dvejopą poveikį: jis sumažina porų ir dendritinių šakų dydį ir palengvina elektroaktyvių medžiagų transportavimą per struktūros vidų. Tai, savo ruožtu, padidina ES_r vertę.

3.2.4. Fazinė sudėtis ir dalelių dydis

Nustatyta, kad Cu mėginių, nusodintų tirpaluose be Cl^- jonų ir su Cl^- jonais, XRD diagramose nėra matoma jokių skirtumų, taip pat Cl^- koncentracija neturi jokio poveikio fazės sudėčiai ir gardelės parametrams. Todėl 17 paveiksle (žr. 48 p.) pateikta tik viena difraktograma, atitinkanti mėginį, nusodintą tirpale su Cl^- jonais, ir rodo, kad Cu nuosėdos turi kubinę (fcc) struktūrą su dideliu kristaliniu tankiu, su smailėmis, atitinkančiomis (111), (200) ir (220) kristalų briaunas. Be to, nebuvo pastebėta dominuojanti polikristalinės vario nuosėdos kristalinė orientacija. Maži pikai, stebimi šalia Cu pikų, buvo priskirti Cu_2O fazei. Svarbu pažymėti, kad Cu putų mėginiai iškart po elektrocheminio nusodinimo sudaro oksidą, o tai rodo, kad porėta medžiaga yra labai jautri paviršiaus oksidacijai.

Polikristalinė Cu 3D medžiaga susideda iš kristalitų, kurie „sukimba“ tarpusavyje ir gali būti įvairių dydžių – nuo kelių nanometrų iki kelių milimetrų, kaip matyti 13–16 paveiksluose. XRD srityje kristalitas laikomas mažiausiu atskiru kristalu arba grūdelio dalimi be gardelės defektų, kurioje vyksta koherentinė rentgeno spindulių sklaida [143,144]. Kai kuriais atvejais grūdelis gali sutapti su kristalitu. XRD matavimai buvo naudojami Cu 3D struktūrų grūdelių dydžio verčių nustatymui. Grūdelių dydžio vertės mėginiuose, nusodintuose tirpaluose be Cl^- jonų ir su Cl^- jonais, buvo labai panašios ir svyravo nuo 16,8 iki $17,3 \pm 5$ nm.

3.2.4. Mechaninės savybės

Kadangi 3D Cu putų medžiagos susideda iš kietos plonasienių matricos ir tuščiavidurių ląstelių, tokių objektų mechaninės savybės yra susijusios su tuo, kaip sudedamosios dalelės (kristalitų agregatai) yra išdėstytos medžiagos

struktūroje [145,146]. Standumas (SF) yra parametras, kuris atitinka medžiagos atsparumo deformacijai, veikiant jėgai, laipsnį. SF vertės buvo gautos iš tiriamų bandinių mikrokietumo matavimų, atliktų apkrovus paviršių ir išanalizavus atpalaidavimo kreives.

Buvo atlikti du eksperimentai. Pirmasis – Cu 3D mėginiai buvo nusodinti iš tirpalo be priedų 10 arba 20 sekundžių. Antrasis – mėginiai buvo nusodinti iš tirpalų, kurių sudėtyje buvo skirtingas HCl kiekis. SF vertės buvo apskaičiuotos pagal apkrovimo kreives ir apibendrintos 18 pav. (žr. 49 p.). Kaip matyti, 20 sekundžių nusodinti mėginiai yra atsparesni deformacijai nei 10 sekundžių nusodinti mėginiai. Visomis trimis taikytomis apkrovomis pastarųjų mėginių (raudoni taškai) SF vertės yra artimos 5–7 $\mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$, o 20 sekundžių nusodintų mėginių (juodi taškai) – artimos 10–15 $\mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$.

Nusodintų Cu 3D struktūrų mechanines savybes taip pat veikia Cl^- jonų koncentracija nusodinimo tirpale. Mažiausias SF vertes parodė mėginiai, nusodinti esant 10 mM HCl (mėlyni taškai 18B paveiksle, žr. 49 p.), kurios buvo artimos mėginių, nusodintų be chloro tirpale, vertėms. Pridėjus 50 arba 100 mM HCl, buvo nusodinti 3D Cu mėginiai, kurių SF vertės buvo 25–30 $\mu\text{N nm}^{-1}$ (žr. žalius ir rausvus taškus 18B paveiksle, žr. 49 p.). Kaip minėta anksčiau, mėginiai, nusodinti tirpale, kurio Cl^- koncentracija viršija 50 mM, turi rimtų struktūrinių defektų, kurie riboja minėtų Cu 3D putų tolesnį naudojimą. Taip pat akivaizdu, kad mėginio savybės keičiasi priklausomai nuo gylio. Tai gali būti susiję su porėtos struktūros ypatumais.

Nustatytų Cu putų mechaninių savybių tyrimo rezultatai sutampa su SEM analize (žr. 14 pav., žr. 45 p.). Tai rodo, kad tam tikra HCl koncentracija nusodinimo tirpale skatina didesnio tankio struktūrų susidarymą. Šios struktūros yra atsparesnės deformacijai ir turi žymiai didesnę elektrochemiškai aktyvų paviršiaus plotą, palyginti su mėginiais, nusodintais tirpale be Cl^- jonų.

3.3. Elektrocheminė CO_2 redukcija į C_2 angliavandenilius

3.3.1. Modifikuotų Cu putų mikrostruktūros charakteristika

Pagrindinis CO_2ER praktinio pritaikymo iššūkis yra pažangių katalizatorių kūrimas. Tačiau Cu nanoputų, turinčių didelį paviršiaus plotą, potencialas elektrocheminėje CO_2 redukcijoje nėra pakankamai ištirtas. Mes sutelkėme dėmesį į Cu 3D pagrindu sukurtus katalizatorius ir strategijas, kaip pagerinti jų katalizinį efektyvumą C_2 selektyvumo atžvilgiu.

Cu putų elektrodai buvo nusodinti iš rūgštinių sulfato tirpalų, kurių H_2SO_4 ir CuSO_4 komponentų koncentracijos skyrėsi, taip pat buvo pridėta Cl^- jonų priedų, naudojant 3,0 A cm^{-2} srovės tankį ir 20 s nusodinimo laiką. Darbiniai

elektrodai (CuI – CuVIII) buvo nusodinti tolesniems tyrimams, o mėginių nomenklaturą pateikta 7 lentelėje (žr. 51 p.).

Siekiant suprasti vadinamąjį struktūros ir aktyvumo santykį, būtina gauti išsamesnį ir tikslesnį elektrocheminio katalizatoriaus vaizdą. Tipiniai SEM vaizdai Cu putų, nusodintų tirpaluose be Cl^- jonų ir su Cl^- jonais, paviršiaus morfologijos skirtingais didinimo masteliais pateikiami 19 (žr. 52 p.) ir 20 (žr. 53 p.) paveiksluose.

Cu 3D struktūrų, nusodintų esant Cl^- jonams, makrotopografija buvo labai panaši visuose tiriamose mėginiuose, todėl 20 pav. (žr. 53 p.) pateikiamas tik vienas mėginys iš šios grupės. Tuo tarpu 19 pav. (žr. 52 p.) pateikiami vaizdai, rodantys akivaizdžius struktūrinius skirtumus tarp mėginių, nusodintų tirpaluose be priedų.

Įrodyta, kad putų struktūros susidarymą lemia Cu nusodinimo ir vandenilio išsiskyrimo reakcijos konkurencija, dėl kurios susidaro trimatė morfologija su unikaliu porų dydžio pasiskirstymu ir labai porėtomis dendritinėmis sienelėmis [147–149]. Vandenilio skyrimosi reakcija sukuria dviejų tipų poras [150]. Pirmoji rūšis – makroporos arba skylės, susidariusios dėl atsiskyrusių vandenilio burbuliukų. Antroji rūšis susidaro iš vandenilio burbuliukų, susidariusių vario grūdelių aglomeratų viršūnėse augimo metu. Tuo tarpu nusodintų 3D struktūrų sienos susideda iš šakotų dendritų, kurie tęsiasi visomis kryptimis ir tarpusavyje susilieja. Dėl to susidaro laisva struktūra su tuščiomis erdvėmis, kaip matyti 19D paveiksle (žr. 52 p.).

Makroporų skaičius ir dydis, taip pat sienelių tarp jų plotis priklauso pirmiausia nuo Cl^- jonų buvimo, o ne nuo sulfato ir sieros rūgšties santykio nusodinimo tirpale. 8 lentelėje (žr. 53 p.) apibendrinamas elektrolito sudėties poveikis porėtumo parametrams.

Makroporos arba skylės (pirmojo tipo poros) mėginiuose, nusodintuose tirpaluose be HCl, buvo mažesnės ir vienodesnio dydžio, o jų vidutinės vertės svyravo nuo 25 iki 45 μm (19A, 19B pav., žr. 52 p.). Tuo tarpu pridėjus HCl susiformavo susiliejusios skylės, kurių dydis buvo nevienodas (22–129 μm), o vidutinės vertės svyravo nuo 65 iki 80 μm (20A, 20B pav., žr. 53 p.). Mažiausias vidutinis makroporų dydis (25,3 μm) ir didžiausias vidutinis porų tankis ($4,0 \cdot 10^5 \text{ cm}^{-2}$) buvo CuI mėginyje, nusodintame tirpale be Cl^- jonų. Tuo tarpu visi kiti tirti mėginiai turėjo panašias šio parametro vertes ($\sim 1\text{--}2 \cdot 10^4 \text{ cm}^{-2}$).

Nusodintos vario putų sienos pasižymi dendritine morfologija su daugybe antrinių ir aukštesnės eilės šakų (19C, 19D (žr. 52 p.) ir 20B (žr. 53 p.) pav.). Pirminių šakų vidutinis ilgis ir skersmuo priklauso nuo rūgšties ir sulfato koncentracijos, taip pat nuo Cl^- jonų buvimo nusodinimo tirpale. Cu putų sienos, susidariusios tirpale be Cl^- jonų, susideda iš šakų, kurių ilgis yra nuo

7 iki 14 μm , o plotis – nuo 3 iki 4 μm . CuI mėginys (19C pav., žr. 52 p.), kuris buvo nusodintas tirpale, kuriame buvo 1,5 M H_2SO_4 ir 0,2 M CuSO_4 , buvo pastebėta tankesnė struktūra su mažesnėmis šakomis. Priešingai, Cu putos su didesnėmis šakomis buvo gautos tirpaluose, kurių sudėtyje buvo 0,4 M CuSO_4 (pvz., mėginys CuIII, 19D pav., žr. 52 p.).

Cl^- jonų pridėjimas į rūgštinį sulfato tirpalą pagreitina metalo nusodinimo reakciją. Dėl to putų sienos efektyviau užpildomos Cu nuosėdomis, palyginti su tuo atveju, kai Cl^- jonų nėra. Kaip matyti SEM atvaizde 20B pav. (žr. 53 p.), priedas žymiai sumažina Cu kristalitų agregatų, sudarančių putų šakas, dydį. Šių šakų ilgis ir plotis yra atitinkamai 1,2–2,4 μm ir 200–300 nm. Mažėjant dendrito šakų dydžiui, jos tapo tankiai supakuotos, padidindamos putų sienelių kompaktiškumą. Didelio didinimo atvaizdai patvirtina porų sienelių nanostruktūrinį pobūdį, kuris yra esminis veiksnys nustatant Cu putų mėginio ES_r vertes.

Elektrochemiškai nusodintos Cu 3D struktūros turi didelį paviršiaus plotą. Tikslios šio parametro žinios yra labai svarbios lyginant įvairių katalizinių sistemų elgseną. Taikant elektrochemines reakcijas, elektrochemiškai aktyvus paviršiaus plotas yra pagrindinis parametras, nes tai yra plotas, kuris perduoda krūvį tirpalo dalelėms [52]. ES_r priklauso nuo to, kaip gerai elektrolitas pasiekia poras, ir jį veikia paviršiaus šiurkštumas. Remiantis ankstesnių tyrimų, skirtų įvairių ES_r nustatymo metodų tinkamumui porėtoms 3D Cu struktūroms tirti, rezultatais, šiam tikslui mes pritaikėme dvigubo sluoksnio talpos matavimus, naudodami ciklinę voltamperometriją. Gautos paviršiaus šiurkštumo koeficiento f_R (ES_r ir mėginio geometrinio ploto S_G santykis) vertės yra pateiktos 8 lentelėje (žr. 53 p.).

Porų dydžio pasiskirstymas ir Cu kristalitų aglomeratų, sudarančių sieneles tarp skylių, tankis lemia šių struktūrų vienodumą ir mėginių ES_r vertes. Cu putų, nusodintų tirpale be priedų, f_R vertės svyravo nuo 800 iki 1000. Be to, didesnė CuSO_4 koncentracija nusodinimo tirpaluose (mėginiai CuII ir CuIV) padidina Cu jonų redukciją, palyginti su vandenilio išsiskyrimu, sienelių storį ir šakų matmenis, taip pat šių mėginių f_R vertes. Priešingai, f_R vertės mėginiuose, nusodintuose tirpaluose su Cl^- priedais, buvo du ar tris kartus didesnės nei mėginiuose, nusodintuose tirpaluose be Cl^- jonų. Šios vertės svyravo nuo 1600 iki 2500. Cu elektrodų savitasis paviršius, atrodo, priklauso nuo Cu kristalitų aglomeratų dydžio sienelėse ir sluoksnio vidutinio storio. Cl^- jonų buvimas tirpale sumažina dendritinių šakų dydį ir, remiantis mūsų ankstesniais tyrimais [150], padidina Cu 3D sluoksnio vidutinį storį nuo ~80 μm mėginiuose, nusodintuose be Cl^- jonų, iki ~120 μm .

3.3.2. CO₂ redukcijos aktyvumas ir selektyvumas

Linijinės skenavimo voltamperometrijos bandymai buvo atlikti su tiriamais Cu putų elektrodais 0,1 M KHCO₃ tirpale, prisotintame Ar arba CO₂. Poliarizacijos kreivės buvo išmatuotos ir pateiktos vienam mėginiui iš kiekvienos grupės 18 pav. Katodinės srovės tankis progresyviai didėja didėjant pritaikytam potencialui abiem elektrodams, veikiamiems prisotintų tirpalų. Tačiau neigiamo potencialo diapazone aišku, kad Cu putų elektrodai CO₂ prisotintoje terpėje rodo didesnes katodines srovės tankius nei Ar prisotintoje terpėje. Ar atmosferoje katodinė srovė dominuoja H₂ skyrimosi reakcijoje [22,23,25], o padidėjęs srovės tankis yra visiškai susijęs su CO₂ elektrocheminiu redukavimu terpėje, prisotintoje šiuo dujų. Palyginus pirmosios grupės (CuI–CuIV) ir antrosios grupės (CuV–CuVIII) poliarizacijos kreives matyti, kad CO₂ redukcija yra spartesnė ant Cu elektrodų, nusodintų iš tirpalų su Cl⁻ jonais. Didesnis reakcijos greitis ant šių elektrodų gali būti priskirtas padidėjusiam ES_r , palyginti su mėginiais, nusodintais tirpale be priedų (8 lentelė, žr. 53 p.).

Remiantis naujausiais tyrimais [16,151], Cu elektrodas, skirtas CO₂ redukuoti į angliavandenilius ir oksigenatus, reikalauja potencialo nuo -1,8 V iki -0,8 V. Todėl tirti Cu putų mėginiai, siekiant nustatyti jų aktyvumą ir selektyvumą elektrocheminei CO₂ redukcijai, buvo bandomi esant fiksuotoms -1,01 V, -1,36 V ir -1,78 V potencialo vertėms. CO₂ redukcijos procesas buvo atliekamas 120 min. potenciostatinėmis sąlygomis. Cu 3D elektrodų chronoamperometrinės kreivės pateiktos 22 paveiksle (žr. 55 p.). Abiejų elektrodų, nusodintų tirpaluose be Cl⁻ jonų ir su jais, srovės tankio reikšmingų pokyčių nepastebėta, o tai rodo elektrodų 2 val. katodinio veikimo patikimumą. Visų tirtų Cu elektrodų fiksuoti katodiniai srovės tankiai pateikti 9 lentelėje (žr. 56 p.). Pagrindiniai CO₂ redukcijos dujiniai produktai (H₂, CH₄, C₂H₄, C₂H₆) buvo analizuojami naudojant dujų chromatografiją ir H₂ matuoklį (daugiau informacijos pateikta skyriuje „Eksperimento metodika“ (žr. 77 p.).

Tarp Cu putų mėginių, nusodintų tirpaluose, kuriuose buvo Cl⁻ jonų, dauguma pasižymėjo didesniu vidutiniu geometrinio srovės tankiu (j_g – srovė į geometrinį elektrodų plotą (0,63 cm²)) nei mėginiai, nusodinti tirpaluose be priedo. Esant fiksuotam -1,36 V potencialui, j_g vertės Cu elektrodų, nusodintų tirpale be Cl⁻, svyravo nuo 7,2 iki 8,4 mA·cm⁻². Priešingai, j_g vertės mėginiuose, nusodintuose esant Cl⁻ jonams, svyravo nuo 8,9 iki 13,0 mA·cm⁻². Didesnis CO₂ redukcijos greitis, stebimas elektroduose, nusodintuose esant Cl⁻ jonams, gali būti priskirtas didesnėms mėginių ES_r vertėms. Tačiau, kai j_g vertės minėtu potencialu lyginamos atskirai Cu mėginiams, nusodintiems iš skirtingų tipų elektrolitų (su Cl⁻ ir be Cl⁻), didžiausios j_g vertės atitinka CuI ir

CuVII mėginius, kurie neturi didžiausių ES_r verčių kiekvienoje grupėje. Panašios tendencijos buvo stebimos ir kitų dviejų taikomų CO₂ redukcijos potencialų atveju.

Norint įvertinti bendrą elektrodų veikimą, naudinga atsižvelgti į normalizuotą srovės tankį pagal elektrodų ES_r vertes (j_{sr}). Tai leidžia palyginti katalizatorių, turinčių skirtingus šiurkštumo koeficientus f_R , aktyvumą ir nustatyti, ar didesnis katalizinis aktyvumas atsiranda dėl didesnio katalizinio poveikio ar padidėjusio aktyvių vietų skaičiaus.

Palyginus j_{sr} vertes mėginių, nusodintų iš skirtingų elektrolitų, matyti, kad Cu putų elektrodai, nusodinti iš tirpalų be priedų, paprastai yra aktyvesni nei nusodinti esant Cl⁻ jonams. Pirmojo j_{sr} vertės svyravo nuo 11,0 iki 16,3 $\mu\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$ esant fiksuotam -1,36 V potencialui, o antrojo j_{sr} vertės svyravo nuo 5,6 iki 11,6 $\mu\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$. Cu putų mėginiai, nusodinti tirpale, kuriame buvo 1,5 M H₂SO₄ ir 0,2 M CuSO₄ (mėginys CuI) arba 0,8 M H₂SO₄ ir 0,2 M CuSO₄ (mėginys CuIII), pasižymėjo didžiausiu aktyvumu CO₂ redukcijai. Kalbant apie Cu putų mėginių aktyvumą CO₂ER, mėginiai su didžiausiomis f_R vertėmis yra mažiausiai aktyvūs abiejose grupėse, nepriklausomai nuo to, ar jie buvo nusodinti su Cl⁻ jonais, ar be jų. Šie rezultatai rodo, kad ES_r nėra lemiamas veiksnys, nulemiantis Cu putų elektrodų CO₂ redukcijos aktyvumą.

Elektrokatalizinių procesų selektyvumas dažnai apibūdinamas Faradėjinio efektyvumu, kuris parodo, kokia elektros srovės dalis, tenka konkretaus produkto susidarymui elektrolizės metu. CO₂ redukcijos dujiniai produktai buvo analizuojami naudojant dujų chromatografiją, o atitinkamos FE vertės buvo nustatytos, kai koncentracijos pasiekė stabilias vertes. Tuo tarpu tirpūs produktai nebuvo analizuojami.

CO₂ redukcijai reikalingas potencialas yra labai artimas vandenilio skyrimosi reakcijos potencialui, o tai reiškia, kad vandenilio skyrimosi reakcija konkuruos su CO₂ redukcija, taip darant didelę įtaką mažam energijos efektyvumui ir prastam produkto selektyvumui [16,162]. Nustatyti H₂ gamybos srovės efektyvumai svyravo nuo 40 iki 55 % ir buvo šiek tiek didesni esant neigiamesnei -1,78 V potencialo vertei. Atitinkamai, nebuvo aptikta jokių C₂ dujinių produktų, taip pat ir CH₄ susidarymo su visais tiriamais Cu putų elektrodais, esant pirmam bandomajam potencialui -1,01 V, todėl išsami CO₂ redukcijos produktų analizė esant minėtam potencialo vertei buvo neatlikta.

23 pav. (žr. 58 p.) parodyta dujinių produktų Faradėjinio efektyvumo pasiskirstymas skirtingiems Cu putų elektrodams, esant -1,36 V ir -1,78 V potencialo vertėms. Metanas kaip reakcijos produktas buvo aptiktas tik esant -1,78 V potencialo poliarizacijos sąlygoms, ir tai buvo susiję su elektrolito, kuriame buvo nusodintas mėginys, sudėtimi. Mėginiai, nusodinti tirpale be

priedų, pasirodė esą geresni katalizatoriai CH_4 susidarymui, nes didžiausia FE vertė pasiekė 5,6 %, o Cu elektrodų, nusodintų esant Cl^- jonams, FE vertė buvo ne didesnė kaip 1,2 %. Tuo tarpu C_2 produktai susidarė su visais tirtais Cu putų elektrodais esant -1,36 V ir -1,78 V potenciostatinėms sąlygoms. Tačiau jų FE vertės buvo didesnės esant mažiau neigiamam -1,36 V potencialui, palyginti su -1,78 V potencialu. Visi tiriami elektrodai esant potencialui -1,36 V generavo dujinį C_2 angliavandenilių (C_2H_4 ir C_2H_6) mišinį.

Palyginus dviejų tipų vario elektrodų aktyvumą ir selektyvumą, matyti, kad elektrolite be priedų nusodintos vario struktūros yra aktyvesnės ir turi struktūrą, palankią C_2 junginių formavimuisi, palyginti su antrosios grupės mėginiais. Pirmosios grupės elektrodų C_2 produktų susidarymo srovės išeigos (FE) reikšmės svyravo nuo 12,5 % iki 28 %. Tuo tarpu panašios reikšmės vario struktūroms, nusodintoms iš elektrolito su Cl^- priedu, svyravo nuo 10 % iki 18 %. Palyginus C_2 dujinių produktų susidarymo efektyvumą kiekvienoje grupėje, matyti, kad pirmoje grupėje CuI elektrodas, esant -1,36 V įtampai, turėjo didžiausią FE (28 %) C_2 dujiniams produktams, o CuII elektrodas – mažiausią (12,5 %). Antroje grupėje CuVI ir CuVIII elektrodai efektyviausiai gamino C_2 dujinius junginius (FE ~17–18 %), o CuVII elektrodas buvo mažiausiai efektyvus (10 %). CO_2 redukcijos FE vertės, esant -1,78 V potencialui, neviršijo 12 % nė vienoje mėginių grupėje. Tačiau sumažėjimas yra reikšmingesnis pirmosios elektrodų grupės atveju.

Palyginus susidariusių C_2 dujinių junginių santykius, matyti, kad naudojant antrosios grupės elektrodus, esant -1,36 V potencialui, C_2H_6 dominuoja prieš C_2H_4 susidarymą (23C pav., žr. 58 p.). Tačiau naudojant pirmosios grupės elektrodus šis santykis yra beveik vienodas, išskyrus CuI mėginį, kuris yra palankus C_2H_4 susidarymui (23A pav., žr. 58 p.).

Keletas autorių yra prieję prie panašių išvadų, nurodydami, kad padidėjęs vario elektrodo paviršiaus šiurkštumas prisideda prie C-C jungties reakcijos ir lemia selektyvią C_2 angliavandenilių mišinio gamybą vietoj metano [151,153]. Visgi mūsų tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad pirmosios grupės vario porėtos struktūros (putos) yra efektyvesnės C_2 junginių gamyboje, nors jų f_R reikšmės yra mažesnės nei antrosios grupės mėginių. Net lyginant FE reikšmes tarp pirmosios grupės elektrodų, didžiausią C_2 junginių gamybos efektyvumą parodė elektrodas su mažiausia f_R reikšme (CuI). Tai rodo, kad vien ES_r reikšmių analizės neužtenka vertinant vario putų elektrodus – būtina detaliau ištirti mėginių mikrostruktūrinės savybės ir jų įtaką. Taip pat tai leidžia manyti, kad kiti struktūriniai veiksniai, tokie kaip preferencinis kristalitų orientacijos modifikavimas, grūdelių ribos ir trimatės vario struktūros išsidėstymas erdvėje, gali reikšmingai paveikti CO_2 redukcijos procesą.

3.3.3. Struktūros ir savybių sąryšis

3.3.3.1. Kristalitų orientacijos įtaka

Sunku, vienareikšmiškai nustatyti, kurie polikristalinio katalizatoriaus paviršiaus struktūriniai elementai, ypač jei tai yra porėta 3D struktūra, prisideda prie stebimo katalizinio aktyvumo. Taip yra todėl, kad išmatuotas katalizinis aktyvumas visada yra atsirandančių skirtingų struktūrų aktyvumų suma. Kadangi morfologija, mikrostruktūra ir kristalinės briaunos yra pagrindiniai struktūriniai parametrai, turintys įtakos tiriamų elektrodų kataliziniam našumui, bandėme įvertinti kiekvieno iš jų galimą poveikį CO₂ redukcijai ir C₂ dujinių produktų išeigai.

Rentgeno spindulių difrakcijos (XRD) matavimai paprastai taikomi norint įvertinti pageidaujamą metalinių elektrodų kristalinę orientaciją. Tačiau Cu putų mėginių rezultatai yra gana prieštaringi [149,154,155]. Įprastinė Bragg-Brentano geometrija XRD eksperimentams yra ribotai pritaikoma plonomis metalo putų plėvelėms, nes sunku atskirti metalo putų indėlį į smailės intensyvumą nuo pagrindinio metalo substrato indėlio [150,156]. Tuo tarpu keli autoriai įrodė, kad Pb UPD gali įvertinti skirtingų briaunų arba kristalografinių domenų indėlį į daugiasluoksnius Cu paviršius, atsiejant smailės ciklinėse voltamperogramose [5,126,131].

Cu putų elektrodų charakterizavimas buvo pradėtas toliau aprašytu Pb UPD eksperimentu, siekiant nustatyti etaloną. Ankstesni darbai parodė, kad 8 μm Cu sluoksnis, nusodintas iš rūgštinio vario sulfato tirpalo, kuris naudojamas kaip lygus elektrodas Cu putų struktūrai formuoti, pasižymi (100) vyraujančia kristalito orientacija [150]. 24A paveiksle (žr. 60 p., juoda kreivė) parodyta minėto elektrodo Pb UPD ciklinė voltamperograma tirpale, kuriame yra 0,1 M KClO₄, 2 mM NaCl, 2 mM PbCl₄·3H₂O ir 1 mM HClO₄. Anodinėje srityje ties -0,092 V atsiranda ryškus pikas, kuris, remiantis literatūros šaltiniais [126,131], yra artimas Pb UPD tirpinimo potencialui ant Cu(100) plokštumos.

Elektrocheminio metalų vyraujančių kristalinių plokštumų pakeitimo procesas apima skirtingų periodinių potencialų taikymą, dėl kurio susidaro tekstūruoti metaliniai paviršiai [126,157]. Minėtas Cu lygus elektrodas buvo naudojamas nuosekliems oksidacijos ir redukcijos ciklams atlikti esant 500 mV·s⁻¹ skleidimo greičiui nuo -1,0 V iki 2,0 V potencialo intervale 0,1 M NaCl tirpale. Šio eksperimento tikslas buvo dvejopas: pakeisti Cu elektrodo paviršių ir įvertinti kristalinių plokštumų pasiskirstymą naudojant Pb UPD techniką. Ryškiausias pokytis po elektrocheminio oksidacijos-redukcijos ciklavimo yra tas, kad Pb UPD tirpinimo kreivėje pastebima intensyvi, plati

smailė, kurios maksimumas yra ties $-0,045$ V, o peties – ties $-0,094$ V (24A pav., žr. 60 p., raudona linija). Pastarasis rodo kelių smailių buvimą, kurios buvo atsietos naudojant matematinės Gauso funkcijas. Rezultatai pateikti 24B paveiksle (žr. 60 p.). Mažesnė, vingiuota smailė ties $-0,094$ V sutampa su smaile, atitinkančia pradinį Cu lygaus elektrodą Cu(100) smailę. Plati smailė ties $-0,075$ V yra artima smailei, susijusiai su Cu(111) smailėmis. Šis pikas atsirado dėl pakartotinio oksidacijos-redukcijos ciklavimo.

Atliekant Pb UPD matavimus, ypatingas dėmesys turi būti skiriamas porėtos struktūros ir didelio paviršiaus ploto Cu 3D elektrodams, remiantis panašiais tyrimais. Remdamiesi savo patirtimi taikant šiuos matavimus Cu 3D struktūrų ES_r įvertinimui [132], nustatėme, kad Pb UPD potenciostatinis nusodinimas turėtų trukti mažiausiai 900 sekundžių, siekiant maksimaliai padidinti Pb UPD sluoksnio paviršiaus padengimą. Ant tirtų Cu putų elektrodų suformuotų Pb UPD sluoksnių anodinio tirpimo (voltametrinio Pb pašalinimo) kreivės parodytos atitinkamai 25 ir 26 paveiksluose (žr. 60 p.), A ir B. Smailių atskyrimo pavyzdys parodytas 25B ir 26B paveiksluose (žr. 60 p.).

Pateiktos kreivės atskleidžia keletą dėsningumų. Pirma, Cu 3D elektrodų Pb UPD tirpimo kreivės pasislenka į teigiamo potencialo diapazoną, skirtingai nei neporėto elektrodą Pb UPD tirpimo kreivė. Šio poslinkio mastas yra susijęs su mėginio ES_r verte ir yra reikšmingesnis mėginiams su didesnėmis ES_r vertėmis. Antra, putų mėginių Pb UPD sluoksnio anodinio tirpimo kreivės yra asimetriškos ir susideda iš mažiausiai dviejų smailių, kurios atitinka dviejų skirtingų orientacijų plokštumas. Literatūroje nurodoma, kad Pb nuo Cu(111) plokštumų nutirpsta paskutiniai, tai reiškia, kad jis nutirpsta esant teigiamiausiam potencialui, o Pb nuo Cu(100) ir Cu(110) plokštumų nutirpsta esant neigiamesniai potencialui [126,131]. Cu (111) plokštumų buvimas Cu putų mėginiuose buvo aptiktas rentgeno spindulių difrakcijos matavimais [150], o tai rodo, kad antroji anodinė smailė teigiamesnėje potencialo srityje atitinka kristalitų Cu(111) plokštumą. Pirmoji smailė gali atitikti (100) ir (arba) (110); tačiau jų atskyrimas nebuvo šio tyrimo tikslas. Nors (111) plokštuma, skirtingai nei (100) ir (110), nėra palankios C_2 produktų susidarymui CO₂ER proceso metu, pagrindinis šio tyrimo tikslas buvo įvertinti (111) plokštumų indėlį į bendrą kristalitų plokštumų sudėtį ir nustatyti jų galimą poveikį redukcijos produktų sudėčiai. Integruotas plokštumų smailių krūvis arba frakcijos plotas buvo įvertintas po smailių atskyrimo, o gautos vertės pateiktos 10 lentelėje (žr. 62 p.).

Palyginus Cu(111) plokštumų įtaką C_2 produktų selektyvumui, akivaizdu, kad CuI, efektyviausias elektrodas C_2 junginių gamybai, turi mažiausiai (111) plokštumų tarp mėginių, nusodintų tirpale be priedo. Tačiau kristalitų

plokštumų pasiskirstymo skirtumai tarp mėginių nėra pakankamai reikšmingi, kad paaiškintų Cu putų aktyvumo ir selektyvumo skirtumus CO₂ER procese. Nepaisant to, yra aiškus ryšys tarp Cu putų elektrodų kristalinės struktūros ir CO₂ reakcijos produktų, kai kalbama apie CH₄ gamybą. Maža Cu(111) plokštumų dalis gali paaiškinti mažą CH₄ išeigą, ypač mėginiuose, nusodintuose esant Cl⁻ jonams.

3.3.3.2. Dalelių ribos ir defektai

Defektyvios vietos atomai paprastai yra nesočiojoje koordinacijos būsenoje, todėl, remiantis keliais tyrimais, defektai, įskaitant grūdelių ribas, vaidina svarbų vaidmenį palengvinant C-C jungimąsi CO₂ER procese [23,151,158,159]. Todėl grūdelių ribų tankio padidėjimas gali žymiai pagerinti katalizatoriaus aktyvumą ir selektyvumą. Šiuo požiūriu tikslinga palyginti Cu 3D elektrodų mikrostruktūrą.

XRD srityje kristalitas laikomas mažiausiu monokristalu arba grūdelio dalimi, neturinčia gardelės defektų ir kurioje vyksta koherentinis rentgeno spindulių sklaidymas [143,144]. Tam tikrais atvejais grūdelis gali sutapti su kristalitu. Cu 3D struktūrų grūdelių dydžio vertės buvo nustatytos ankstesniame skyriuje remiantis XRD matavimais ir nustatyta, kad tirpaluose be ir su Cl⁻ jonais nusodintų mėginių grūdelių dydžio vertės yra labai panašios ir svyruoja nuo 16,8 iki 17,3 ± 5 nm [150].

27 paveiksle (žr. 64 p.) pateikti didelio didinimo (100 000 kartų) SEM atvaizdai, kuriuose matyti Cu putų mėginiai, nusodinti tirpale su chlorido (Cl⁻) jonais ir be jų. Šie vaizdai rodo, kad 3D Cu putos sudarytos iš kristalitų, kurie sulimpa ir kurių dydis gali svyruoti nuo kelių dešimčių iki kelių šimtų nanometrų.

Lyginant CuI ir CuII mėginių, kurie pasižymėjo skirtingu aktyvumu ir selektyvumu CO₂ER atžvilgiu, mikrostruktūrą, matyti, kad abiejų mėginių didelių dalelių dydis reikšmingai nesiskiria ir svyruoja nuo 250 iki 300 nm. Tačiau kai kurie CuI kristalitai yra padengti mažesnėmis, iki 120 nm skersmens dalelėmis, o tai žymiai padidina grūdelių ribų skaičių. Be to, aiškiai matomi CuI mėginio kristalografiniai požymiai (27A pav., žr. 64 p.), rodantys kristalitų kraštus ir jų suformuotas plokštumas. Šie požymiai keliems kristalitams paryškinti 27A pav. (žr. 64 p.). Tuo tarpu CuII mėginys sudarytas iš kristalitų be aiškiai išreikštų kristalografinių požymių (27B pav., žr. 64 p.). Nepaisant to, kad CuV mėginys sudarytas iš šakotų, pailgų kristalitų, kurių vidutinis ilgis yra 72 nm, o skersmuo – 67 nm (27C pav., žr. 64 p.), ši struktūra yra mažiau efektyvi CO₂ produktų išeigų atžvilgiu nei CuI mėginys.

Tirtų Cu putų mėginių mikrostruktūros charakteristikos rodo, kad CuI turi didesnę struktūrinių defektų tankį nei kiti mėginiai. Ši kristalinė struktūra žymiai padidina aktyviųjų vietų, kurios skatina CO₂ER, skaičių. Be to, katalizatoriai su daugiau briaunų ir kraštų atrodo, yra efektyvesni skatinant C₂ susidarymą. Tai galėtų paaiškinti, kodėl C₂ gamybos efektyvumas su CuI elektrodu yra didesnis.

3.3.3.3. Kristalitų dydžio ir geometrijos įtaka C₂ produktų išeigai

Keletas CO₂ER tyrimų parodė, kad procesas priklauso nuo Cu katalizatorių paviršiaus geometrijos [115,152,160] ir kad morfologinės savybės, tokios kaip porų dydis ir forma, turi įtakos kataliziniui aktyvumui ir selektyvumui [114,149]. Tačiau mūsų duomenys rodo, kad makroporų dydis ir tankis turi minimalią įtaką CO₂ER išeigai. Pavyzdžiui, CuI ir CuIII mėginiai, kurie buvo nusodinti elektrolite be Cl⁻ jonų, pasižymi didžiausiomis FE vertėmis šioje putų grupėje ir turi atvirkštinius porėtumo parametrus (8 lentelė, žr. 53 p.).

Todėl reikėtų atkreipti dėmesį į putų sienelės struktūrą sudarančių kristalitų agregatų parametrus. Lyginant efektyviausių ir mažiausiai efektyvių katalizatorių struktūrines charakteristikas iš tirpale be priedo nusodintų mėginių grupės, reikėtų atsižvelgti į keletą pagrindinių veiksnių. CuI mėginio sienelės sudarytos iš kompaktiškai supakuotų kristalitų agregatų, kurie sudaro šakas, kurių matmenys svyruoja nuo 4 iki 7 μm ilgio ir nuo 2 iki 3 μm pločio. Šiame mėginyje tarpai tarp šakų svyruoja nuo 0,5 iki 1,0 μm, todėl 3D struktūra yra siaura ir tanki (19C pav., žr. 52 p.). Tuo tarpu CuII mėginys sudarytas iš didesnių agregatų, kurių ilgis svyruoja nuo 7 iki 14 μm, o plotis – nuo 4 iki 5 μm, o tarpai tarp šakų svyruoja nuo 1,5 iki 2 μm (19D pav., žr. 52 p.). Dėl didesnių agregatų, sudarančių putų sienelės, ir didesnių tarpų tarp šakų galima manyti, kad CuII mėginio erdvinė struktūra yra mažiau kompaktiška nei CuI mėginio.

Yra žinoma, kad C-C jungimasis yra svarbiausias C₂ junginių susidarymo etapas ir kad didesnės pH vertės reakcijos zonoje yra palankios šiai reakcijai [25,161]. Jei struktūrinės ypatybės trukdo HCO₃⁻ patekti į reakcijos zoną, reakcijos terpės pH išlieka padidėjęs, o tai veda prie C-C jungčių susidarymo ir C₂ produktų susidarymo [25,153]. Galima manyti, kad tankesnė CuI elektrodo erdvinė struktūra, palyginti su CuII elektrodu, yra palankesnė palaikyti aukštesnės pH vertės ant elektrodo ir tokiu būdu skatina C₂ junginio susidarymą. Ši interpretacija gali paaiškinti, kodėl C₂ produktų FE vertė CuI mėginyje siekia net 28 %, o CuII mėginyje – tik 12 %.

Cl⁻ jonų buvimas Cu putų struktūrų nusodinimo tirpale sumažina dendritinių šakų dydį ir tuo pačiu metu žymiai padidina ES_r vertes, palyginti

su mėginiais, nusodintais be priedų. Pirmosiomis sąlygomis susidaro tanki erdvinė struktūra, kurios tarpai tarp atskirų šakų yra nuo 0,3 iki 0,6 μm (20 pav., žr. 53 p.). Tačiau šie mėginiai nėra tokie efektyvūs C_2 gamybai kaip CuI. Mažesnės j_{Sr} vertės putoms, nusodintoms esant Cl^- , palyginti su CuI mėginiu, rodo dalinį potencialių aktyviųjų struktūros vietų panaudojimą dėl jos mikrostruktūrinių ypatybių. Be to, lyginant CO2ER charakteristikas tarp katalizatorių su skirtingais šiurkštumo koeficientais, reikia būti atsargiems, nes jie pasiekia masės pernašos apribojimus esant skirtingam greičiui. Tačiau dideli masės pernašos apribojimai gali būti pasiekti mėginiais, kurių erdvinis tankis yra itin didelis ir dėl to didelės ES_r vertės, kai per mažai CO_2 pasiekia elektrodo paviršių. Masės pernašos modeliavimo tyrimai iš esmės paaiškino šį reiškinį, parodydami, kad idealus kompromisas tarp pH padidėjimo ir CO_2 tiekimo elektrodo paviršiuje suteikia optimalų C_2 selektyvumą šiurkštiems elektrodams [151]. Todėl galima manyti, kad tarpo dydis tarp atskirų putų šakų, nusodintų esant Cl^- , gali būti per mažas, kad būtų efektyvus C_2 junginių gamybai.

Pateikti pavyzdžiai rodo didelę Cu putų šakų dydžio, tarpų tarp jų ir susidariusios erdvinės struktūros įtaką jų efektyvumui redukuojant CO_2 iki C_2 junginių. Ypatinga šakų konfigūracija, būdinga mėginiais, nusodintiems tirpale be Cl^- priedo ir turintiems mažesnę (0,2 M) CuSO_4 koncentraciją, sudaro tankesnę erdvinę struktūrą, kuri skatina C_2 susidarymą CO2ER metu ant Cu putų elektrodų.

3.3.4. Cu 3D elektrodo stabilumas

Kalbant apie katalizatoriaus struktūros ir aktyvumo tarpusavio ryšį, reikia atsižvelgti tiek į aspektų priklausomybę, tiek į potencialų ir (arba) reakcijos sukeltus morfologinius ir struktūrinius pokyčius, vykstančius tam tikrame elektrokatalizės procese. Kadangi elektrokatalizės savybės pastebimai priklauso nuo paviršiaus struktūros, Cu metalo rekonstrukcijos elgsena daro didelę įtaką jo CO_2 redukcijos efektyvumui [9,27,36]. Keletas tyrimų parodė, kad pradinė gerai apibrėžta morfologija ir labai aktyvios vietos elektrokatalizės metu linkusios prarasti savo savybes dėl paviršiaus rekonstrukcijos [31,32].

Siekdami ištirti Cu putų struktūrų stabilumą elektrocheminės CO_2 redukcijos procese, atlikome Cu 3D elektrodų ex-situ SEM ir Pb UPD analizę po 2 valandų potenciostatinės poliarizacijos CO_2 prisotintame KHCO_3 tirpale. Pb UPD sluoksnio tirpimo kreivės Cu putų mėginiais, nusodintiems tirpaluose su Cl^- jonais ir be jų (28 pav., žr. 66 p.), prieš ir po CO_2 redukcijos

proceso yra identiškos, todėl galima teigti, kad nebuvo pastebėta reikšmingo tiriamų struktūrų vyraujančių kristalinių plokštumų pokyčio.

Kaip matyti iš SEM vaizdų (29 pav., žr. 67 p.), Cu putos išlaiko savo dendritinę morfologiją net ir po elektrocheminės CO₂ redukcijos, o tai rodo struktūrinį stabilumą ir galimą katalizatoriaus pakartotinį panaudojimą.

IŠVADOS

1. Pb arba Tl monosluoksnių nusodinimo iki termodinaminio potencialo metodai yra tikslūs ir patikimi vertinant neporėtų Cu elektrodų elektrochemiškai aktyvų paviršiaus plotą (ES_r). Tuo tarpu labai porėtoms 3D struktūroms šie metodai yra netinkami, daugiausia dėl sudėtingos mėginio erdvinės struktūros ir nesugebėjimo suformuoti pilno monosluoksnių. Iš nagrinėtų Cu 3D struktūrų ES_r vertinimo metodų, dvigubo sluoksnių talpos nustatymas voltamperometriniais matavimais yra tinkamiausias dėl savo paprastumo.

2. Maksimaliai padidinti bandinio ES_r ir kartu užtikrinti tinkamą elektrocheminiu būdu nusodintų Cu putų mechaninį stabilumą įmanoma naudojant Cl^- jonus kaip priedus prie rūgštinio sulfatinio variavimo elektrolito. Įvedus 50 mM HCl, nusodinto mėginio ES_r padidėjo iki trijų kartų. Tuo tarpu amonio acetato ir polietilenglikolio priedai neturėjo teigiamo poveikio elektrocheminiu būdu nusodintų Cu 3D struktūrų savybėms.

3. Teigiamas Cl^- jonų poveikis elektrocheminiu būdu nusodinant Cu putų elektrodus yra susijęs su jų specifine įtaka mikrostruktūrinėms savybėms. Šios charakteristikos apima putų sienelių mikroporų dydį ir kristalinių agregatų, sudarančių dendritines šakas, dydį. Šie struktūriniai pokyčiai lemia didesnę elektrochemiškai aktyvų paviršiaus plotą, o didesnis tankis, gaunamas esant Cl^- jonams, užtikrina 3D struktūros mechaninį stabilumą.

4. Cu 3D mėginių, elektrochemiškai nusodintų iš rūgštinio sulfatinio elektrolito su skirtinga pagrindinių komponentų (H_2SO_4 , $CuSO_4$ ir Cl^- jonų) koncentracija, struktūrinė įvairovė leido įvertinti jų katalizinio aktyvumo ir selektyvumo bei struktūros tarpusavio ryšį C_2 junginių susidarymui CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos metu.

5. Cu 3D elektrodų porų dydis ir tankis nėra reikšmingi C_2 išėgai CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos metu, o Cu putų mėginys, nusodintas tirpale, kuriame yra 1,5 M H_2SO_4 ir 0,2 M $CuSO_4$, pasirodė esąs efektyviausias katalizatorius C_2 junginiams susidaryti.

6. Didesnis katalizinis aktyvumas ir selektyvumas C_2 junginių susidarymo atžvilgiu CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos metu ant Cu 3D elektrodo pirmiausia priklauso nuo jų sudarančių nanostruktūrinių šakų dydžio ir tarpų tarp jų. Ši erdvinė struktūra yra palanki aukštesnių pH verčių išsaugojimui porėto elektrodo viduje, palaikydama C-C jungimosi procesą. Didesnis šio elektrodo katalizinis aktyvumas ir selektyvumas taip pat gali būti susiję su mažesniu Cu(111) plokštumų indėliu į bendrą jų pasiskirstymą ir didesniu struktūrinių defektų tankiu.

7. Cu 3D elektrodai, kurių šiurkštumo koeficiento vertės viršija 1000, kas būdinga mėginiams, nusodintiems esant Cl^- jonams, yra mažiau efektyvūs C_2 gamyboje CO_2 elektrocheminės redukcijos metu, nei mėginiai, nusodinti be priedo ir kurių f_R vertės yra ~ 800 . Tai yra susiję su mėginių mikrostruktūra, kai Cl^- jonai, esantys elektrolite, sukuria putų erdvinę struktūrą, kuri yra mažiau prieinama elektrochemiškai aktyvioms dalelėms.

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