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Oxide-derived copper (OD-Cu) electrodes exhibit unprecedented CO reduction performance towards liquid fuels, producing ethanol and acetate with >50% Faradaic efficiency at ~0.3 V (vs. RHE). By using static headspace-gas chromatography for liquid phase analysis, we identify acetaldehyde as a minor product and key intermediate in the electroreduction of CO to ethanol on OD-Cu electrodes. Acetaldehyde is produced with a Faradaic efficiency of ~5% at ~0.33 V (vs. RHE). We show that acetaldehyde forms at low steady-state concentrations, and that free acetaldehyde is difficult to detect in alkaline solutions using NMR spectroscopy, requiring alternative methods for detection and quantification. Our results represent an important step towards understanding the CO reduction mechanism on OD-Cu electrodes.

General information
State: Published
Organisations: Department of Physics, Experimental Surface and Nanomaterials Physics, Department of Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Stanford University, Carlsberg Research Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory
Number of pages: 5
Pages: 1450-1454
Publication date: 2016
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Volume: 55
Issue number: 4
ISSN (Print): 1433-7851
Ratings:
BFI (2018): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
BFI (2017): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2017): CiteScore 11.31 SJR 6.155 SNIP 2.165
Web of Science (2017): Impact factor 12.102
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
BFI (2016): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 10.8 SJR 5.954 SNIP 2.146
Web of Science (2016): Impact factor 11.994
Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes
BFI (2015): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2015): CiteScore 11.13 SJR 5.888 SNIP 2.225
Web of Science (2015): Indexed yes
BFI (2014): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2014): CiteScore 10.84 SJR 5.811 SNIP 2.307
Web of Science (2014): Indexed yes
BFI (2013): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2013): CiteScore 10.7 SJR 5.702 SNIP 2.198
Web of Science (2013): Impact factor 11.336
ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2013): Indexed yes
BFI (2012): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2012): CiteScore 10.55 SJR 6.407 SNIP 2.329
Web of Science (2012): Impact factor 13.734
ISI indexed (2012): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2012): Indexed yes