pH effects on the electrochemical reduction of CO(2) towards C2 products on stepped copper - DTU Orbit (10/02/2019)

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We present a microkinetic model for CO(2) reduction (CO(2)R) on Cu(211) towards C2 products, based on energetics estimated from an explicit solvent model. We show that the differences in both Tafel slopes and pH dependence for C1 vs C2 activity arise from differences in their multi-step mechanisms. We find the depletion in C2 products observed at high overpotential and high pH to arise from the 2nd order dependence of C-C coupling on CO coverage, which decreases due to competition from the C1 pathway. We further demonstrate that CO(2) reduction to CO on Cu, which suggests C2 products to be favored for CO2R under alkaline conditions. The mechanistic insights of this work elucidate how reaction conditions can lead to significant enhancements in selectivity and activity towards higher value C2 products.

**General information**
State: Published
Organisations: Department of Physics, Stanford University, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory
Number of pages: 9
Publication date: 2019
Peer-reviewed: Yes

**Publication information**
Journal: Nature Communications
Volume: 10
Issue number: 1
Article number: 32
ISSN (Print): 2041-1723
Ratings:
BFI (2019): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2019): Indexed yes
BFI (2018): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
BFI (2017): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2017): CiteScore 12.41 SJR 6.582 SNIP 2.912
Web of Science (2017): Impact factor 12.353
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
BFI (2016): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 11.8 SJR 6.414 SNIP 2.855
Web of Science (2016): Impact factor 12.124
Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes
BFI (2015): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2015): CiteScore 11.23 SJR 6.287 SNIP 2.86
Web of Science (2015): Indexed yes
BFI (2014): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2014): CiteScore 10.77 SJR 6.41 SNIP 3.034
Web of Science (2014): Impact factor 11.47
Web of Science (2014): Indexed yes
BFI (2013): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2013): CiteScore 9.85 SJR 6.206 SNIP 2.797
Web of Science (2013): Impact factor 10.742
ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2013): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2012): CiteScore 8.32 SJR 5.866 SNIP 2.829
Web of Science (2012): Impact factor 10.015
ISI indexed (2012): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2012): Indexed yes
Scopus rating (2011): CiteScore 4.44 SJR 3.137 SNIP 1.825