Total oxidation of propane on Pt/\(\text{WO}_x/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) catalysts by formation of metastable Pt\(^{\delta^+}\) species interacted with \(\text{WO}_x\) clusters

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HIGHLIGHTS

- The activity of Pt/\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) catalyst for \(\text{C}_3\text{H}_8\) oxidation is promoted by \(\text{WO}_x\) addition.
- The Pt\(^+/Pt\) ratio increases with \(\text{WO}_x\) surface density.
- The reducibility of metastable Pt\(^{\delta^+}\) species correlates with the catalytic activity.
- A simple redox model is presented involving the initial C–H bond activation.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

A series of Pt/\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) catalysts with various tungsten oxide loadings were prepared by a stepwise wet impregnation method. The catalysts were characterized by X-ray diffraction, nitrogen physisorption, Raman, UV–vis diffuse reflectance, transmission electron microscopy and infrared spectroscopy of adsorbed probe molecules (\(\text{CO}, \text{NH}_3\) or \(\text{C}_3\text{H}_8\)). The propane oxidation activity of Pt/\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) catalyst is significantly improved by the addition of tungsten oxide. The tungsten oxide overlayer is presented as monomeric/polymeric \(\text{WO}_x\) clusters and \(\text{WO}_y\) crystals depending on the loading amount. The most active catalyst occurs at an intermediate surface tungsten density corresponding to the maximum of polytungstate species. The electronic interactions between Pt and \(\text{WO}_x\) clusters lead to the generation of more reducible Pt\(^{\delta^+}\) species which are suggested to be active sites for propane oxidation. Basically, a simple model is proposed involving the initial C–H bond activation at the platinum–tungsten oxide interface.

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1. Introduction

Diesel engine vehicles have been rising rapidly in worldwide due to their high fuel efficiency, reliability and durability compared to gasoline cars [1]. Consequently, diesel exhaust pollutants are leading to increasingly stringent emission standards. Besides particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen oxides (\(\text{NO}_x\)), diesel emissions also contain a large share of unburned hydrocarbons (HC) presented in both the gas and particle phases [2]. These compounds when oxidized produce a wide variety of oxygenated products including aldehydes, ketones, alcohols, phenols, etc. most of which have been proven toxicity, and play a significant role in ozone production in the presence of nitrogen oxides [3]. For the reduction of HC emission as well as CO and the soluble organic fraction (SOF) of PM, Pt/\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) system as a typical diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) has been widely applied in current commercial oxidation catalysts installed in diesel driven vehicles [4]. Almost 60–80% of total hydrocarbon emissions are produced in the cold-start period [5]. Generally, the efficient oxidation of saturated hydrocarbons on Pt/\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\) catalyst requires relative high temperatures. It is therefore important to find routes to improve the low-temperature oxidation activity of platinum catalysts.
The oxidation activity of Pt catalysts is found to depend strongly on the oxidation state and dispersion of platinum, both of which can be affected by the supports and additives. H. Yoshida’s group investigated the effect of supports (MgO, La2O3, Al2O3, ZrO2, SiO2, SiO2–Al2O3 and SO32––ZrO2) on the low-temperature propane combustion over platinum catalysts [6–8]. They found that the turnover frequency is improved with the increase in the acid strength of support materials at the same dispersion of platinum. Kim et al. also ascribed the large different activities of Pt/ZrO2–SiO2 and Pt/ZrO2–SiO2–H2O2 catalysts, despite their close platinum dispersion, to the effect of the acidity generation on propane combustion [9]. On the other hand, Burch’s group found that the alumina modified with fluorine is more acidic than that with sulfur dioxide, but its combustion activity is not higher than the latter one [10]. Similarly, Hubbard et al. reported no enhanced activity with sulfated zirconia even though the acidity increased by 11 orders of magnitude [11]. So it seems that the total acidity of the support is not the only important factor in determining the propane combustion activity of platinum catalysts.

Solid oxide additives are promising for preparing highly active platinum catalysts. For example, the propane oxidation turnover rate on Pt/V2O5/Al2O3 catalysts increases with the vanadium oxide loading, probably because the intrinsic Pt oxidation activity increases with the sample acidity in spite of increased Pt dispersion [12]. The increased activity for propane combustion on Pd/V2O5–Al2O3 catalysts is also related to the modified redox properties of the catalysts and in particular the high reducibility of vanadium species [13]. The promoting effect of tungsten oxide on the propane oxidation activity of platinum catalysts has been also reported. Yoshida’s group [8,14] showed that the enhanced activity of catalysts is ascribed to less oxidized platinum by interaction with the electronegative additives used (W, V, P, Mo and Nb) under the oxidizing atmosphere. The stabilities of Pt/WO3/Al2O3 and Pt/WO3/TiO2–SiO2 are proved stable on the propane combustion tests at 750 °C for 1000 h [15] and at 350 °C for 400 h [16]. A similar promotion effect of tungsten oxide was found on Pt/Al2O3 catalyst for methane combustion [17]. Recently, Taylor’s groups ascribed the enhanced catalytic activity of Pd/WO3/TiO2 catalyst to an increased concentration of highly reactive oxygen species on the new WO3-decorated interface between PdO and TiO2 particles [18]. They also found that there is significance in the order of impregnation of the noble metal and promoter on the final performance of for Pd/V2O5/Al2O3 catalysts [19]. The formation of active sites at the Pt/WO3 interface on titania was reported to facilitate the dissociation of surface intermediates for propane oxidation in our previous study [20]. Nevertheless, the catalytic behaviors of such catalysts are not fully understood; for example, the nature of the true active phase, metal or metal oxide, remains a matter of discussion. A detailed characterization study needs to be performed to elucidate the exact nature of the metal/support interaction between platinum and tungsten oxide and the corresponding effect on propane combustion activity.

In this study, the effect of different tungsten oxide loadings on the propane oxidation of Pt/Al2O3 was investigated by using structural characterizations and in-situ diffuse reflectance infrared transform (DRIFT) spectroscopy. The key factors controlling the activity of the catalysts were discussed from the viewpoint of Pt dispersion, Pt oxidation state and reactivity of Pt sites affected by tungsten oxide, and a simple reaction scheme was proposed.

2. Experimental

2.1. Catalyst preparation

The alumina supports modified with various weight percentages of tungsten oxide (10 wt.%, 20 wt.% and 30 wt.%, calculated in terms of WO3/Al2O3) were prepared by the incipient-wetness impregnation of γ-alumina (BASF, Germany, S BET = 150 m2/g) with ammonium metatungstate ((NH4)10W12O41·5H2O, 99.5%, Yili, China). After drying at 110 °C for 12 h, the samples were calcined at 550 °C for 3 h in a muffle and the obtained WO3/Al2O3 supports were denoted as yWAl (where y was the loading percentage of WO3). For reference, pure tungsten oxide (derived by decomposition of ammonium metatungstate) and alumina were treated by the same calcination process.

The supported catalysts were prepared by impregnating the obtained supports (yWAl, Al2O3 and WO3) with Pt(NO3)2 solution (27.82 wt.%, Heraeus) as the precursor. The nominal loading amount of Pt was 1 wt.%. The impregnation procedure was the same as described above. The impregnated powders were submitted to drying at 110 °C for 12 h and calcination at 500 °C for 3 h in static air. The received catalysts were denoted as yPtWAl, Pt/Al2O3 and Pt/WO3, respectively.

2.2. Catalyst characterization

The powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were determined by a Japan Science D/max–RB diffractometer employing Cu Kα radiation (λ = 0.15418 nm) operating at 40 kV and 30 mA.

Textural properties were determined by nitrogen physisorption at −196 °C using a JW-BK122F (Beijing JWGB, China) instrument. Prior to nitrogen physisorption measurement, the samples were degassed to 0.01 Pa at 220 °C. The specific desorption pore volume was assessed by the Barrett–Joyner–Halenda (BJH) method.

The Raman spectra of the samples were obtained at ambient condition on a confocal micro-Raman apparatus (LabRam HR 800, Horiba Jobin Yvon, France) with a CCD detector. UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectra (UV–vis DRS) of the samples were recorded on a Hitachi U-3010 (Japan) spectrophotometer equipped with an integrating sphere.

Transmission electron microscope (TEM) images were taken using a FEI Tecnai G² 20 with an acceleration voltage of 200 kV.

Infrared (IR) spectra of CO adsorption were recorded on a Nicolet 6700 FTIR spectrometer equipped with a MCT detector. Successive experiments were carried out to collect the information of CO adsorption for the catalysts. After pretreating in He (100 ml/min) at 500 °C for 1 h, the as-received catalyst was cooled down to RT for CO adsorption. After the first CO adsorption, the catalyst was then treated in 5% O2/He (100 ml/min) at 500 °C for 1 h to obtain the oxidized sample, and was cooled down to RT in He (100 ml/min) for the second CO adsorption. Similarly, the reduction treatment was then performed in 5% CO/He (100 ml/min) at 500 °C before the third CO adsorption. For each CO adsorption measurement, the sample wafer was first exposed to 1% CO/He stream (100 ml/min) for 20 min and then flushed with He for 20 min. IR spectra were recorded under He stream by accumulating 32 scans at a resolution of 4 cm−1.

IR spectra of ammonia adsorption were recorded on the same apparatus. The catalyst was purged by nitrogen at 500 °C for 30 min. A gas mixture of 1000 ppm NH3/N2 was dosed in a diffuse reflectance IR cell at RT for 30 min, and then the catalyst was flushed with N2. The spectra were collected by accumulating 32 scans at a resolution of 4 cm−1.

IR spectra of propane oxidation were performed on the same apparatus. After pretreatment in nitrogen at 500 °C for 0.5 h, the catalyst was cooled down to 200 °C. The spectra were recorded at an interval of 50 °C after exposing the catalyst to 800 ppm C3H8/2% O2/N2. The heating rate was 10 °C/min.
Fig. 1. Propane oxidation activities of Pt/Al₂O₃ and the tungsten oxide modified catalysts.

2.3. Activity measurement

The activities of the catalysts for propane oxidation were tested in a fixed bed reactor made of stainless steel (i.d. 18 mm). Two hundred milligrams of catalyst powders (diluted to 1 ml with silica pellets), sandwiched between two quartz wool layers, were inserted into the reactor. After a pretreatment at 500 °C in N₂ for 30 min and being cooled down to RT, the reactor was heated to 500 °C at a rate of 10 °C/min. The gas mixture consisted of 800 ppm C₃H₈, 2% O₂ and N₂ in balance with a total flow rate of 1000 ml/min. The outlet gas concentrations were determined by a MKS 2300 IR spectrometer.

3. Results

3.1. Activities for propane oxidation

Fig. 1 shows the propane oxidation activities of Pt/WO₃/Al₂O₃ catalysts. The propylcatic oxidation of Pt/Al₂O₃ catalyst at low temperatures is significantly promoted by the modification of tungsten oxide depending on the loading amount. The T₅₀ (the temperature for 50% propane conversion) follows the order of 30PtWAl < 20PtWAl < 10PtWAl < Pt/Al₂O₃ < 327 °C. The shift of the T₅₀ towards lower temperatures exceeds 80 °C when the tungsten oxide loading reaches 20 wt%. A further increase in the tungsten oxide loading makes no contribution to the activity of platinum catalysts. It is probably more meaningful to compare the T₁₀ values (the temperature for 10% propane conversion) since propane oxidation is a highly exothermic reaction and the heat and mass transfer limitations are small at low temperatures. They obey a similar sequence: 20PtWAI (200 °C) < 30PtWAI (204 °C) < 10PtWAI (210 °C) < Pt/Al₂O₃ (240 °C). The most active catalyst is 20PtWAI, which has a much higher activity than the tungsten-free Pt/Al₂O₃ catalyst with a T₁₀ shift towards lower temperatures by 40 °C.

3.2. Solid properties

Fig. 2 shows the XRD patterns of the catalysts. All the samples exhibit characteristic peaks of γ-alumina. No diffraction peaks of crystalline WO₃ are observed for 10PtWAI, indicating the formation of uniformly spread oxotungsten species. Typical diffraction peaks (2θ = 23.7°, 28.8°, 33.6°, 41.5°, 50.3°, 54.8° and 60.3°) of bulk tungsten oxide, identified as orthorhombic WO₃ (ICPDS card 20-1324), are observed on 20PWAl and 30PWAl. There are no significant diffraction peaks of metallic or oxidized Pt phase, indicating a high dispersion of the metal on all the catalysts.

As listed in Table 1, the surface area of the catalysts decreases slightly with increasing the tungsten oxide loading, which would not result in any obvious difference of the catalytic performance. Fig. 3 shows the pore diameter distributions of the catalysts. The main feature is the appearance of a bimodal distribution in pore diameter of the catalyst with increasing the tungsten oxide loading. All the catalysts yield a pore diameter distribution at 8–9 nm, almost independent of the tungsten oxide loading, which is assigned to the pore structure of the alumina support. A second contribution at a larger pore diameter appears especially on 30PtWAI, which is associated to the surface layer of bulk WO₃.

![Fig. 2. XRD patterns of the (1) Pt/Al₂O₃, (2) 10PtWAl, (3) 20PtWAl and (4) 30PtWAl catalysts.](image)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Catalysts</th>
<th>Pt (wt.%)</th>
<th>WO₃/Al₂O₃ (wt.%)</th>
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<th>Pore volume (cm³/g)</th>
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<td>135</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<td>127</td>
<td>0.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>30PtWAl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 3. Pore size distribution of Pt/WO₃/Al₂O₃ catalysts.](image)
3.3. Raman and UV–vis

The tungsten oxide species are different on the alumina support as a function of surface WO$_3$ density (W atoms per nm$^2$ Al$_2$O$_3$): surface mononitrogan tungsten WO$_3$ species, surface polytungstate WO$_3$/WO$_6$ species and WO$_3$ crystals. It has been seen from the XRD patterns that crystalline WO$_3$ appears on 20PtWAI and especially 30PtWAI catalysts. Table 2 shows the mean crystallite sizes of WO$_3$ in these two samples. Obviously, a larger crystallite size of WO$_3$ is formed on the latter catalyst due to the aggregation and sintering of WO$_3$. To further illuminate such a transformation of WO$_3$ clusters to WO$_3$ crystallites, the Raman spectra of the W-containing catalysts were recorded in the 200–1200 cm$^{-1}$ region and the results are shown in Fig. 4. It is known that the γ-Al$_2$O$_3$ support has no Raman active modes. The spectrum of WO$_3$ reveals typical bands at 800, 700 and 250 cm$^{-1}$ which are assigned to W=O stretching, W=O bending and W–O=W deformation modes of octahedrally coordinated WO$_3$ crystals [21]. The band at 320 cm$^{-1}$ is a consequence of the appreciable distortion of the WO$_3$ structure from the ideal octahedral arrangement of ReO$_3$-type structure, and may be assigned to the W–O bending mode in the tetrahedrally coordinated tungstate. At a low tungsten oxide loading (10 wt.%), only a band at 1015 cm$^{-1}$ is observed assigned to symmetric W=O stretching arising from tetrahedrally coordinated surface species. When the tungsten oxide loading is enhanced to 20 wt.%, the W–O bands associated with WO$_3$ crystals appear in a low intensity, implying the occurrence of aggregation and crystallization of tungsten oxide locally on 20PtWAI catalyst. WO$_3$ crystals become one of major phases on 30PtWAI catalyst, which is consistent with the XRD result.

The band corresponding to W=O vibrations of polytungstate appears at 970 cm$^{-1}$ for the modified alumina support (20 wt.% WO$_3$/Al$_2$O$_3$), which has been assigned to the symmetric stretching vibration mode of W=O bonding in two-dimensional oxotungsten species in interaction with the support. This band shifts towards to a higher wavenumber at 1015 cm$^{-1}$ for all PtWAI catalysts. Such a shift has been reported as differences in the degree of dehydration of tungsten species and also as a consequence of a greater lateral interaction [22]. In our work, it is more likely that the interaction between platinum and surface tungsten oxide species affects the distortion of the oxotungsten species, which was also found over Pt/WO$_3$/TiO$_2$ system by Taylor’s group [18]. It appears that the transfer of electrons from the metallic Pt to the electronegative additives (WO$_x$, where 2 < x < 3) at the Pt–WO$_3$ interface makes the W=O bond stronger, resulting in a blue shift of the W=O Raman band.

Further investigation was done by applying UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectroscopy and Kubelka–Munk function multiplied by the photon energy. As listed in Table 2, the $E_g$ value continuously decreases from 3.83 to 3.62 eV with increasing the surface W density, indicating the growth of WO$_3$ domains at higher surface densities. Again, the electronic interaction between platinum and tungsten oxide is evidenced by the decrease of $E_g$ after impregnation of platinum (20PtWAI vs. 20WAI), which reflects the degree of electron delocalization in the tungsten oxide phase. It is known from Table 2 that the small increase in the crystallinity of WO$_3$ crystals should not result in such a significant difference of the WO$_3$ absorption edge energy. It is more plausible that the effective charge delocalization of Pt by WO$_3$ domains may introduce an additional electronic density for tungsten oxide and correspondingly the generation of electron deficient active sites (such as Pt$^{4+}$) on the catalysts [23].

3.4. TEM

Hydrocarbon oxidation on platinum group metal catalysts is sometimes speculatively classified in structure-sensitive reactions preferentially promoted on larger precious metal crystallites [6,24,25]. Fig. 5 shows the TEM images of the catalysts. No obvious difference is observed among the catalysts with or without WO$_3$ addition. All the catalysts seem to show a high dispersion of platinum with diameters located in a narrow range of 1–2 nm. Although the TEM images do not allow on the clear discrimination between the small clusters of Pt and WO$_3$ particles, few dark particles larger than 3 nm are observed, indicating no obvious difference in the Pt particle size of the catalysts. It implies that the variation in the oxidation activity of the catalysts is not due to the Pt particle size effect but due to the chemical modification of platinum species by the electronegative additives, probably the variation in the oxidation state of platinum.

3.5. IR spectra of CO adsorption

In order to study the reducibility of platinum species on different catalysts, successive oxidation/reduction pretreatments were performed prior to CO adsorption. Fig. 6 shows the IR spectra of the as-received, oxidized and reduced catalysts from contact with CO. Three overlapped bands at 2065, 2087 and 2107 cm$^{-1}$ are observed on Pt/Al$_2$O$_3$ in Fig. 6a, which are assigned to linear CO adsorbed on the terrace and step sites on platinum particles (Pt$^0$) and partially oxidized platinum (Pt$^{4+}$) sites, respectively [26]. The bands for CO associated with terrace sites of Pt$^0$ and Pt$^{4+}$ increase slightly in intensity after the oxidation treatment. The reduction pretreatment results in the disappearance of partially oxidized platinum species and a decrease in the amount of terrace sites on Pt particles. Thus, the reduction of Pt on Pt/Al$_2$O$_3$ is more feasible than the oxidation of the catalyst, and only a small amount of reducible Pt$^{4+}$ species are observed.
It can be seen in Fig. 6b–d that all the bands shift to higher wavenumbers with increasing the tungsten oxide loading. For 30PtWAl catalyst, the bands associated with CO–Pt\(^0\) (terrace sites), CO–Pt\(^6\) (step sites) and CO–Pt\(^{6+}\) shift to 2078, 2098 and 2123 cm\(^{-1}\), respectively. It is generally related to the acidic nature of the WO\(_x\) modified support, which will be discussed in the next section. A second effect of WO\(_x\) modification is the introduction of more reducible Pt\(^{6+}\) species. The band assigned to CO coordinated to Pt\(^{6+}\) sites turns to be much more intense on the as-received PtWAl catalysts, indicating that platinum species on the acidic WO\(_x\)/Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) supports are more electron-deficient than those on the electroneutral Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) support. More importantly, the metastable Pt\(^{6+}\) species are more liable to the atmosphere on PtWAl catalysts, which correlates with our previous findings about the formation of more reducible Pt\(^{6+}\) by interaction between platinum and the acidic sulfate additives on Pt/Ce\(_{0.67}\)Zr\(_{0.33}\)O\(_2\) catalyst [27]. The number of Pt–O bonds of lower binding energy, i.e. the site density of more reactive surface oxygen, increases on the Pt–WO\(_x\) interface.

3.6. \(\text{NH}_3\) adsorption

In order to evidence the modification of tungsten oxide on the acidity of Pt/Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) catalyst, the IR spectra obtained after \(\text{NH}_3\) adsorption are shown in Fig. 7. According to the literatures [28,29], typical bands at 3390, 3270 and 3183 cm\(^{-1}\) are assigned to \(v_{as}(\text{N–H})\), \(v_s(\text{N–H})\) and \(\delta_{as}(\text{NH})\) of Lewis-bound ammonia, respectively. The bands at 1260 and 1125 cm\(^{-1}\) are corresponding to the symmetric deformation mode of ammonia coordinated to Lewis acid sites. A combination band of the symmetric and antisymmetric deformation vibration of \(\text{NH}_4^+\) species arises at 3022 cm\(^{-1}\). The broad band at 2788 cm\(^{-1}\) is associated with the overtone of \(\delta_{as}(\text{NH})\) of Brønsted-bound ammonia. The bands at 1682 and 1448 cm\(^{-1}\) are characteristic of asymmetric and symmetric deformation modes of the protonated \(\text{NH}_3\) (\(\text{NH}_4^+\)) coordinated to Brønsted acid sites. These bands decrease in intensity significantly on Pt/Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) catalyst due to the electroneutral nature of alumina. Thus, the modification of tungsten oxide introduces abundant Lewis and Brønsted sites on Pt/Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) catalyst, and Brønsted-bound ammonia is more labile. The band at 1020 cm\(^{-1}\) is related to the OH-bending vibration of alumina [30]. It turns to be much more intense for the WO\(_x\)-modified catalysts due to the fundamental overtone of the W–O stretching mode of surface wolframyl species [29].

3.7. IR spectra of \(\text{C}_3\text{H}_8\) oxidation

Fig. 8 shows the DRIFT spectra in the ranges of 4000–2800 and 1700–1300 cm\(^{-1}\) recorded while exposing the catalysts to propane and O\(_2\) at 200–500 °C. A band at 1636 cm\(^{-1}\) and a shoulder at 1617 cm\(^{-1}\) due to C–C stretching, together with other weak bands at 1458 and 1375 cm\(^{-1}\) associated to the asymmetric and symmetric –CH\(_3\) deformation [31], are observed on Pt/Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) catalyst after propane adsorption at 200 °C in Fig. 8a. The band at 2969 cm\(^{-1}\) is characteristic of the C–H vibrations of gaseous propane. The bands assigned to carboxylate (acetate, 1575, 1543, 1458 and 1435 cm\(^{-1}\);
Fig. 6. IR spectra of the adsorbed species from contact with CO on the (a) Pt/Al₂O₃, (b) 10PtWAl, (c) 20PtWAl and (d) 30PtWAl catalysts at RT.

formate, 1590, 1558, 1386 and 1375 cm⁻¹) become more intense with increasing the temperature. The above bands assigned to the oxygenated intermediates reach the maximum at 350 °C and then decline at higher temperatures. The variations of the bands associated with carbonaceous species (mono- or poly-dentate carbonate, 1520, 1473 and 1352 cm⁻¹; carboxylate, 1507 and 1396 cm⁻¹)

follow a similar trend [32,33]. Meanwhile, a band at 3540 cm⁻¹ arises from surface OH groups on γ-Al₂O₃. The bands at 2969, 1636, 1617, 1458 and 1375 cm⁻¹, due to physisorbed propane, become slightly weaker on 20PtWAl catalyst in Fig. 8b, implying that the adsorption of propane on catalyst

Fig. 7. IR spectra of the adsorbed species from contact with ammonia on the (1) Pt/Al₂O₃, (2) 10PtWAl, (3) 20PtWAl and (4) 30PtWAl catalysts at RT.

Fig. 8. IR spectra of the adsorbed species from contact with C₃H₈ and O₂ on the (a) Pt/Al₂O₃ and (b) 20PtWAl catalysts at (1) 200, (2) 250, (3) 300, (4) 350, (5) 400, (6) 450 and (7) 500 °C at a heating rate of 10 °C/min.
is not obviously affected by the addition of tungsten oxide. However, the bands assigned to the adsorbed oxygenated intermediates (acetate and formate) are much weaker and reach the maximum at about 300 °C. No special intermediates are observed, implying that the modification of tungsten oxide does not change the general reaction mechanism for propane oxidation, but it may accelerate some rate-determining steps of reaction and the deep oxidation of the oxygenated intermediates at lower temperatures. It is also noted that the desorption of byproducts such as hydroxyl group and carbonaceous species is promoted on the acidic catalyst.

4. Discussion

4.1. Surface acidity, Pt oxidation state and WOx surface density

It is shown from the XRD, Raman and UV–vis results that the molecular structures of tungsten oxide phase on Pt/Al2O3 catalysts include monolayer/polytungstate surface WOx species below monolayer surface coverage (<4.0 W/nm²) and crystalline WO3 nanoparticles (≥4.0 W/nm²), which depend on the loading amount. Tungsten oxide acts as a typical acidic additive. Fig. 9 shows the dependencies of the amounts of Brønsted and Lewis acid sites on the WOx surface density. The normalized acidities were determined from integration of the infrared bands corresponding to NH3 adsorbed on Brønsted acid sites (centered at 1473 cm⁻¹) and Lewis acid sites (at 1260 cm⁻¹) in Fig. 7, and were normalized by the intensity of IR bands at 1448 and 1245 cm⁻¹ for Pt/Al2O3 as internal standards. The additional Lewis acid sites arise mainly from coordinatively unsaturated W⁶⁺ cations in [WO₆] and [WO₄], or coordinatively unsaturated Al³⁺ atoms as a result of the electron withdrawing nature of isolated W⁶⁺ atoms forming exposed WOx groups [34,35]. The limited availability of electron-deficient W⁶⁺ restricts further increase in the amount of Lewis acid sites at higher WOx surface density. Thus, it obeys a parabolic line law. Meanwhile, the Brønsted acid sites arise from partially hydrated tungsten species, including OH groups associated with W=O, W—O—W and Al—O—W linkages in WOx clusters and WO3 nanoparticles. As a result, a quasi-linear function is observed.

It is known that the interaction between tungsten oxide and platinum can make the latter in more electron deficient state, which is caused by the withdrawing effect of the electronegative additives. Fig. 10 shows the variation of the partially oxidized platinum (Pt⁵⁺) ratio as a function of the WOx surface density. The Pt⁵⁺/Pt ratio was calculated from division of the infrared bands corresponding to CO adsorbed on all platinum sites by that adsorbed on Pt⁵⁺ sites in Fig. 6. Clearly, the addition of WOx leads to a quasi-linear increase of the Pt⁵⁺/Pt ratio. It is difficult to directly relate the oxidation state of Pt species to the acidity of catalyst. The interaction between platinum and tungsten oxide would lead to a proton transfer from the acidic surface –OH groups (Brønsted acid–base interaction) to platinum species [36]. The coordinatively unsaturated Pt⁵⁺ can be also formed as a result of the electron withdrawing nature of isolated W⁶⁺ atoms forming exposed WOx groups (Lewis acid–base interaction). It should be also noted that the acidity of catalyst can affect the carbon accumulation, which is a critical issue in propane oxidation over platinum catalysts and remains to be studied in the future.

4.2. Reducibility of platinum and propane oxidation activity

It is seen in Fig. 1 that the oxidation activity of catalysts does not increase quasi-linearly when the tungsten oxide loading exceeds 20 wt.%, suggesting that the surface Pt⁴⁺/Pt ratio is not the exact factor in determining the catalytic behavior. The cleavage of both C—H and C—C bonds involves active oxygen, which can be effectively provided by the reduction of Pt⁴⁺ to metallic platinum. Thus, the reducibility of Pt⁴⁺ species, which was calculated by subtraction from the Pt⁴⁺/Pt ratio on the oxidized catalyst by that on the reduced catalyst, is considered as a more important factor. Fig. 11 reflects a symmetric relationship between the propane activity and reducibility of metastable Pt⁴⁺ species. It is seen that more reducible Pt⁴⁺ sites are formed on 20PtWAI, corresponding to the highest activity for propane oxidation. After then, both of them level off on 30PtWAI.

It has been confirmed using isotopically labeled oxygen experiments that gold-free and gold-doped CoOx catalysts oxidize propane to CO2 via a Mars–Van Krevelen mechanism [37]. It is expected that the total oxidation of propane on Pt/WO3/Al2O3 catalysts follows a similar reaction route [18]. In this model, the active
Fig. 12. Scheme of propane activation at the platinum–wusten oxide interface.

oxygen is not the adsorbed one but is provided from the lattice of catalyst. When propane reacts with PtO2, propane is oxidized to CO2 and Pt4+ sites are reduced, with molecular oxygen then reoxidizing the catalyst. It has been also pointed out that the availability of appropriate oxygen species and the rate of catalyst reoxidation are crucial in hydrocarbon catalytic combustion over oxide catalysts [38]. In this work, the increased reactivity of platinum on the WO3/Al2O3 support is more likely ascribed to the higher reducibility and especially faster reoxidability of Pt species, which can be related to their interactions with the adjacent WO3 clusters.

4.3. Propane oxidation at the metal/support interface

The results from this study allow us to assume a model for propane dissociative adsorption on Pt/WO3/Al2O3 catalysts although further evidences are required. Fig. 12 presents a schematic representation of a model involving the initial C–H bond activation at the electronegative sites. The interaction between platinum and the adjacent WO3 clusters keeps the metal in more electron deficient state. Hereby, metastable Pt4+ species, which do not equal to stably oxidized Pt species such as PtO and PtO2, are generated. The dissociative adsorption of propane has been presented as the rate-determining step for propane oxidation [39]. Over the WO3-modified platinum catalyst, the electropositive hydrogen radical is preferably adsorbed on the W=O bond, while the electronegative propyl radical is adsorbed on the oxidized Pt4+ sites, accompanied with the broken of Pt–O=W bond. Subsequently, the cleavage of C–H bond occurs with the adsorption and activation of gaseous oxygen on Pt sites. With the formation of surface oxygenated complexes (SOCs), the partially oxidized Pt sites are reduced. Simultaneously, the W=O bond is regenerated via a dehydrogenation route.

5. Conclusions

From all the above results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The temperatures of Pt/Al2O3 catalyst for 10% and 50% propane conversion can be lowered with WO3 modification by about 40 and 80 °C, respectively. The promotion effect of the acidic additives is limited when the loading amount of WO3 exceeds 20 wt.% of the alumina support.

2. The large different activities of Pt/Al2O3 and Pt/WO3/Al2O3 catalysts, despite their similar platinum dispersion, is ascribed to the improved reducibility of metastable Pt4+ species by interaction with WO3 clusters. The accelerated dissociative adsorption of propane on metastable Pt4+ sites via abstraction of H by the adjacent WO3 appears to be the determining factor of propane oxidation.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge Projects 2009AA062313 and 2009AA064803 supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology of China.

References
