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Yao Chen
University of Wollongong

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Investigation on Advanced Active Materials for Lithium-ion Batteries

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree**

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Yao Chen, M. Sc., B. Sc.

**Institute for Superconducting & Electronic Materials,
Faculty of Engineering**

2006

Dedicated to

My Parents, Shaoying Diao and Shanliang Chen

My husband, Jiangfeng Wu

My lovely Son, David Sichen Wu

Candidate's Certificate

I hereby declare that the research work presented in this thesis is original and was performed by the candidate in the laboratories in Institute for Superconducting & Electronic Materials and in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree to any other University or Institution.

Yao Chen

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CONTENTS

CANDIDATE'S CERTIFICATE	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
CONTENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.1 Introduction to lithium-ion batteries	4
1.2 Cathode Materials for lithium ion batteries	8
1.2.1 Layered oxides	8
1.2.1.1 Lithium cobalt oxide, LiCoO_2	8
1.2.1.2 Lithium nickel oxide, LiNiO_2	12
1.2.1.3 Mixed nickel-cobalt dioxide, $\text{LiNi}_{1-y}\text{Co}_y\text{O}_2$	14
1.2.1.4 LiMnO_2 and $\text{LiNi}_{1-y}\text{Mn}_y\text{O}_2$	17
1.2.1.5 $\text{LiNi}_{1-y-z}\text{Mn}_y\text{Co}_z\text{O}_2$	24
1.2.1.5.1 Synthesis and structure of $\text{LiNi}_{1-y-z}\text{Mn}_y\text{Co}_z\text{O}_2$	25
1.2.1.5.2 Magnetic behaviour of $\text{LiNi}_{1-y-z}\text{Mn}_y\text{Co}_z\text{O}_2$	33
1.2.1.5.3 Electrochemical behavior of $\text{LiNi}_{1-y-z}\text{Mn}_y\text{Co}_z\text{O}_2$	35
1.2.2 LiFePO_4 and related materials	42
1.2.2.1 The structure and conductivity of LiFePO_4	44
1.2.2.2 Synthesis and electrochemistry of LiFePO_4	48
1.2.2.3 $\text{LiMn}_y\text{Fe}_{1-y}\text{PO}_4$	52
1.3 Anode materials for lithium ion batteries	55
1.3.1 Carbon-based materials	57
1.3.2 Tin-based anode materials	60
1.3.2.1 Tin	62
1.3.2.2 Tin oxides	64
1.3.2.3 Tin-based alloys	67

1.3.3 Silicon-based anode materials	70
1.3.4 Transition metal oxides	72
1.4 Present status and remaining challenges	77
 CHAPTER 2 EXPERIMENTAL	 79
2.1 Materials and chemicals	79
2.2 Experimental procedures	80
2.3 The preparation of cathode materials	82
2.3.1 Spherical $\text{LiCo}_{0.25}\text{Ni}_{0.75}\text{O}_2$ prepared by chemical coprecipitation method	82
2.3.2 $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{O}_2$ synthesized by a chemical coprecipitation process	83
2.3.3 Nanocrystalline LiFePO_4 prepared by a sol-gel method	84
2.3.4 Carbon-coated LiFePO_4 prepared by a carbon aerogel synthesis process	84
2.4 Preparation of anode materials	85
2.4.1 Synthesis of nanocrystalline Ag and SnO_2 via a reverse micelle approach	85
2.4.2 Preparation of CoO and Co_3O_4 by high temperature decomposition	86
2.4.3 Nanosize Co_3O_4 powders prepared by a chemical decomposition approach	86
2.5 Electrode preparation and test cell construction	87
2.5.1 Electrode preparation	87
2.5.2 Test cell construction	87
2.6 Structural and physical characterization of electrode materials	88
2.7 Electrochemical testing	89
 CHAPTER 3 SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{O}_2$	 90
AS A CATHODE MATERIAL FOR LITHIUM SECONDARY	
BATTERIES	90
3.1 Introduction	90
3.2 Synthesis and physical characterization of $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{O}_2$	91

3.3	Electrochemical characteristics of $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{O}_2$	95
3.4	Conclusions	103
CHAPTER 4	PREPARATION AND PROPERTIES OF SPHERICAL $\text{LiNi}_{0.75}\text{Co}_{0.25}\text{O}_2$ AS A CATHODE FOR LITHIUM ION BATTERIES	104
4.1	Introduction	104
4.2	Synthesis and structural analysis of spherical $\text{LiNi}_{0.75}\text{Co}_{0.25}\text{O}_2$	105
4.3	Electrochemical characteristics of spherical $\text{LiNi}_{0.75}\text{Co}_{0.25}\text{O}_2$ cathodes	114
4.4	Conclusions	117
CHAPTER 5	CARBON COATED LiFePO_4 AS CATHODE MATERIALS FOR LI-ION BATTERIES	118
5.1	Introduction	118
5.2	Nanocrystalline LiFePO_4 synthesized via a sol-gel process	119
5.2.1	Synthesis and structural analysis of C- LiFePO_4	120
5.2.2	Electrochemical behavior	123
5.3	Carbon coated LiFePO_4 prepared via a carbon aerogel synthesis process	125
5.3.1	Preparation and structure of carbon coated LiFePO_4	125
5.3.2	Electrochemical characterization of carbon-coated LiFePO_4	129
5.4	Summary	131
CHAPTER 6	AN INVESTIGATION OF COBALT OXIDES AS ANODE MATERIALS FOR LI-ION BATTERIES	133
6.1	Introduction	133

6.2	Synthesis of cobalt oxides by the thermal decomposition method and characterization as an anode material for Li-ion batteries	134
6.2.1	Preparation and structure of cobalt oxides	134
6.2.2	Electrochemical characterization of cobalt oxides	139
6.3	Nanosize Co_3O_4 synthesized by chemical decomposition of cobalt octacarbonyl in toluene at low temperature	147
6.3.1	Preparation and physical characterization	147
6.3.2	Electrochemical performance	150
6.4	Conclusions	153
CHAPTER 7	SYNTHESIS OF NANOCRYSTALLINE Ag AND SnO_2 MATERIALS VIA A REVERSE MICELLE APPROACH AND THEIR CHARACTERIZATION AS ANODES FOR LI-ION BATTERIES	154
7.1	Introduction	154
7.2	Synthesis and electrochemical characterization of Ag nanopowders	156
7.3	Preparation and electrochemical characteristics of SnO_2 nanopowders	162
7.4	Conclusions	168
CHAPTER 8	GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY	170
8.1	Review of the study	170
8.2	Suggestions for future study	173
REFERENCES		175
LIST OF SYMBOLS		192
LIST OF FIGURES		194
LIST OF TABLES		199
PUBLICATIONS DURING PHD STUDIES		200

ABSTRACT

The objectives of the Ph.D project were: (1) to prepare and study advanced active materials with high capacity and long cycle life for rechargeable lithium ion batteries; (2) to understand the relationship between the structural, physical, and electrochemical properties of the electrode materials; (3) to identify the main parameters which are responsible for the differences in electrochemical behaviour. In this study, several methods have been used to improve the performance of electrodes, including element substitution, synthesis methods, carbon-enriching, etc.

A starting point for the study was a survey of the literature pertaining to the cathode and anode materials for lithium ion batteries. Many different electrode materials are described. The thesis provides a detailed description of the status of current research and development in electrode materials for lithium ion batteries.

A variety of cathode materials have been investigated. Some of them have shown good electrochemical performance when used in lithium ion cells. Electroactive $\text{LiCo}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{O}_2$ powders were prepared from lithium compounds and $\text{Co}_x\text{Mn}_y\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}(\text{OH})_2$ precursor by heating at 850-900 °C.

High density spherical $\text{LiCo}_{0.25}\text{Ni}_{0.75}\text{O}_2$ compounds were synthesized from lithium compounds and spherical $\text{Co}_{0.25}\text{Ni}_{0.75}(\text{OH})_2$ precursor by heating in oxygen at 750°C and 800°C for 12 hrs. The structural characteristics of the compounds were determined by x-ray diffraction. The best sintering temperature was found to be 800 °C, in terms of

stabilising the layered structure and improving the cycle life. It was found that the spherical $\text{LiCo}_{0.25}\text{Ni}_{0.75}\text{O}_2$ compounds sintered at 800 °C have a highly ordered layered structure with reduced cation mixing.

Carbon-enriched nanocrystalline LiFePO_4 compounds were prepared by the sol-gel method and the R/F carbon gel method, respectively. A layer of carbon was laid down as a coating on the surface of the lithium crystals, which dramatically enhanced the electronic conductivity of the LiFePO_4 compounds. A high capacity of 160 mAh/g at the C/5 rate has been demonstrated for the LiFePO_4 electrode. These electrodes also exhibited good cyclability at different charge/discharge rates.

A variety of anode materials have also been investigated to search out alternative anode materials to replace graphite for lithium ion batteries. Five types of cobalt oxides were prepared by high temperature decomposition, low temperature decomposition, high energy ball-milling, and the chemical decomposition of cobalt octacarbonyl in toluene, respectively. The LT- Co_3O_4 , the CoO, and the nanosize Co_3O_4 powders prepared by decomposing organo-cobalt compounds at low temperature show good capacity retention on charge/discharge cycling, which is promising for their use as anode materials in Li-ion cells. It was found that the electrochemical properties of cobalt oxides are sensitive to the crystallinity, morphology, and particle size.

Nanosize Ag powders were prepared via a reverse micelle approach. The size of Ag nanoparticles can be influenced by the concentration of the reduction agent. In addition, SnO_2 nanopowders were synthesized by using the same method. 1D structured SnO_2

nanorods were observed in the SnO₂ nanopowders. The SnO₂ nanopowder electrodes show high electrochemical reactivity toward lithium in Li-ion cells.

The synthesized materials were characterized by x-ray diffraction, SEM and TEM, through which the phase composition and microstructure were observed. The capacity and cycle life of the cathode materials were obtained from charge/discharge cycling tests. The kinetic characteristics and kinetic parameters of lithium ion insertion and extraction within the electrode materials were determined by a.c. impedance spectroscopy and cyclic voltammograms.

In summary, the investigations in this project have produced several types of electrode materials with high capacity and long cycle life. In particular, the study focuses on the preparation of cathode materials with high density and ordered structure, and anode materials with ultrafine particles. Analysis of the electrochemical processes in lithium ion cells was conducted by various techniques. All of these studies provide a fundamental basis for the development of high energy density electrode materials.