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REVIEW

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1 Introduction

Photocatalysis is an environment-friendly technology developed in the 20th century. When light is absorbed by some special semiconductors, namely "photocatalysts", electrons (e⁻) originally in the valence band (VB) are excited to the conduction band (CB) and holes (h⁺) are formed in the initial position. Free electrons with strong reducibility can reduce the valence state of some elements in compounds (such as carbon in CO₂ and nitrogen in N₂) when regular methods are not useful or cost too much. Thus far, photocatalysis has shown its huge application prospects in clean energy, environmental remediation, and many other fields; currently, researchers are heading towards new photocatalyst development and reaction mechanisms. Photocatalytic hydrogen evolution reaction (HER), CO₂ reduction reaction (CO₂RR), and photocatalytic degradation reaction represent the three main aspects of photocatalysis.



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MXenes are two-dimensional nanomaterials, which can be constructed from different elements. The rich interlayer groups, surface groups, and the flexible layer spacing of MXenes make them ideal catalysts. Among these, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ has gained particular attention as a photocatalyst for photocatalytic CO_2 reduction reactions (CO_2RR), hydrogen evolution reactions (HER), and photocatalytic degradation reactions. The structure of $Ti_3C_2T_x$, hydrophilic surface functional groups, and the Gibbs free energy for hydrogen adsorption lead to the excellent photocatalytic HER performance of this material. Numerous surface defects on $Ti_3C_2T_x$ also provide plentiful CO_2 adsorption sites for CO_2RR . It is the structure of two-dimensional nanomaterials and their high-speed electron transport channels that enable their excellent catalytic oxidation activity. However, at present, there are still challenges that limit their further application, the most significant of which is the material stability. In order to overcome this, the synthetic routes to prepare these photocatalysts need to be adapted.

Photocatalytic nanomaterials have an extensive number of potential applications. When their particle size is below a certain value, the Fermi level of the electronic energy levels morphs from continuous to discrete levels and the energy gap grows wider. These semiconductors are, therefore, more susceptible to photon excitation, which improves their photocatalytic activity.¹

Nanomaterials can be divided into four categories, according to the dimensions of their structural scale: (1) zero-dimensional materials, e.g., groups of nanostructure clusters; (2) onedimensional nanomaterials, e.g., fibrous nanotubes, nanowires, nanoribbons, or other related structures; (3) two-dimensional nanomaterials, e.g., layered nanomaterials, quantum wells, superlattices, and other structures; (4) three-dimensional nanomaterials, e.g., composite structures consisting of one or more zero-dimensional, one-dimensional, or two-dimensional nanomaterials. The first three are collectively known as low Vannami materials. In low Vannami materials, two-dimensional nanomaterials show significant changes in the surface, electron energy levels, state density, and other aspects compared with three-dimensional materials. This due to the fact that their thickness is greatly reduced compared to other two-dimensional materials; thus, these possess unique optical and electronic characteristics, which make them a hot topic in catalysis.^{2,3}

MXenes are two-dimensional nanomaterials and have a general material formula of $M_{n+1}X_nT_x$. In this formula, M represents nitrogen or carbon, X is generally a transition metal element, and T represents the functional groups. MXenes typically consist of transition metal carbides, nitrides, or carbides that are several

1570 | Mater. Adv., 2021, 2, 1570-1594



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Review

atomic layers thick. It was first reported in 2011⁴ that MXene materials have comparable conductivity towards transition metal carbides due to the presence of hydroxy groups or terminal oxygen species on their surfaces. The most important feature of this range of materials is that, unlike conventional battery materials, they provide more channels for ions to move through, thus dramatically increasing their speed.

 ${\rm Ti}_3{\rm C}_2{\rm T}_x$ was the first discovered MXene material and is also the most widely used MXene material in the field of photocatalysis.^{5–7} It was first obtained by etching the Al layer of ${\rm Ti}_3{\rm AlC}_2$ with hydrofluoric acid. In this paper, the application of ${\rm Ti}_3{\rm C}_2{\rm T}_x$ as a photocatalyst and approaches to improve its catalytic performance are summarized.

2 MXene

2.1 From MAX to MXene. MXenes are a type of twodimensional nanomaterials with covalent bonds formed between the early transition elements and nitrogen or carbon elements. This furnishes an intramolecular skeleton in which the layers are connected by hydrogen bonds. Since the first Mxene, $Ti_3C_2T_x$, was discovered in 2011, more than 20 kinds of MXene materials including M₂X, M₃X₂, and M₄X₃ have been successively prepared.^{7,8} Due to their unique structure and properties, MXenes have been widely favored for use in battery applications.

The preparation of MXenes can be divided into two approaches, namely, bottom-up and top-down. Presently, the top-down etching method is commonly employed. This is due to the MAX phase^{9,10} (commonly, M means early transition metal elements such as Ti and Nb; A represents the Al or Si layer; X represents C or N elements) as M is mainly composed of metallic bonds between the atoms, which are connected to A. The chemical properties are largely dictated by A. By using certain concentrations of hydrofluoric acid or LiF/HCl¹¹ to etch the MAX phase of Ti₃AlC₂, ternary carbides within the titanium carbon layers become closer to each other. In this process, the Al layer is etched away gradually, resulting in a greater carbontitanium interlayer spacing in the Ti₃C₂T_x product. In order to obtain Ti₃AlC₂ with a graphene-like structure consisting of only a few or single layers, mechanical or chemical intercalation dissection is required. However, when chemical intercalation is used for stripping, some organic molecules may occupy the active sites exposed on the surface, which is unfavorable for photocatalytic reactions.

Etching is a slow process, as shown in Fig. 1(a). In this process, Al layers are gradually peeled off, while the Ti–C skeleton layers are not damaged because of their strong ionic bonding.¹² Free groups such as –OH and some H₂O molecules enter into the framework of Ti–C and become inter-connected by hydrogen bonds, which expands the layer spacing of $Ti_3C_2T_x$. This permits ions with a large radius to enter the layer spacing,¹³ providing an operating space for the ion intercalation method to peel-off few layers of $Ti_3C_2T_x$. The number of –OH groups and H₂O molecules within the interlayer space accounts for the large electrical capacity of $Ti_3C_2T_x$.

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ obtained by direct etching with hydrofluoric acid possesses a different morphology to $Ti_3C_2T_x$ obtained by etching with LiF/HCl. Furthermore, NMR spectroscopy revealed a greater number of -OH and -F functional groups on the surface of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ etched by hydrofluoric acid, while LiF/HCl etching furnished a material with predominantly -O functional groups.

2.2 Structure and properties of $Ti_3C_2T_x$

2.2.1 Structure of $Ti_3C_2T_x$. As shown in Fig. 2(a), the structure of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is comprised of three parts: the intralayer skeleton region, the interlayer region, and the surface terminating groups. In the intramolecular skeleton region, Ti atoms and C atoms are stacked alternately to form ionic bonds, and the skeleton of the entire main structure is formed on this basis. In the interlayer region, it was found through neutron diffraction that the interaction between the layers is established through hydrogen bonding between either O or F atoms on the surface and van der Waals forces between these atoms. The strength of interlayer hydrogen bonding depends not only on the orientation of -OH relative to the entire sheet but also on the number and distribution of the -OH groups. When there is water between the layers, it can also participate in hydrogen bonding. In addition, a large number of terminal groups are



Fig. 1 The process of etching Ti_3AlC_2 to yield Ti_3C_2 .



Fig. 2 Schematic diagram showing the crystal structure of Ti_3C_2 (a)¹⁹ and its monolayer with (b) top and (c) side view. The large blue balls represent Ti atoms and the small brown balls represent C atoms. The highlighted unit cell indicates the high symmetry A, B, and C adatom sites.²⁰

randomly distributed on the surface of the $Ti_3C_2T_x$ main structure. These surface groups are directly bonded to the exposed surface and $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is obtained by top-down etching, which mainly includes surface groups such as -O, -OH, and -F. After a period of placement, the -F groups can be replaced by -O groups. The surface groups have a great influence on the properties of the $Ti_3C_2T_x$ formed, which can be analyzed by electron energy loss spectroscopy (TEM),14,15 neutron scattering,16 and NMR techniques.^{17,18} These experiments confirm that the surface functional groups of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ are randomly distributed with -O, -OH, and -F all directly bonded to the surface of the exposed MXene plane. Furthermore, there are no adjacent -OH functional groups found between the layers. The presence of cations between the layers causes the MXene lamellae to slide easily relative to each other, changing their rheological properties and resulting in their clay-like properties.

2.2.2 Properties of Ti₃**C**₂**T**_{*x*}. The structure of Ti₃**C**₂**T**_{*x*} determines the electric storage performance. As Ti₃C₂T_{*x*} has a wide spacing between the layers, the ions can travel through the layers at a high speed, whilst the hydroxyl or terminal oxygen groups on the surface furnish a material with excellent conductivity. Both factors are important for the use of these MXene materials in batteries.^{20–25}

Various surface groups (such as –O, –F, and –OH) have supplied abundant anchored sites for the base photocatalyst to form efficient heterojunction structures, which are ideal for photocatalytic activities.²⁶ There is also a large number of exposed metal sites on the surface, which can be used as active sites for reactions.

The surface chemical state of MXene materials has a large influence on the regulation of its physical properties. When -F on the surface is replaced by an -O group, the electrochemical performance is improved. For example, when $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is treated with a KOH and CH₃OOK solution, the -O groups on the surface increase, along with the electric capacity. Under an



atmosphere of N₂, Ar, or other inert gases, the number of -F groups on the surface of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is reduced, after which the electrical capacity is greatly increased.

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ shows an excellent absorption of light between 300 nm and 500 nm.²⁷ Recently, researchers have even found that the absorption can be broadened to the near-infrared (NIR) region. According to a further study, this may be related to its surface plasmon resonance (SPR), and the thinner the material, the stronger the SPR.²⁸ Such a peculiarity makes $Ti_3C_2T_x$ an ideal photothermal co-catalyst.

2.2.3 Instability of Ti_3C_2T_x. MXenes typically have poor stability. $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is rapidly oxidized when heated under CO₂, air, and other environments, and when the surface groups are all –O, $Ti_3C_2O_2$ exhibits metallic properties.^{29,30} $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is also slowly oxidized when exposed to air under atmospheric conditions. After oxidation, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is called oxidized MXene (denoted as MO).



Fig. 4 HAADF-STEM images from single-layer $Ti_3C_2T_x$ MXene flakes prepared using etchants with different HF concentrations: (a) 2.7 wt% HF, (b) 5.3 wt% HF, and (c) 7 wt% HF. Single V_{T_1} vacancies are indicated by the red circles, while vacancy clusters $V_{T_1}^C$ are shown by the blue circles. (d) Scatter plot of the defect concentration from the images acquired from samples produced using different HF concentrations. The red line shows the error plot with the average and standard deviation for different HF concentrations.³³

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Table 1 Comparison of photocatalysts including ${\rm Ti}_3{\rm C}_2{\rm T}_x$ in HER

Year Ref.	2017 30	2017 44	2016 45	2018 46	2018 47	2018 48	2018 49	2018 50	2019 51	2019 52	2019 53	2019 54	2019 55	2019 56	2019 57	2019 58	2019 59	2019 60	2019 32
Light source Morphology	300 W Xe lamp Cauliflower- (λ > 420 nm) structure by self-assembly of	300 W Xe lamp Nanosheets	$(\lambda > 400 \text{ mJ})^{-1}$ attached on the surfaces and surfaces and	between the sheets 300 W Xe lamp Nanosheets with porous nanonarticles	$300 \text{ W Xe lamp Nanosheets}$ ($\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$)	300 W Xe lamp Nanoflowers	300 W Xe lamp Flower-like $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$ microspheres	300 W Xe lamp 2D–2D (λ > 420 nm) heterostructure	300 W Xe lamp Sphere-like	300 W Xe lamp 1D/2D nanosheets	300 W Xe lamp Nanofibers/ nanosheets	200 W Hg lamp Nanosheets (285-325 nm)	300 W Xe lamp Spheres-like	300 W Xe lamp 2D nanosheets structure	300 W Xe lamp Particle-like $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	300 W Xe lamp Nanosheets	300 W Xe lamp Nanosheets	350 W Xe lamp 3D structure	300 W Xe lamp Smooth sheet-like
Monolayer or multilayer	${ m Ti}_3{ m C}_2{ m T}_x$ NPs	Multilayer	Monolayer	Monolayer	Multilayer	Multilayer	Multilayer	Monolayer	Multilayer	Monolayer	Monolayer	Monolayer	Multilayer	Multilayer	Monolayer	Ti ₃ C ₂ MXene quantum dots	Multilayer	Monolayer	Multilayer
Preparation methods	One-step hydrothermal method	${ m Ti}_3{ m C}_2{ m T}_x$ oxidation	Hydrothermal method	Hydrothermal and photodeposition method	$Ti_3C_2T_x$ oxidation	Hydrothermal and calcination	Hydrothermal	Calcination	Hydrothermal	Electrostatic	Electrostatic self-assembly technique	Electrostatic self-assembly technique	Hydrothermal	Electrostatic self-assembly technique	Hydrothermal	Deposition	<i>In situ</i> growth and hydrothermal	Hydrothermal	Calcination
Sacrificial reagent	Lactic acid (17.6%)	TEOA (10%)	Methanol (25%)	TEOA (10%)	Methanol (10%)	Methanol (20%)	0.25 M Na ₂ SO ₃ / 0.35 M Na ₂ S/ H ₂ PfCL	TEOA (10%)	Lactic acid (20%)	Lactic acid (10%)	Methanol (10%)	Methanol (25%)	Methanol (30%)	TEOA	0.25 M Na ₂ SO ₃ and 0.35 M Na ₂ S	TEOA (15%)	TEOA	0.1 M Na ₂ S and 0.1 M Na ₂ SO ₂	TEOA (10%)
Activity improvement factor	m) 135.59 times	n)	Approximately 4 times	 15 times than pristine g-C₃N₄ 		6 times	n) 1.97 times	 n) 12.15 times than pure p-C₂N, 	4 times	n) 6.68 times	3.8 times than TiO ₂ nanofibers	m) 2.88 times than TiO ₂ nanoparticles/multilayer Ti ₂ C ₂	2.33 times	1.8 times than O-doped $g-C_3N_4$	13.4 times	25.97 times	5.99 times than Mo.S@TiO.@Ti ₂ C,	Approximately 8 times	8 times than C-TiO ₂
n AQY (%)	40.1% (420 m	1.98% (400 nr	0.3%	3.1% (420 nm	7.36%	5.86 (350 nm)	8.96% (420 ni	4.16% (420 m		35.6% (429 m		15.8% (305 ni		17.59% (405 nm)	15.60% (420 nm)	3.654%	7.535%		
${ m H_2}~{ m productio} \ (\mu { m mol}~{ m h^{-1}} \ { m gcatalyst}^{-1})$	14 342	480.8	17.8	5000	333	783.11	2596.76	1620	502.6	2407	6269	2650	6144.7	- 25124	11182.4	5111.8	10505.8	204	1409
Name	$CdS/Ti_3C_2T_x$	2D-Layered Carbon/TiO ₂	Ti ₃ C ₂ T _x /rutile TiO ₂	${ m Ti}_3{ m C}_2/{ m Pt/g-C}_3{ m N}_4$	Sulfur-doped Carbon/ TiO,	Ti ₃ Č ₂ T _x /TiO ₂ nanoflowers	$Zn_2In_2S_5/Ti_3C_2T_x$	$d-Ti_3C_2/TiO_2/g-C_3N_4$	ZnS/Ti_3C_2	1D CdS nanorod/2D	Ti ₃ C ₂ more transmeet TiO ₂ nanofibers/MXene Ti ₃ C ₂	TiO ₂ nanoparticale/ monolayer Ti ₃ C ₂	MoS_2/Ti_3C_2	Ti ₃ C ₂ MXene/O-doped g C ₃ N ₄	CdLa ₂ S ₄ /Ti ₃ C ₂	Ti ₃ C ₂ MXene quantum dots/g-C ₃ N ₄	Mo _x S@TiO ₂ @Ti ₃ C ₂	Ti ₃ C ₂ /porous MOFs (1ii0-66-NH ₂)	$C-TiO_2/g-C_3N_4$

Materials Advances

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Table 1 (continued)

1574 | Mater. Adv., 2021, 2, 1570–1594

	H ₂ productio (µmol h ⁻¹	u	Activity improvement			Monolayer or			
Name	$g_{ m catalyst}^{-1}$	AQY (%)	factor	Sacrificial reagent	Preparation methods	multilayer	Light source Mo	orphology	Year Ref.
CdS@Ti ₃ C ₂ @CoO	134.46		1.75 times than CdS@CoO		Calcination	Monolayer	300 W Xe lamp Sp	heres-like	2019 61
							$(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$ str	ructure	
$TiO_2-Ti_3C2-CoS_x$	950		5.8 times than TiO_2	Methanol (20%)	Hydrothermal	Multilayer	300 W Xe lamp Sn me	nooth round block orphology	2019 62
$Ti_3C_2(TiO_2)$ (CdS/MoS_2)	8470		3.76 times than CdS/MoS ₂	lactic acid (20%)	Hydrothermal	Multilayer	300 W Xe lamp Ns $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	anospheres	2019 63
Ti ₃ C ₂ MXene/MoS ₂ nanosheets/TiO ₂ nanosheets	6425.297	4.61%	7.15 times than TiO ₂ /Ti ₃ C ₂	TEOA	Ti ₃ C ₂ T _x oxidation	Multilayer	300 W Xe lamp Ti wi na	³ C ₂ nanosheets th MoS ₂ inoparticales	2019 64
2D/3D g-C ₃ N ₄ /Ti ₃ C ₂ (MXene) heterojunction	116.2		6.64 times	$\mathrm{TEOA}\left(10\% ight)$	Calcination	Multilayer	300 W Xe lamp Ns $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	anosheets	2020 65
Àu/MoS2/Ti3C2	12000			Methanol (30%)	Electrostatic self- assembly technique	Multilayer	N	anosphere-like	2020 66
$2D/2D Ti_3C_2/g-C_3N_4$	72.3	0.81% (400 nm)	10.18 times than pure g-C ₃ N ₄	TEOA (10%)	Electrostatic self- assembly approach	Monolayer	200 W Hg lamp Fla sh of	at irregularly aped nanosheets 2D/2D structures	2019 67
MXene@Au@CdS	17070.43		1.85 times than pure CdS	0.35 mol L ⁻¹ Na ₂ S and 0.25 mol L ⁻¹ Na ₂ SO ₃ solution	Hydrothermal	Monolayer	300 W Xe lamp Ns $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	anosheets	2020 68
Black phosphorus quantum dots/ Ti ₃ C ₂ @TiO ₂	684.5		11.35 times	TEOA (25%)	Solvent-heatmethod	Multilayer	300 W Xe lamp Ns $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	anosheets	2020 69

Materials Advances



Fig. 5 TEM images of (a–c) CdS, (d–f) exfoliated Ti_3C_2 MXene nanosheets, (g–i) the composite CM-20, (j) the corresponding elemental mapping results of CM-20, and (k) the oxidation process of $Ti_3C_2T_x$.⁵²



Fig. 6 (a and b) Photocatalytic H_2 evolution performance of different samples, (c) the recycled photocatalytic H_2 evolution experiments of CM-20, (d) AQY values and the wavelength dependence of photocatalytic H_2 evolution in the composite CM-20.⁵²

When $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is oxidized, it is only the Ti atoms that are oxidized into the corresponding oxide (TiO₂), while the C atoms remain unchanged. In other words, MO comprises a sandwich structure of layered carbon layers and titanium oxide.³¹ Fig. 3 shows the structural evolution of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ oxidation to MXene (MO). As can be seen from Fig. 3, MO maintains a layered structure, whilst the TiO₂ nanoparticles formed by oxidation are coated within the carbon layer structure. Due to the photoresponse capacity of TiO₂, this resulting structure is photocatalytically active. An example of this is MO/g- C_3N_4 , which can photocatalytically split water with a relatively high efficiency.³²

The crystal structure of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ contains Ti defects, which appear to contribute significantly to the instability of this material.^{14,33} High angle annular dark field (HAADF)-STEM imaging is an important tool in 2D materials' characterization and is used to unambiguously resolve the crystal structure and defect configurations.^{34,35} As shown in Fig. 4, widespread Ti defects were directly detected through the HAADF-STEM imaging of the single-layer $Ti_3C_2T_x$ flakes. Single-layered $Ti_3C_2T_x$ obtained by HF etching was observed through HAADF-STEM images in Fig. 4(a)–(c). Fig. 4(d) was obtained by calculating tens of such images, and it reveals that the relationship between HF concentration and defect formation. It was found that vacancy clusters are rarely observed after etching with 2.7 wt% HF concentration but are relatively common after etching with 7 wt% HF.³³ Generally speaking, the average concentration of V_{Ti} (Ti vacancies) is positively related to that of HF.

3. Application in photocatalysis

Due to the excellent structural properties of $Ti_3C_2T_x$, there are many cases in which $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is used as a co-catalyst in



Fig. 7 (a) Photocurrent density curves and (b) EIS Nyquist plots of CdS and CM-20.52

photocatalytic systems or is directly involved in photocatalytic reaction systems. This paper summarizes the application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in the field of photocatalysis from three aspects: photocatalytic hydrogen evolution reactions (HER), photocatalytic CO₂ reduction reactions (CO₂RR), and photocatalytic degradation reactions.

3.1 Application in HER

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is the most widely used photocatalytic agent in hydrogen evolution reactions^{36–39} (HER). $Ti_3C_2T_x$ has the following advantages that make it ideal for use in photolysis: (a) hydrophilic surface functional groups are conducive for the adsorption of water molecules and promote the reaction; and (b) the Gibbs free energy of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ adsorption on hydrogen approaches zero infinitely, which is conducive for the reduction of H⁺.

There are three important steps in the HER process, which are:^{30,40,41} (a) initial h⁺ + e⁻ formation; (b) generation of H* (the intermediate adsorption state); and (c) formation of the 1/2 H₂ product. The adsorption state of H* in process (b) directly affects the final hydrogen evolution efficiency and is an extremely important factor, which can be represented by the Gibbs adsorption free energy $|\Delta G_{H*}|$. Through simulation calculations, it was found that when all the Ti₃C₂T_x surface groups are -F, $\Delta G_{H*} = -0.927$ eV, and the adsorption is too strong. When all the surface groups are -O, $|\Delta G_{H*}|$ is 0.003 eV, which is even better than the commonly used catalyst Pt ($\Delta G_{H*} \approx -0.090$ eV).^{42,43} Therefore, Ti₃C₂T_x is a good HER co-catalyst. Examples of Ti₃C₂T_x used for photolysis in recent years are summarized below (Table 1).

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ plays a significant role in HER, whether as a co-catalyst or as a part of the overall catalyst, as it greatly improves the performance of the base catalyst. As shown in Table 1, the presence of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ increases the yield of H_2 compared to solely the base catalyst by more than 2 times. The quantum efficiency is also significantly improved to 40.1%, whilst the maximum value of hydrogen production is 14.34 mmol g^{-1} h⁻¹.

Monolayer $Ti_3C_2T_x$ or quantum dot $Ti_3C_2T_x$ displays better activity in HER. However, the use of monolayer $Ti_3C_2T_x$ as a photocatalyst has several disadvantages: (a) the preparation of monolayer $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is complex; (b) the structural stability is low and the catalyst is easily oxidized in water; (c) manipulation of the mono-layer or few-layer structures is not easy to carry out. Few-layer structures are presently prepared by electrostatic selfassembly or by *in situ* growth. The stability of the composite catalyst obtained by *in situ* growth is significantly greater than that obtained by electrostatic self-assembly.

Due to the surface hydrophilic groups,⁷⁰ suitable Gibbs adsorption free energies $|\Delta G_{H^*}|$, and excellent electron transfer efficiency, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ not only plays an important role in the three-step process of HER but can participate in electron hole separation.

Xiao *et al.* successfully synthesized the Schottky junction of 1D CdS nanorod/2D Ti_3C_2 MXene nanosheet in 2019.⁵² As shown in Fig. 5, Xiao *et al.* anchored Cd²⁺ using the deficiency of Ti on the Ti_3C_2 surface and the electrostatic interaction of free Cd²⁺ to prepare the 1D CdS nanorods. The composite material demonstrated excellent hydrogen production performance



Scheme 1 Formation of Schottky barrier at the MXene/TiO₂ interface.⁴⁵

(2407 μ mol h⁻¹ g_{catalyst}⁻¹), producing 6.68 times as much H₂ as pure CdS (Fig. 6).

Theoretically, the surface negative value (zeta potential value: ~18 mV) of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is sufficient to adsorb positively charged Cd^{2+} . $Ti_3C_2T_x$ treated with DMSO forms a low-layered structure, on which Cd^{2+} can be anchored and one-dimensional CdS nanorods can be grown. As shown in Fig. 5, due to the constraint effect of $Ti_3C_2T_x$, the length of 1D CdS nanorods in the 1D CdS nanorods/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x$ heterojunctions is smaller than that of the 1D CdS nanorods alone.

CdS equipped with $Ti_3C_2T_x$ displays excellent electrochemical properties. As shown in Fig. 7, the photocurrent of 1D CdS nanorods/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x$ was significantly better than that of onedimensional CdS nanorods and the optical resistance was significantly lower than that of one-dimensional CdS nanorods. ESR tests show that the hydroxyl radical and superoxide radical signals of 1D CdS nanorods/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x$ were significantly enhanced after the addition of $Ti_3C_2T_x$. In conclusion, under the same illumination conditions, 1D CdS nanorods/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x$ generate more photogenic carriers. These produce oxygen-containing



Fig. 8 SEM images of (a) TiO₂ (50 wt%), (d) Ti₃C₂T_x, (b) TiO₂/Ti₃C₂T_x (5 wt%), and (c) TiO₂/Ti₃C₂T_x.⁴⁵



groups with oxidizing reductivity, which can participate in photo-

catalytic hydrogenation reactions. 1D CdS nanorods/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x$ typically exhibit better visible light response, electron hole separation efficiency, and more effective carrier transport efficiency after the formation of multi-dimensional heterojunctions. This accounts for their excellent photocatalytic hydrogen evolution capability.

Using Ti₃C₂T_x as the co-catalyst, Wang *et al.* synthesized a TiO₂/Ti₃C₂T_x complex photocatalyst,⁴⁵ which was 4 times more efficient than pure phase TiO₂ in photohydrolyzing aquatic hydrogen. This is attributed to the Schottky barrier formed between TiO₂ and Ti₃C₂T_x, which effectively improves the separation efficiency of the electron holes. As shown in Scheme 1, excited electrons can be wired to Ti₃C₂T_x from the conduction band of TiO₂ owing to the close contact between Ti₃C₂T_x and Ti₃C₂T_x and a depletion layer formed at the metal–semiconductor interface, which is the Schottky barrier.⁴⁵

In this work, Wang *et al.* treated $Ti_3C_2T_x$ with DMSO to form low-layer structures. Amorphous TiO_2 was formed from $TiCl_4$ hydrolysis and then on the surface of $Ti_3C_2T_x$, amorphous TiO_2 was coated. After hydrothermal treatment, anatase $TiO_2/Ti_3C_2T_x$ material was formed, as shown in Fig. 8. Amorphous TiO_2 is micro-spherical and is coated on the surface of $Ti_3C_2T_x$, displaying



a low-layered structure (Fig. 8). After water heat treatment, the whole structure forms into a brittle cake structure (Fig. 9).

The TiO₂/Ti₃C₂T_x material displays excellent photocatalytic hydrogen evolution capability with good cycling stability. The hydrogen production efficiency of TiO₂/Ti₃C₂T_x5% is about 4 times as high as



Fig. 10 (a) PL spectra and (b) DRS spectra of TiO_2 , $TiO_2/Ti_3C_2T_x$ (5 wt%), $TiO_2/Ti_3C_2T_x$ (10 wt%), and $TiO_2/Ti_3C_2T_x$ (50 wt%).⁴⁵

Fig. 9



that of pure phase TiO₂, reaching 17.8 μ mol h⁻¹ g_{catalyst}⁻¹. The hydrogen production efficiency of the 10% and 50% samples decreased slightly, which may be related to light energy absorption, as shown in Fig. 10(a). With the increase in Ti₃C₂T_x addition, the light absorption capacity of the samples in the 250–380 nm region is gradually decreased. This significant improvement in the hydrogen production efficiency is closely related to the smooth carriage of Ti₃C₂T_x. As shown in Fig. 10(b), after the formation of the Schottky barrier, the carrier separation efficiency is improved, thus improving its photocatalytic capacity.

Thus, in conclusion, after loading with $Ti_3C_2T_x$, H_2 production increased at least twice. Such an amazing promotion is mainly related with 3 aspects of $Ti_3C_2T_x$: (a) it supplies a high throughput channel as a co-catalyst for the excited electrons while the holes cannot pass the boundaries; (b) its hydrophilcity; and (c) the Gibbs free energy of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ adsorption on hydrogen approaches zero infinitely.

3.2 Application in CO₂RR

The photocatalytic CO_2 reduction reaction (CO_2RR) consists of five steps:^{71–74} light absorption, charge separation, CO_2 adsorption, surface redox reaction, and product desorption. As shown in Fig. 11, when the CB of the photocatalyst is greater than the redox potential of CO_2 , and charge separation occurs whilst the electrons and holes recombine. Several complex factors dictate which of these two competing processes predominantly occurs. After the adsorption of CO_2 and the migration of photogenerated electrons and holes from the inside of the crystal structure to the

surface, the redox reaction is carried out on the surface of the catalyst. The product then de-attaches, which completes the entire photocatalytic CO_2 reduction reaction.

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is also widely used in the photocatalytic CO_2 reduction reaction. However, due to its own carbon source and instability, further research is needed to understand the mechanism of photocatalytic CO_2 reduction of $Ti_3C_2T_x$.

In 2017, Zhang *et al.* summarized the CO₂ reduction capacity of three MXene materials with surface groups, which terminate with –O through theoretical calculations.⁷⁵ Among the three materials, Ti₂CO₂, V₂CO₂, and Ti₃C₂O₂, Ti₂CO₂ showed the best photocatalytic CO₂ reduction capacity. Of the two reduction paths^{76–78} shown in Fig. 12, the pathway of "CO₂–HCOO– HCOOH" has a favorable energy barrier of about 0.53 eV.

Through DFT calculations, it was revealed that in the first step reaction of CO_2 adsorption in CO_2RR , the O atom of the CO_2 molecule occupies an O defect position on the MXene. This mode in adsorption requires the lowest energy. The adsorption energies of the three materials were $Ti_3C_2O_2$ (-0.73 eV), Ti_2CO_2 (-0.67 eV), and V_2CO_2 (-0.35 eV). Ti_2CO_2 has a lower adsorption energy compared to V_2CO_2 as the Ti atoms are more likely to lose electrons than the V atoms.

If the reaction proceeds *via* pathway 1 (Fig. 11), one of the oxygen atoms of the CO_2 molecule is captured by the oxygen defect. This results in the breaking of the C–O bond, while CO is produced. In this step, $Ti_3C_2O_2$ would lower the energy barrier of the C–O bond to about 0.86 eV. Pathway 2 (Fig. 11) has an energy barrier greater than 1 eV. In this pathway, the CO_2 molecules are captured by an oxygen defect on the surface of MXene and are hydrogenated to form COOH. This is further hydrogenated and converted into the products CO and H_2O . CO, which is produced, can further react to form HCOOH, HCOH, CH_2OH , CH_4 , and other products.

Studies into the application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in CO_2RR is summarized in Table 2.

In 2018, Cao *et al.* prepared a 2D/2D heterogeneous junction of $Ti_3C_2T_x/Bi_2WO_6$ and the composite showed excellent photocatalytic CO₂ reduction performance.⁸² As shown in Fig. 13,

Table 2 Compari	son of photocatalysts ir	ncluding $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in	CO ₂ RR					
Photocatalyst	Products and yield $(\mu mol g^{-1} h^{-1})$	Activity improvement factor	Reaction conditions	Light source	Preparation method	Morphology	Monolayer or Multilayer	Year Ref.
2D/2D Ti ₃ C ₂ MXene/g-C ₃ N ₄ nanosheet	$\begin{array}{c} \text{CO} (5.19) \\ \text{CH}_4 (0.044) \end{array}$	8.37 (CO) 2.09 (CH ₄)	20 mg catalyst gas–solid	$300 \text{ W Xe} \\ \text{lamp} \\ (\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	Calcination under N ₂ atmosphere	2D/2D nanosheets	Monolayer	2020 79
Alklinized Ti ₃ C ₂ / decorating g-C ₃ N ₄	CO (11.21 μ mol g ⁻¹) CH ₄ (0.044 μ mol g ⁻¹)	5.96 (CO) 5.6 (CH ₄)	40 mg catalyst gas–solid	300 W Xe lamp $(\lambda > 420 \text{ nm})$	Alkali etching	3D	Multilayer	2019 80
TiO_2/Ti_3C_2	$CO \\ CH_4 (0.22)$		50 mg catalyst liquid– solid	300 W Xe lamp	Calcination	Nanoparticles	Multilayer	2018 81
2D/2D ultrathin Ti ₃ C ₂ /Bi ₂ WO ₆	CO CH ₄ (1.78) CH ₂ OH (0.44)	4.34 (CH ₄) 6.28 (CH ₃ OH)	100 mg catalyst liquid– solid	Xe lamp	Hydrothermal	Flat shape 2D structure	Monolayer	2018 82
2D/2D/0D TiO ₂ / C ₃ N ₄ /Ti ₃ C ₂	CO(4.39) $CH_4(1.20)$	1.39 (CO) (than TiO ₂ /C ₃ N ₄)	30 mg catalyst liquid–solid	300 W Xe lamp	Electrostatic self-assembly	2D/2D structure	Ti_3C_2 quan- tum dots	2020 83



Fig. 13 (a-c) Typical FESEM, AFM images, and height cutaway view of Bi_2WO_6 , (d-f) Ti_3C_2 nanosheets, (g-i) TB2 ($Ti_3C_2T_x/Bi_2WO_6$), and (j) schematic illustration of the synthetic process.⁸²

multi-layer structure $Ti_3C_2T_x$ was tested with DMSO. After the formation of low-layer structure $Ti_3C_2T_x$, the oxygen-rich surface was negatively charged, which permitted Bi^{3+} to be adsorbed from hydrolyzed $Bi(NO_3)_{35}5H_2O.^{84}$ After the addition of a tungsten source, a 2D/2D $Ti_3C_2T_x/Bi_2WO_6$ heterojunction was

formed. The concurrent addition of CTAB furthermore ensures the ultrathin structure of both ${\rm Bi_2WO_6}^{85}$ and ${\rm Ti_3C_2T_x}^{86}$

The successful preparation of heterojunctions greatly enhances the ability of Bi_2WO_6 to reduce CO_2 . The CH_4 production of the sample TB2 reached 1.78 μ mol h⁻¹ g⁻¹, while



Fig. 14 (a) Photocatalytic activity of TB0 to TB5; (b) GC-MS spectra over TB2 after irradiation for several hours with different carbon sources; (c) GC-MS analysis of the reaction products with ¹²C and ¹³C as carbon sources.⁸²



Fig. 15 (a) UV-Vis DRS of all the as-prepared samples; (b) TRPL spectra of TB0 and TB2; (c) EIS plots and (d) transient photocurrent of the prepared samples.⁸²

the yield of CH₃OH reached 0.44 μ mol h⁻¹ g⁻¹. The isotopic spectra of Fig. 14(b) and (c) indicates that the produced CH₄ and CH₃OH are formed from the photocatalytic reduction of CO₂.

As shown in Fig. 15(a), $Ti_3C_2T_x$ exhibits excellent light absorption performance between 200–800 nm. The light absorption capacity of Bi_2WO_6 was also significantly improved by carrying $Ti_3C_2T_x$. To be noted, as shown in Fig. 14(b), the fluorescence lifetime decreased after loading with $Ti_3C_2T_x$. This is because TC supplies a more efficient non-radiative decay pathway. In electrochemical tests, the photocurrent photoelectric impedance spectrum further revealed that the carriage of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ greatly promoted the carrier strength of Bi_2WO_6 . This further confirmed the successful construction of the $Ti_3C_2T_x/Bi_2WO_6$ heterojunction.



Fig. 16 FESEM images of UCN (a) and 10TC (b) samples, AFM images and the corresponding height profiles of UCN (c and e), 10TC (d and f) samples, and (g) schematic illustration for the fabrication process.⁷⁹

Yang *et al.* prepared 2D/2D Ti₃C₂ MXene/g-C₃N₄ heterojunctions in 2020.⁷⁹ As shown in Fig. 16(g), Ti₃AlC₂ was successfully etched to form Ti₃C₂, as indicated by the XRD patterns.^{87,88} 2D g-C₃N₄ was found to grow on the surface of Ti₃C₂ under an atmosphere of N₂. The formed 2D/2D Ti₃C₂ MXene/g-C₃N₄ demonstrated excellent photocatalytic CO₂ reduction capability. As shown in Fig. 17, the photocatalytic performance of pure phase g-C₃N₄ for the production of CO and CH₄ is only 0.62 µmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹ and 0.021 µmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹, respectively, in contrast to Ti₃C₂, wherein the production of CO and CH₄ is 5.19 µmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹, 0.044 µmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹, respectively. The isotopic experiments confirm that the product is produced by the photocatalytic reduction of CO₂.

The tests of PL and TRPL showed that the composite rate of electron holes^{45,89} decreased significantly after carrying Ti₃C₂. As shown in Fig. 18(b), the fitted pure phase C_3N_4 had a lifetime of only 4.14 ns, while 10TC had a lifetime of 4.51 ns, which represents a significant increase in the lifetime of the carriers. This is closely related to the smooth carrying of Ti₃C₂. An excellent "storage capacitor" is produced when Ti₃C₂ forms a heterojunction with g-C₃N₄. When the electrons are transmitted to the semiconductor surface, they transfer to Ti₃C₂ quickly while the holes cannot. This greatly reduces the electron hole composite and improves the photocatalytic performance of the material. On the other hand, abundant defects on the Ti₃C₂ surface provide excellent sites for CO₂ adsorption.

In conclusion, the application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in CO_2RR is relatively less than that of photocatalytic water splitting. This is because of its instability and its own carbon resources, which can cause interferences during the photocatalytic CO_2 reduction reaction. As shown in Table 2, among limited reports, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ with both single-layered structures and multi-layered structures shows an obvious production promotion. It is to be noted that there are no new products (such as C_2 products, formaldehyde, and methyl ether) after loading with $Ti_3C_2T_x$ compared to the base photocatalyst. This phenomenon confirms that $Ti_3C_2T_x$ cannot change the energy barrier of the base photocatalyst for CO_2 reduction. Thus, in general, the obvious promotion during CO_2RR may be related to the two features of $Ti_3C_2T_x$: (a) abundant surface vacancies for CO_2 adsorption and (b) promoting the separation of carriers.

3.3 Applications in degradation

The main principle of photocatalytic degradation by photocatalytic semiconductor materials is that light stimulates the generation of oxidizing holes.^{90–93} These can oxidize dissolved oxygen into efficient oxygen-active species such as superoxide radicals ($^{\circ}O_2^{-}$), singlet oxygen ($^{\circ}O$), and hydroxyl radicals ($^{\circ}OH$). These species can directly oxidize the substrate.^{94–96} Ti₃C₂ has a wealth of surface groups and active sites, which are conducive for the adsorption of substrates. Accordingly, Ti₃C₂ has been of particular interest as a photoactive degradation catalyst. A summary of the previous studies investigating the application of Ti₃C₂ in photocatalytic degradation reactions is shown in Table 3.



Fig. 17 Photocatalytic CO₂ reduction performance of the as-prepared samples (a); cycling tests over the 10TC sample (b); GC-MS analysis of the products from the photoreduction of CO₂ over 10TC using labelled 12 CO₂ and 13 CO₂ as the carbon sources (c and d).⁷⁹

In 2018, Cai *et al.* produced a Ag_3PO_4/Ti_3C_2 composite photocatalyst, which possessed excellent photocatalytic degradation performance.⁸⁷

As shown in Fig. 19, after DMSO and sonication treatment, Ti_3C_2 with a low-layer structure was formed. After the addition of silver nitrate, Ag^+ was adsorbed due to the negative charge on the surface of Ti_3C_2 . Ag_3PO_4 nanoparticles were grown *in situ*, forming a heterojunction between the Ag_3PO_4 nanoparticles and the Ti_3C_2 nanosheets.

As shown in Fig. 20, the heterojunction of the Ag_3PO_4 nanoparticles/Ti₃C₂ nanosheets shows a photocatalytic degradation stage rate K of 0.094, 0.005, 0.32, and 0.0042 min⁻¹ for methyl orange (MO), 2,4-dinitrophenol (2,4-DNP), tetracycline (TC-H), thiamphenicol (TPL), and chloramphenicol (CPL), respectively. According to EPR analysis, the hydroxyl radical (•OH) plays an important role in the oxidation system, as shown in Fig. 20(f). This may be related to abundant Ti defects on the Ti₃C₂ surface. Ti sites exposed on the surface of Ti₃C₂ have strong redox reactivity, which promotes multiple electron reduction reactions (O₂ \rightarrow H₂O₂ \rightarrow •OH).

As shown in Fig. 21, PL, TRPL, and the electrochemical characterization spectra indicate that the carrier separation efficiency of the material is significantly improved after carrying Ti_3C_2 . This may be attributed to (i) the abundant surface hydrophilic functional groups of the Ti_3C_2 construct, which have strong interfacial contact with Ag_3PO_4 , facilitating the separation

of carriers; (ii) the strong redox reactivity of the surface Ti sites, which promote multiple electron reduction reactions to induce more $^{\circ}$ OH production; and (iii) a Schottky junction formed at the Ag₃PO₄/Ti₃C₂ interface enabling efficient transfer electrons to the Ti₃C₂ surface. This inhibits the photocossion of Ag₃PO₄ caused by photogeneration electrons.

Under high temperature conditions, Ti in the Ti_3C_2 skeleton layer is oxidized into TiO_2 , while C still exists in the form of a graphene-like layer. Therefore, under high temperature conditions, Ti_3C_2 can be converted into amorphous TiO_2 anchored within the graphene-like layer. In 2020, Wu *et al.* took advantage of this material, which displayed excellent photocatalytic degradation performance.¹⁰⁵

As shown in Fig. 22(e) and (f), high temperature treated Ti_3C_2 still retains its morphology and a 3D block-shaped morphology is formed after carrying g-C₃N₄ (Fig. 23).

Graphene layers anchored to TiO₂/g-C₃N₄ show first-order kinetic constants for the degradation of rhodamine B (RhB), tetracycline (TC), ciprofloxacin (CIP), and bisphenol A (BPA) of 0.0559, 0.0244, 0.0168, and 0.0194 min⁻¹, respectively. According to the EPR test results (Fig. 24(a)-(d)), the oxygen active species that play a role in the oxidation process mainly include $^{\circ}O_2^{-}$ and $^{\circ}OH$. Furthermore, signals corresponding to the holes (h⁺) were also detected. The contribution to the degradation of these test molecules appears to be in the order of $^{\circ}O_2^{-} > h^+ > ^{\circ}OH$.





Fig. 18 PL spectra, EIS, and TPR plots of UCN, Ti₃C₂, and 10TC samples (a, c, and d); TR-PL spectra of UCN and 10TC (b).⁷⁹

High-temperature treated Ti_3C_2 has a greatly enhanced light absorption capacity, whilst the carrier separation efficiency and transmission efficiency are also improved. The improvement of the photocurrent (Fig. 24(e) and (f)) also verified that the graphene layers anchoring TiO_2 lead to the formation of a heterogeneous junction. This is due to the change in the electric field between g- C_3N_4 .

In conclusion, as a co-catalyst, the application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalytic degradation is mainly due to its three characteristics: (a) in a liquid–solid phase reaction, its hydrophilicity makes it easy for the adsorption or contact between the pollutants and photocatalysts; (b) high throughput electron transfer makes it easier to generate concentrated holes (h⁺); and (c) Ti sites exposed on the surface of Ti_3C_2 have strong redox reactivity, which promotes multiple electron reduction reactions, such as the reaction of activating molecular oxygen ($O_2 \rightarrow H_2O_2 \rightarrow \bullet OH$).

4. Challenges

The application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalysis is worthy of further investigation, despite the many problems that need to be solved. The main issue lies in the instability of the composite material, resulting in unstable photocatalytic performance. This contributes to the difficulty in determining the photocatalytic process mechanisms of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ -based photocatalysts. Many of the existing solutions use either few- or single-layer structured materials. However, the preparation process of these is complex. Despite this, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ has an excellent optical response ability and displays broad catalytic activity.

5. Summary and outlook

5.1 Summary

In recent years, $Ti_3C_2T_x$ has attracted wide interest as a photocatalytic material due to its rich surface space and surface defects, hydrophilic properties, large interlayer spacing, and excellent microwave absorbing properties. $Ti_3C_2T_x$ -based photocatalysts are widely used in hydrogen evolution reactions (HER), CO_2 reduction reactions (CO_2RR), photocatalytic degradation reactions, and show excellent catalytic performance. The application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalysis still warrants further investigation.

The further application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalysis depends on the development of the material itself. Methods to improve the stability of the $Ti_3C_2T_x$ structure need to be explored, starting from synthetic methods. In addition, the rich groups on the surface of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ and its hydrophilicity should be further explored, particularly in photocatalytic liquid phase reactions.

5.2 Outlook

5.2.1 Mechanism. During the photocatalytic reaction, especially the reaction including liquid phase, the mechanism

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Table 3 Application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalytic degradation reactions

-								
Photocatalyst	Substrate of degradation	Removal rate constants (m	(%)/rate in ⁻¹) Reaction conditions	Light O source sp	tygenic ecies	Morphology or	onolayer multilayer Year	Ref.
$\mathrm{Ag}_3\mathrm{PO}_4/\mathrm{Ti}_3\mathrm{C}_2$	Methyl orange (MO)	(rate constan (MO)	ts) 0.094 20 mg catalyst + 50 mL 20 mg L^{-1} substrate, 30 min dark adsorption	$\begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$	(main)	2D Ti ₃ C ₂ /Ag ₃ PO ₄ particles M	onolayer 2018	87
	2,4-Dinitrophenol (2,4-D) Tetracycline hydrochlori (TC-H)	NP) 2,4-DNP (0.00 de TC-H (0.32)	J5)	•	H			
	Thiamphenicol (TPL) Chloramphenicol (CPL)	TPL (0.0042) CPL (0.025)						
Ti ₃ C ₂ /SrTiO ₃ composites	UO_{2}^{2+}	(Removal rat	 20 mg catalyst + 60 mL 50 ppm sub- strate, 8 hours dark adsorption 	300 W Xe •C lamp $(\lambda = 320 - 2500 \text{ nm})$	Н	2D Ti ₃ C ₂ /SrTiO ₃ particles M	ultilayer 2019	97
Ti ₃ C ₂ -OH/Bi ₂ WO ₆ composites	Rhodamine B (Rate const	77% in 180 n ants) 0.0596 10 mg	nin catalyst + 50 mL 2×10^{-5} 300 V	$\frac{1}{N} \text{ Xe lamp } (\lambda = 0.000)$	h^+	Porous spherical structure	TI ₃ C ₂ -OF	2019 98
MoS2@Ti3C2 Nanohybrid	Liquid paraf- (Rate const fin (LP)	ants) 0.0476 A description and 2.0 g or 1.0 g or 1	vition substrates, 30 mm uaix, 400- vition in amount of sample + 1000 of deionized water and press of LP + 10 mL dichlor- lamp	W high- sure mercury		MoS_2 nanosheets/ Ti_3C_2 sheet	s Multilaye	r 2019 99
$0\mathrm{D}/\mathrm{2D}\ \mathrm{Bi}_3\mathrm{TaO}/\mathrm{Ti}_3\mathrm{C}_2$	Methylene blue	nacun reagen (Rate constants) 0.032	t, 30 min dark adsorption 50 mg catalyst + 100 300 W Xe mL 10 mg L^{-1} ($\lambda > 420$ 1 20 Mg transform	lamp •OH mi)	Bi ₃ . nan	taO7 nanoparticles/Ti ₃ C ₂ osheets	Multilayer	2020 100
2D/2D Ti ₃ C ₂ /Porous g-C ₃ N ₄	Phenol	(Rate constants) 0.022	dark adsorption 20 mg catalyst + 50 500 W Xe mL 10 mg L^{-1} ($\lambda > 400 t$	lamp im)	2D/	2D Ti ₃ C ₂ /PCN nanocomposite	Multilayer with ultra- sonication	2020 101
CdS@Ti ₃ C ₂ @TiO ₂	Sulfachloropyridazine (SCP)	(Removal rate) SCP (about 95% in 60 min)	Substrate, 30 min dark adsorption 50 mg catalyst + 200 Light inter mL 20 mg L^{-1} 300 mW ci	$\operatorname{nsity}_{n^{-2}(\lambda)} \cdot \operatorname{O}_{2}^{-n}$	CdS	i nanoparticles/Ti ₃ C ₂ @TiO ₂ k	Bulk Ti ₃ C ₂ @TiO ₂	2019 102
	Metnylene blue (MB) Rhodamine B (RhB) Phenol	MB (about 80% IN 60 min) RhB (about 99% in 60 min) Phenol (about 50% in 60 min)	substrate, 30 min dark adsorption					
$(111) TiO_{2-x}/Ti_3C_2$	Mmethylene blue (MB)	(Removal rate) MB	10 mg catalyst + 200 500 W Xe m $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$ $^{-1}$	lamp •OH (m	ain) TiO	2 nanoparticles/Ti ₃ C ₂ ocheete	Multilayer	2017 103
(001) TiO ₂ /Ti ₃ C ₂	Methyl orange (MO)	(Rate constants) 0.018	10 mg catagyst + 200 300 W Xe M 20 mg L $^{-1}$ sub- mL 20 mg L $^{-1}$ sub- strate, 60 min dark adsorption	lamp •OH (m.	ain) TiO nar nar	osheets osheets	Multilayer	2016 104

Table 3 (continued)							
Photocatalyst	Substrate of degradation	Removal rat constants (n	e (%)/rate Light nin ⁻¹) Reaction conditions source	Oxyger species	nic s Morphology	Monolayer or multilayer Yea	r Ref.
Graphene layers anchored TiO ₂ , g-C ₃ N ₄	Rhodamine B (RhB)	(Rate constants) 0.0559 (RhB)	$\begin{array}{l} 10 \mbox{ mg catalyst} + 200 \ 300 \ W \ Xe \ lamp \\ mL \ (RhB \ 20 \ mg \ L^{-1}, \ (\lambda > 400 \ mm) \\ TC \ 10 \ mg \ L^{-1}, \ CIP \ 3 \\ mg \ L^{-1}, \ BPA \ 5 \ mg \\ L^{-1}, \ BPA \ 5 \ mg \\ L^{-1}, \ 60 \ mn \ dark \end{array}$	НО	3D bulk	Bulk Ti ₃ C ₂ @TiO ₂	2020 105
	Tetracycline (TC) Ciprofloxacin (CIP) Bisphenol A (BPA)	0.0244 (TC) 0.0168 (CIP) 0.0194 (BPA)		n+2			
2D/2D Ti ₃ C ₂ /MoS ₂	Methylene orange (MO)	(Rate constants) 0.00836	50 mg catalyst + 50 400 W metal mL 20, 30, 50 mg halide lamp L^{-1} substrate, 30 min dark adsorption, 60 min dark adsorption	+ c	Flower-like nanosphere	Multilayer	2020 106
$lpha ext{Fe}_2 O_3/ ext{ZnFe}_2 O_4 \widehat{\otimes} ext{Ti}_3 C_2$	Rhodamine B (RhB)	(Rate constants) 0.02686 (RhB) (Removal rate)	20 mg catalyst + 100 300 W Xe lamp mL 10 mg L ⁻¹ sub- $(\lambda > 400 \text{ nm})$ strate, 30 min dark adsorption	01^{-1}	∞-Fe₂O₃/ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles. Ti₃C₂ nanosheets	Multilayer	2019 107
	Cr(vi)	Cr(vı) Light off: about 70% in 90 min Light on: about 90% in 90 min		HO,			

1586 | Mater. Adv., 2021, 2, 1570-1594

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Review



Fig. 19 TEM images of (a) bulk Ti_3C_2 , (b) single Ti_3C_2 sheet, (c) Ag_3PO_4/Ti_3C_2 composite. (d) EDX spectra of the Ag_3PO_4/Ti_3C_2 composite and (e) the schematic representation of single 2D Ti_3C_2 sheets and Ag_3PO_4/Ti_3C_2 synthesis.⁸⁷

needs to be explored. As is known to all, the structure of pure $Ti_{3}C_{2}T_{x}$ is not stable in both air and water. In air, the freshetched surface groups (such as –OH and –F) can be replaced by oxygen termination after being exposed to air for a period of time; in water, $Ti_{3}C_{2}T_{x}$ can even be oxidized after being replaced for 21 days in room temperature.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it needs to be explored more whether the structure of $Ti_{3}C_{2}T_{x}$ is changed during the photocatalytic reaction and if it does, how it changes.

During photocatalytic CO_2RR , although both monolayerstructured and multilayer-structured $Ti_3C_2T_x$ exhibit high performance, isotope detection shows that some carbon resources come from CO_2 molecular; thus, there are still some ambiguities and other possibilities. For example, the valence state of "C" in $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is mostly "-4", which makes it possible for CO_2 to react with $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in order to form the CO as product; this pathway involves redox reaction rather than catalysis.

This, in all, the mechanism needs to be explored more, both during the photocatalytic reaction and the oxidation of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ itself.



Fig. 20 Photocatalytic degradation of various pollutants by the as-prepared catalysts. (a) CPL, (b) TPL, and (c) TC-H degradation efficiency in the presence of the as-prepared catalysts under visible light irradiation ($\lambda > 420$ nm). HPLC chromatogram of (d) CPL and (e) TPL under different degradation times using the as-prepared catalysts. (f) UV-vis absorption spectra of TC-H under different degradation times using different catalysts.⁸⁷



Fig. 21 UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra (a), PL spectra (b), time-resolved PL decay spectra (c), EIS Nyquist plots (d), transient photocurrent responses (e) of the as-prepared catalysts, and DMPO spin-trapping ESR spectra for DMPO- $^{\circ}$ OH in the Ag₃PO₄/Ti₃C₂ system in the presence or absence of HA.⁸⁷

5.2.2 Development direction. The application of $Ti_3C_2T_x$ in photocatalysis is meaningful not just because it obviously promotes the reaction but also due to its applications in other

new two-dimensional materials. For further applications, the following directions are necessary: to explore new methods of preparation to get structurally-stable $Ti_3C_2T_x$; to explore easier



Fig. 22 SEM images of C_3N_4 (a and b), Ti_3C_2 (c and d), heated Ti_3C_2 (e and f), and graphene layers anchored $TiO_2/g-C_3N_4$ (g and h).¹⁰⁵



Fig. 23 The photocatalytic degradation performance of TC (a), CIP (b), BPA (c), and RhB (d) by photocatalysts under visible light irradiation.¹⁰⁵

methods of preparation to get monolayered $Ti_3C_2T_x$; to explore more effective combination between $Ti_3C_2T_x$ and the base photocatalyst; to explore methods of regulating the surface groups and interlayer groups; to explore other application in the MXene family; to explore the mechanism.

 $Ti_3C_2T_x$ is the earliest material in the MXene family; thus, the improvement of its application in photocatalysis represents a great significance for the application of the whole family.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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Fig. 24 Trapping experiment for the photocatalytic degradation of TC over GTOCN3 (a); ESR spectra of CNTOC3 for (b) DMPO $-^{\circ}O_2^{-}$, (c) TEMPO $-h^+$, (d) DMPO $-^{\circ}OH$ in the dark and under visible light irradiation, *I*–*T* curves under visible light irradiation (e) and the EIS response (f) of the samples.¹⁰⁵

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