

Short communication

Non-covalent immobilization of chiral copper complexes on Al-MCM41: Effect of the nature of the ligand



Robert A. Feldman, José M. Fraile *

Instituto de Síntesis Química y Catálisis Homogénea (ISQCH), Facultad de Ciencias, C.S.I.C. - Universidad de Zaragoza, E-50009Zaragoza, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 April 2016

Received in revised form 20 May 2016

Accepted 21 May 2016

Available online 24 May 2016

Keywords:

Asymmetric catalysis
Immobilized catalysts
Mesoporous materials
Bis(oxazolines)
Copper
Cyclopropanation

ABSTRACT

Cu-Al-MCM41, prepared by deposition of copper(II) triflate with incipient wetness impregnation and thermal treatment under air flow, can be modified with different chiral ligands of the bis(oxazoline) family. The efficiency of the supported chiral catalysts in the enantioselective cyclopropanation of styrenes with ethyl diazoacetate depends on the nature of the ligand. The azabis(oxazolines) perform much better than the bis(oxazolines) and give stable catalysts that can be used for at least five consecutive runs, with productivities that can reach values close to 1000 molecules of cyclopropane per copper site. The best enantioselectivities obtained with these catalysts are in the range of 60–70% ee in the reaction at 90 °C.

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1. Introduction

The immobilization of chiral catalysts on solid supports is a way to combine the activity and selectivity advantages of homogeneous chiral catalysts with benefits associated with having an additional phase [1], however, the practical advantages in the catalytic process need to be sufficiently high in order to compensate the costs associated to the immobilization process [2]. A consideration with the covalent immobilization of chiral ligands is that it can require additional functionalization but this is not the case with non-covalent immobilization methods [3], when the essence is to have simple preparation procedures that utilize the same ligand used in homogeneous catalysis. The electrostatic interaction between the support and the catalytic complex is an ideal immobilization method, as it is held together with the strongest type of interactions, and its potential has been demonstrated in a good number of examples using different supports, such as organic polymers [3,4] or clays [3,5].

Silica based mesoporous materials with isomorphous substitutions in the framework are described to interact electrostatically with cationic chiral complexes [3,6].

Chiral bis(oxazoline) ligands have been widely used in homogeneous catalysis [7], in many cases in the form of cationic complexes, and this permits them to be immobilized through electrostatic interactions. A rich body of literature describes work with supports such as clays [8–10] and nafion-silica composites [11], and a few examples

with ordered mesoporous materials [12–16]. In our previous work, we compared different approaches to the electrostatic immobilization of bis(oxazoline)-copper complexes on Al-MCM41, and found that a direct cationic exchange is not easy to accomplish, and that an incipient wetness impregnation method leads to better results in the cyclopropanation reaction of styrene with ethyl diazoacetate [17]. A higher enantioselectivity and recoverability was obtained with a different approach to immobilizing the copper centres on the support, that utilized a three-step immobilization method, consisting of a first impregnation with copper(II) triflate, subsequent thermal treatment of the solid and final modification with the chiral ligand [18]. In this paper we demonstrate how this methodology performs with different bis(oxazoline) and azabis(oxazoline) [19] ligands (Fig. 1).

2. Experimental

2.1. Preparation of the catalysts

Al-MCM41 (Si/Al = 10) was prepared from sodium aluminate and fumed silica in a basic medium with cetyl trimethyl ammonium as the template and 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene added to expand the pore size [20]. As previously described [18], Al-MCM41 (500 mg) was added to a solution of copper(II) triflate (42 mg, 0.1 mmol) in 600 μ L of methanol and the container was shaken to ensure that the solution was evenly distributed. This material was then calcined (1 °C/min heating until 450 °C, maintained for 4 h) under a 100 mL/min flow of air to obtain what we designate “Cu-Al-MCM41”.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jmfraile@unizar.es (J.M. Fraile).

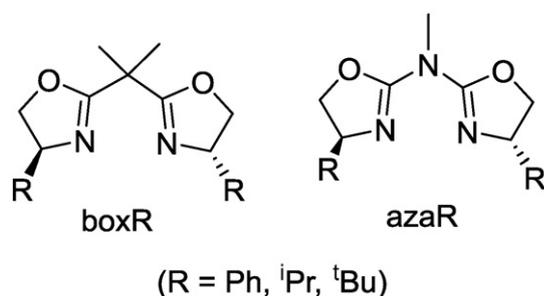


Fig. 1. Ligands used in this work.

Cu-Al-MCM41 (500 mg, 0.1 mmol Cu) was added to a solution of the corresponding chiral ligand (0.2 mmol) in 600 μ L of dichloromethane, the container was shaken to ensure that the ligand was evenly distributed, and this supported complex was then immediately used as a catalyst.

2.2. Catalytic tests

2.2.1. Homogeneous cyclopropanation

At room temperature, EDA (2.5 mmol, 285 mg) dissolved in dichloromethane (0.5 mL) was added over the course of 2 h with a syringe pump to a solution containing the copper catalyst (0.025 mmol), n-decane (100 mg) and alkene (styrene or α -methyl styrene, 2 mL). After the addition, the reaction was left to stir for 30 min and then analyzed for the reaction yield and selectivity by CG.

2.2.2. Heterogeneous cyclopropanation

The supported catalyst (100 mg, 0.02 mmol Cu) was suspended in the alkene (styrene or α -methyl styrene, 2 mL) with n-decane (100 mg) and the mixture was heated at 90 $^{\circ}$ C. EDA (2.5 mmol, 285 mg) dissolved in dichloromethane (0.5 mL) was added over the course of 15 min with a syringe pump. After the addition, the catalyst was separated by centrifugation, the products were analyzed by GC, and the next reaction was performed by immediately re-suspending the catalyst in the alkene.

3. Results and discussion

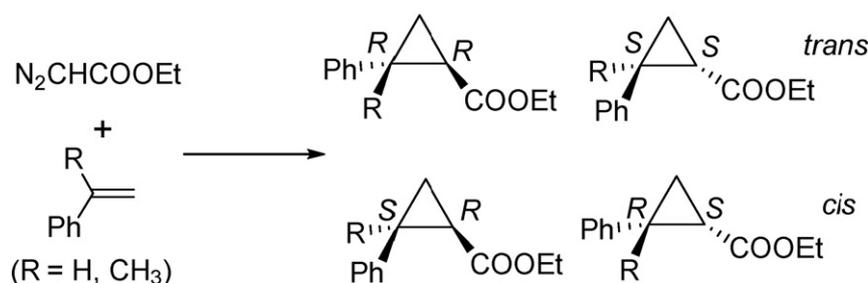
The Cu-Al-MCM41 catalyst was prepared following the conditions described in our most recent paper [18]. The chosen support was an Al-MCM41 with a Si/Al molar ratio of 10, and with expanded porosity obtained by introduction of 1,3,5-trimethylbenzene as co-template, to yield a solid characterized to have an internal volume of 1.2 mL/g, BET surface area of 628 m²/g, and BJH pore diameter of 92 Å . Copper was introduced by incipient wetness impregnation of Cu(OTf)₂, and the solid was calcined at 450 $^{\circ}$ C under an air flow with the view to produce a thermodynamically more stable interaction with the support and keeping the oxidation state +2 in well isolated copper centres, as shown by SEM-EDX. The copper may then be modified by incipient wetness impregnation with different chiral bis(oxazoline) and azabis(oxazoline)

ligands (Fig. 1), noting that the nature of both the central bridge (isopropylidene or methylimino) and the substituent in the oxazoline ring (phenyl, isopropyl, *tert*-butyl) have an influence on the stability of the resulting copper complex [21].

The supported chiral catalysts were first tested in the cyclopropanation of styrene (Scheme 1, R = H) with ethyl diazoacetate, using an excess of styrene as solvent at 90 $^{\circ}$ C, which are the best conditions found in our previous work [18]. At 90 $^{\circ}$ C in the homogeneous phase, cationic polymerization of styrene rapidly occurs and so the homogeneous reactions were carried out at room temperature. This difference in temperature needs to be taken into consideration when comparing the results, which are summarized in Fig. 2.

In all cases the yield of cyclopropanes (Fig. 2A, bars) was better than in the homogeneous phase, at least from the second run. An overall trend is that the yield is consistently lower in the first run than in the second run, and this may be attributed to the need for the reduction of Cu(II) to Cu(I) with diazoacetate to build up the catalytically active sites. Remarkably, the reduced Cu(I) sites seem to be stable upon recycling, which can be inferred from the similar yields that were in the range of 65–80%, in runs 2–5. The only exception to this behaviour is the catalyst modified with box^tBu, which reaches a maximum yield in the third run and is then deactivated in the successive reactions. The diastereoselectivity to the *trans* cyclopropane is also consistently lower in the case of the heterogeneous catalysts (Fig. 2A, dots). The *trans/cis* ratio in solution varies from 68:32 to 76:24, but the modified Cu-Al-MCM41 catalysts lead to mixtures with ratios close to 50:50. Interpreting this behaviour would require one to be able to delineate whether this is due to a confinement effect imparted by the support or it is due to the higher reaction temperature.

Enantioselectivities (Fig. 2B) are consistently lower for the heterogeneous catalysts, compared to the analogous homogeneous phase catalysts, and again, one could attribute this to either a confinement or temperature effect. Moreover, there are two separate trends of behaviour depending on the chiral ligand used. With the three azabis(oxazolines) and boxⁱPr the enantioselectivity values are moderate and stable upon recycling, with values around 60% e.e. occurring for aza^tBu, as the best result. Even in the case of azaPh the enantiomeric excess increases until it reaches a stable value of 47% e.e. in the fourth run, and this begs the question as to whether some kind of re-distribution of the ligand occurs during the initial reactions. The ⁱPr-substituted ligands lead to enantioselectivities around 40 and 30% e.e. for aza and bis(oxazoline), respectively. On the contrary, with boxPh and box^tBu the enantioselectivities are already low in the first run and decreases upon reuse. It seems plausible that these differences in behaviour can be attributed to the different stabilities of the ligand-Cu complexes, which are higher for azabox as demonstrated by theoretical calculations [21] and the better performance and recoverability when immobilized by electrostatic interactions on clays and nafion-like solids [22], in ionic liquid phases [23] or by covalent grafting to organic polymers [24]. Even this higher stability has been pointed out as the reason for the better performance of azabis(oxazoline)-metal complexes as catalysts in other reactions, such as the enantioselective reduction of unsaturated esters with cobalt catalysts, both in homogeneous phase [25] and



Scheme 1. Cyclopropanation of styrene and α -methylstyrene with ethyl diazoacetate.

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