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Research Paper

Novel preparation method of bimetallic Ni-In alloy catalysts supported on amorphous alumina for the highly selective hydrogenation of furfural



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ABSTRACT

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1. Introduction

Biomass feedstock valorizations are currently being explored by using heterogeneous catalysts to produce bio-based platform chemicals, fuels, and various commodity products. Furfural (F) is of the most promising biorefinery platform molecules because the transformed into a wide range of value-added derivative molecules, which can be used as plasticizers 70 vents, agrochemicals, monomers in the production of resins (e.g., furfuryl alcohol (FA) and tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol (THFA)) and gasoline blends (e.g., methyl furan (MF) or terminal diols (e.g., pentanediol (PD)) [1–3]. F could be produced effectively from C-5 sugars in hemicellulosic biomasses, such as xylan, arabinose and C-6 sugars in form of glucose or fructose via acidic hydrolysis [4–6]. Autor name:

Interactions between metals in bimetallic catalysts can modify their surfaces, which can be beneficial for the conversion and upgrading of highly complex biomass fractions[7–9]. Copper chromite was the first industrial bimetallic catalyst the hydrogenation of F under harsh reaction conditions (473–573 K, 20–30 MPa) with maximum FA yields of ca. 70% [10]. In previ-

In our previous investigations, we have reported the synthesis of both bulk and supported bimetallic Ni-Sn alloy catalysts from two types nickel precursors: first, from nickel salt (e.g., NiCl₂ or NiCl₂-4H₂O) produced from both bulk and supported Ni-Sn alloys [11] and, second, from Raney® nickel supported on aluminium hydroxide (R-Ni/AlOH), which produced a nickel-tin alloy supported on aluminium hydroxide (Ni-Sn(x)/AlOH; x = Ni/Sn molar ratio) [12,13]. The catalysts $\frac{68}{11}$ wed high activity and selectivity during hydrogenation of F to FA [11–13], and ti $\frac{24}{11}$ atalyst that consisted of the Ni₃Sn₂ alloy dispersed on TiO₂ allowed a remarkable reduction in the reaction temperature from 453 K to 383 K [11]. We have also recently reported the catalytic performance of the Ni-

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ously published studies, several bimetallic alloy transition metal catalysts (e.g., Ni-Sn [11–13], Ni-Fe [14,15], Ni-In [16] 27 Cu [17], and Pt-Zn [18]) have shown superior performance for the selective hydrogenation of F compared with their single metal counterpart. Delbecq et al. have suggested that an increase in the charge density of Pt metals by the addition of the preference of the formation of a metal alloy could emance the affinity towards the C=O bond rather than towards the C=C bond to form unsaturated alcohols in the hydrogenation of α,β -unsaturated aldehydes [19,20]. Moreover, unlike tin alloyed with Pt, the utilization of Ni-Sn alloy-based catalysts for the selective hydrogenation of unsaturated carbonyl compounds has been rarely investigated to date

Sn alloy during hydrogenation of biomass-derived levulinic acid in water to γ-valerolactone (GVL) [22,23]. Over bulk Ni-Sn alloy catalysts, a relatively high reaction temperature (433 K, $4.0 \,\mathrm{MPa}\ H_2$, $6 \,\mathrm{h}$) was applied to achiev 65 th a high conversion and GVL yield (99%) [22]. Alternatively, a GVL yield of >99% was obtained over Ni-Sn(x)/AlOH catalysts at a lower reaction temperature (393 K) compared to the bulk catalysts [23]. We found that the selectivity of Ni could be controlled precisely by changing the Ni/Sn ratio in a Ni-Sn alloy or of the dispersion of the Ni-Sn alloy on an appropriate support that might play a key role in chemoselectivity enhance-

Herein, we report our extended investigation on a facile and novel preparation method for nanosized bimetallic nickel-indium alloy catalysts supported on amorphous alumina (denoted Ni-In(x)/AA; x is Ni/In molar ratio and AA is amorphous alumina). Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts were synthesized via a very similar synthetic procedure to Ni-Sn(x)/AlOH, which has been reported elsewhere 64 The effects of the loading amount of In and thermal treatm 73 on the activity and selectivity of Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts during the hydrogenation of furfural to furfuryl alcohol were studied system-

2. Experimental

2.1. Reagents

Raney Ni-Al alloy (50%wt Ni and 50%wt Al) was purchased 16 m Kanto Chemical Co., Inc.). NaOH, InCl₃·4H₂O and SnCl₂·2H₂O were purchased from WAKO 53 e Chemical Industries, Ltd., and GaCl₃, AgNO₃, NbCl₅, and ZrCl₄ were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, Co., and used as receive 27 Furfural, furfuryl alcohol, tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol, ethanol, and isopropanol were purchased from Tokyo Chemical Industries (TCI) Ltd. and purified using standard procedures prior to use.

2.2. Catalyst synthesis

2 21 Synthesis of R-Ni/AlOH

A typical procedure for the synthesis of the Raney nickel supported on aluminium hydroxide cathyst (denoted as R-Ni/AlOH) is described as follows [12,24]: Raney Ni-Al alloy poweer (2.0 g) was slowly added to a dilute aqueous solution of NaOH (0.31 M, 16 mL) room temperature. The temperature was raised to 363 K, and 4 mL of 3.1 M NaOH solution was subsequently added and stirred for 30 min. The mixture was then placed into a stand Teflon autoclave reactor for hydrothermal treatment at 423 k for 2 h. The resulting precipitate was filtered, washed with distilled water until the filtrate was neutralized and then stored in water. Finally, the catalyst was dried under vacuum prior to use.

Synthesis of Ni-In/AlOH

typical procedure for the synthesis of the nickel-indium alloy supported on aluminium hydroxide (denoted as Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH, 2.0 is Ni/In molar ratio) consisted of first mixing R-Ni/AlOH at room temperature in an ethanol/ H_2O solution ($\sim\!25\,mL$) that contained 4.5 mmol InCl $_3$ -4 H_2O and then $_45$ -tring for 2 h. The mixture was placed into a sealed Teflon autoclave reactor for hydrothermal treatment at 423 k¹²s² 2 h. The resulting precipitate was filtered, washed with distilled water and ethanol and dried under vacuum overnight. The Ni-In(x)/AlOH samples were reduced by hydrogen (H_2) at 673 K for 1.5 h, which produced Ni-In(x)/AA, where AA is amorphous alumina. The Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH bample was reduced by hydrogen (H₂) at 573-873 K for 1.5 h 17 order to investigate the effect of temperature reduction on the formation of the Ni-In alloy in Ni-In(2.0)/AA.

The H₂ uptake was determined through irreversible H₂ chemisorption. After the catalyst was the ated at 393 K under vacuum for 30 min, it was then heated at 673 K under H₂ for 30 min. The catalysts were subsequently cooled to room temperature under vacuum for 30 min. The H2 measurement was conducted at 273 K, and the H2 uptake was calculated according to a method described in the literature [26,27].

2.3. Catalyst characterization

Powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements were recor 35 on a Mac Science M18XHF instrument using monochromatic CuK α radiation (λ 53.15418 nm). The XRD equipment operated at 40 kV and 200 mA with a step width of 0.02° and a scan speed of 4° min⁻¹ $\boxed{1}$ = 0.154057 nm, α 2 = 0.154433 nm). Inductively coupled plasma (ICP) measurements were performed on an SPS 1800H plasma spectrometer by Seiko Ins 54 ments Inc., Japan (Ni: 221.7162 nm and Sn: 189.898 nm). The BET surface area (S_{BE} 25 nd pore volume (V_p) were measured using N_2 physisorption at 77 K on a Belsorp Max (BEL Japan). The samples were degassed at 473 Kg r 2 h to remove physisorbed gases prior to the measurements. The amount of nitrogen adsorbed ont 9 he samples was used to calculate the BET surface area via the BET equation. The pore volume was estimated to be the liquid volume of nitrogen at a relative pressure of approximately 0.995 according to the Barrett-Joyner-Halenda (BJH) approach based on desorption data [25]. SEM images of the synthesized catalysts were taken on a JEOL JSM-610 microscope after the samples were coated using a JEOL JTC-1600 autofine coater. TEM images were recorded on a JEOL JEM1400 microscope. Raman spectra were collected on a JASCO NRS-2100 laser-Raman spectrophotometer with an Ar beam lamp at excitations of 488 nm. and 514.5 nm.

2.4. Typical procedure for the selective hydrogenation of furfural

The catalyst (50 mg), furfural (1.1 mmol), and isopropanol (3 mL) as the solvent were placed into a glass reaction tube, which fit inside a solless steel reactor. After H₂ was introduced into the reactor at an initial H₂ pressure of 3.0 MPa at room temperature, the temperature of the reason was increased to 383-453 K. After 75 min, the conversion of furfural (F) and the yields of furfuryl alcohol (FA) and tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol (THFA) were determined using GC analysis. The used Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/H2 catalyst was easily separated using either simple centrifugation (4000 rpm for 10 min) or filtration, then finally dried overnight under vacuum at room temperature prior to re-usability testing.

2.5. Product analysis

analysis of the reactant (F) and products (FA and THFA) was performed on a Shimadzu GC-8A with a flame ionization detector equipped with a silicone OV-101 packed column (length (m) = 3.0; inner diameter (mm) = 2.0; methylsilicone from Sigma-Aldrich Co. Ltd.). was performed on a Shimadzu GC-17B equipped with a thermal conductivity detector and an RT-βDEXsm capillary column. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were obtained on a JNM-AL400 spectrometer at 400 MHz; the samples for NMR analysis were dissolved in chloroform- d_1 4th TMS as the internal standard. The products were confirmed by a comparison of their GC retention time, mass, ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra with those of authentic samples.

The conversion of furfural, yield a 50 selectivity of the products were calculated acc<mark>or</mark>ding to the following equations:

Conversion : $\frac{introduced\ mol\ reactant(F_0) - remained\ mol\ reactan(F_t)}{(F_0)} \times 100\%$ introduced mol reactant(F0)

Yeild : $\frac{mol\ product}{consumed\ mol\ reactant\,(\Delta F)}x100\%$

Selectivity : $\frac{molproduct}{total molproducts} x 100\%$

where F_0 is the introduced mol reactant (furfural, F), F_t is the remaining mol reactant, and ΔF is the consumed mol reactant (introduced mol reactant- remained mol reactant), which are all obtained from GC analysis using an internal standard technique.

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3. Results and discussion

3.1. Catalyst characterization

A series of bimetallic alloys (Ni-In(x)/AA, 3 Ni/In molar ratio) prepared via hydrothermal treatment of a mixture of Raney® nickel supported on aluminium hydroxide (R-Ni/AlOH) [12,24] and InCl₂·H₂O solution in ethanol/H₂O at 423 K for 2 h, produced the as-prepared Ni-In(x)/AlOH. After reduction of the as-prepared Ni-In(x)/AlOH with H₂ treatment at 573–873 K for 1.5 h, Ni-In(x)/AA, x = Ni/In molar ratio and AA = amorphous alumina were produced. The physicochemical properties of the synthesized Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts are summarized in Table 1.

Based on the ICP-AES results, the loading amounts of In were 1.4, 2.3, 4.5, 6.2, and 9.4 mmol g^{-1} , which was reflected by the Ni/In molar ratios of 5.1, 3.1, 2.0, 1.1, and 0.8, respectively. The results also indicate that S_{BET} increased gradually, while the H_2 uptake decreased with an increase in the loading amount of In. The S_{BET} values of the Ni-In(x)/AA samples were higher than those of the asprepared samples (Ni-In(x)/AIOH) because of thermal treatment or the formation of amorphous alumina. In the Ni-In(2.0)/AA sample, the H_2 uptake was $75 \,\mu$ mol g^{-1} (entry 4), which is comparable to $9.0 \,\mu$ m previous results of the H_2 uptake of Ni-Sn(1.4)/AIOH [12]. An increase in the loading amount of In reduced the surface activity of Ni, as also indicated by the H_2 uptake in samples with Ni/In ratios of 1.1-0.8 (entries 5-7) and bulk Ni-In(2.0) (entry 8).

The average crystallite sizes of the Ni(111) species or bimetallic Ni-In before and after $\rm H_2$ treatment were calculated by using the Scher 30 quation using the diffraction peak at 20 = 44.4° and the results are also summarized in Table 1. The findings indicate that the average crystallite sizes of Ni(111) or bimetallic Ni-In are larger than that of the as-prepared sample due to thermal treatment under hydrogen atmosphere. Compared with the bulk Ni-In(2.0) catalyst with average crystallite sizes of bimetallic Ni-In of 39.8 nm (entry 8), the crystallite sizes in Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts are much smaller. The crystallite sizes of Ni or the Ni-In alloy in Ni-In(x)/AA are also consistent with the $\rm H_2$ uptake. These results suggest that the dispersion of active metal on amorphous alumina may influence the catalytic activity.

The XPD patterns of R-Ni/AlOH and the *as-prepared* Ni-In(x)/AlOH with different Ni/In molar ratios are shown in Fig. 1. R-Ni/AlOH showed sharp diffraction peaks at $2\theta = 44.3^\circ$, $\frac{23.6^\circ}{23.6^\circ}$, and 76.3° , which correspond to the Ni(111), Ni(200), and Ni(220) species, respectively (Fig. 1a). Sharp diffraction peaks were also observed at $2\theta = 18.3^\circ$, 27.8° , and 40.5° , which represent bayerite, and at $2\theta = 18.7^\circ$, 20.4° , 36.7° , 37.8° , 53.2° , 63.9° , and 70.7° , which correspond to gibbsite (Fig. 1a-f). In contrast, the XRD patterns of the *as-prepared* Ni-In(x)/AlOH exhibited broadened peaks at $2\theta = 44.4^\circ$ due to the formation of bimetallic Ni-In, i.e., Ni₂In and Ni₃In₂ (Fig. 1b-f). The formation of bimetallic Ni₂In₃ (#JCPDS-36-1147) at $2\theta = 31.9^\circ$ and indium oxides such as In₂O₃ (#JCPDS-06-416) at $2\theta = 22.4^\circ$, 39.4° , 51.0° , and 57.6° were also observed (Figure d-f) [24,28].

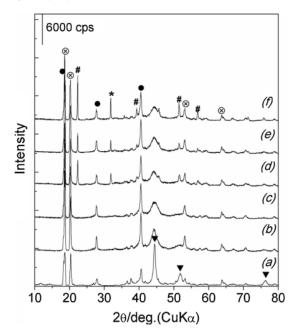


Fig. 1. XRD patterns of (a) R-Ni/AlOH and the *as-prepared* Ni-In(x)/AlOH (x=Ni/In molar ratio) at different Ni/In molar ratios of (b) 5.1, (c) 3.1, (d) 2.0, (e) 1.1, and (f) 0.8. (\bullet) bayerite; (\otimes) gibbsite; (#) In(OH)₃; (\blacktriangledown) Ni(O); (*) Ni₂In₃.

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To confirm the formation of the bi $_{48}$ allic Ni-In alloy, the as-prepared Ni-In(x)/AlOH samples were reduced with $_{12}$ at 673 K for 1.5 h and resulted in the bimetallic Ni-In alloy supported on amorphous alumina (denoted as Ni-In(x)/AA) and the XRD patterns are shown in Fig. 2.

The results indicate that controlled thermal treatment under H_2 transformed the remaining aluminium hydroxides (both bayerite and gibbsite phases) into amorphous alumina, which were not detectable using XRD analysis. The diffraction peak at $2\theta=44.4^\circ$ that is recognized as an identical peak of the Ni(111) species became broadened and overlapped with the bimetallic Ni-In alloy phases with an increase in the loading amount of In (Fig. 2a–e). A shoulder peak at $2\theta=43.2^\circ$ was also observed for a Ni/In ratio of 0.8 (where the amount of Ni In) that (60 be attributed to the formation of the bimetallic Ni₃In species (#JCPDS-21-404) (Fig. 2e). Additionally, the broadened peak of the Ni(111) species both in the as-prepared and H_2 -treated samples suggest the formation of a bimetallic Ni-In alloy that might have selectively occurred on the surface of Ni(111) rather than on the surface of Ni(200) or Ni(220) [29–31].

The low-frequency Raman spectrum of the as-prepared Ni-In(2.0)/AIOH resembles Ni-Sn(1.4)/AIOH, as has been previously reported [23]. It is found that the low-frequency Raman spectrum showed a 530 cm⁻¹ band, which can be attributed to the γ(24) vibrational mode and AI-O-AI deformation, whereas the 315 cm band is ascribed to AI-O-AI stretching vibrations of gibbsite or bayerite (Fig. 3). Alternatively, the bands of AI-O-AI deformation and AI-O-AI stretching vibrations disappeared a 10 H₂ treatment at 673 K for 1.5 h (Fig. 3b) due to the formation of amorphous alumina [32–34], which had been not detected by XRD [12,13]. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images, EDS spectra and T 17 images of both Ni-In(3.1)/AA and Ni-In(2.0)/AA are shown in Figs. S1, S2, and S3 (see ESI), respectively.



Table 1 Physicochemical properties of the synthesized bimetallic Ni-In alloy catalysts supported on amorphous alumina (Ni-In(x)/AA, x = Ni/In molar ratio).

Entry	Catalysts ^a	Nia	Ina	H ₂ uptake ^b /	$S_{\text{BET}}^{c}/$	D ^d /nm
		(mmol ⁻¹)	(mmol ⁻¹)	μmol g ⁻¹	m^2g^{-1}	
1	Raney Ni	4.0	0	121	70	8.6
2	R-Ni/AlOH	3.5	0	104	150	9.0
3	Ni-In(5.1)/AA	7.1	1.4	84	128(101)	8.0(5.2)
4	Ni-In(3.1)AA	7.2	2.3	71	120(90)	7.0(3.8)
5	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	8.8	4.5	75	154(98)	3.8(2.9)
6	Ni-In(1.1)/AA	7.0	6.2	76	161(75)	6.6(3.9)
7	Ni-In(0.8)/AA	7.2	9.4	48	157(72)	5.2(3.4)
8e	Bulk Ni-In(2.0)	4.1	2.0	29	43	39.8

- Values between parentheses are the Ni/In molar ratios determined by ICP-AES.

 Based upon the total H₂ uptake at 273 K (after corrections for photos cal and chemical adsorption).
- Specific surface area of BET (SBET) of samples after H2 treatment at 673 K for 1.5h, determined by N2 adsorption at 77 K; values between parentheses are the SBET values of the as-prepared samples.
- d Average Ni(111) or Ni-In crystallite sizes were calculated according to the Scherer equation; values between parentheses are the crystallite sizes of Ni(111) or Ni-In of the as-prepared catalysts.
- Bulk Ni-In(2.0) catalysts were synthesized via the hydrothermal treatment of a mixture of NiCl2 and InCl3-4H2O solutions at 423 K for 24 h, followed by H2 treatment at 673 K for 1.5 h.

3.2. Catalytic reactions: furfural hydrogenation

3.2.1. Selection of the second metals

At the first stage, the catalytic performances of various transition metal modified-R-Ni/AIOH 610 ch as Sn, In, Ga, Ag, Nb, and Zr, were first evaluated by the selective hydrogenation of the typical unsaturated aldehyde f 32 ral (F) to furfuryl alcohol (FA), which is a promisin 32 nemical intermediate for the synthesis of biosourced products widely used in 57 polymer industry. Conventional Raney nickel (Raney Ni) and Raney nickel supported on aluminium hydroxide (R-Ni/AlOH) catalysts were also synthesized and evaluated using the same reaction conditions as catalyst references. The detailed information for these catalysts is summarized in Table S1 in the ESI. The XRD patterns of 36° as-prepared R-Ni-M/AIOH are shown in Fig. S4 in the ESI. The results of the catalytic hydrogenation of F are summarized in Table 2, and the reaction pathways are shown in Scheme 1.

Conventional Raney Ni exhibited a 99.6% conversion of F and FA and THFA yields of 48% and 51%, respectively (entry 1). As expected, by using the R-Ni/AlOH catalyst, F converted completely to produce a 99% yield of THFA (entry 2). Interestingly, the addition of Sn or In shifted the product selectivity to FA with yields of 91% and 40%, respectively (entries 3 and 4). In tin-alloyed Ni-based (Ni-Sn) catalvsts, the catalytic performances have been reported previously [11-13,22,23]. Alternatively, the presence of Ga, Ag, and Nb significantly reduced the activity of R-Ni/AlOH (entries 5, 6, and 7), while Zr did not affect the activity or selectivity of the former catalyst (entry 8). Therefore, in the present report, we focused on catalytic performance studies of indium-alloyed Ni catalysts on F hydrogenation including the effect of loading amount, H2 treatment, time profiles, and catalyst reusability.

3.2.2. Effect of In loading amount

The results for the selective hydrogenation of F using the as-prepared supported bimetallic Ni-In(x)/AlOH catalysts are summarized in Table 3.

It can be observed that after introducing 1.4 mmol InCl₃·4H₂O to R-Ni/AlOH, the conversion of F drastically decreased to 47% and yielded 40% FA (entry 1). By increasing the loading amount of In to 9.4 mmolg⁻¹, the FA yield was almost constant (entries 7 and 8, 51% and 39%, respectively). The prolonged reaction time of 180 min over Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH produced a marked increase in the FA yield from 55% to 92% (entries 3 and 4, respectively). In contrast, the yield of tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol (THFA) decreased to 4% (entry 4). The FA yield decreased when 20 initial H₂ pressure of 2.0 MPa was applied (entry 5, 40%). The F conversion and FA yield drastically

decreased without the presence of H2 (entry 6). The R-Ni-In/SiO2 catalyst (loading amount of In, 2.7 mmolg-1) produced a 43% conversion and a 39% yield of FA (entry 9). Moreover, the In/AlOH, In2O3, and InCl3·4H2O catalysts (entries 10-12) and the absence of a catalyst (entry 13) did not produce hydrogenated products of F under the same conditions. In addition, screening tests using solvents (e.g., methanol, ethanol, toluene, 1-propanol, and H2O) other than isopropanol (iso-PrOH) were also performed, and the results were inferior to the results with iso-PrOH, as reported previously

The H₂ treatment of as-prepared Ni-In(x)/AlOH at 673 K for 1.5 h resulted in Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts (th 28 RD patterns are shown in Fig. 2). The catalysts were evaluated for the catalytic hydrogenation of biomass-derived furfural to furfuryl alcohol, and the results are summarized in Table 4. Interestingly, over H_2 -treated Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts, the high conversion of F was achieved and produced a high yield of FA (entries 1-6). In Ni-In(2.0)/AA, F was converted completely into almost a 100% yield of FA. The high yield of FA without the formation of THFA, even though the reaction time was prolonged to 360 min (entry 4), obviously indicated the important role of In in the Ni-In alloy catalyst system. Additionally, over the indium-modified Raney Ni supported on silica (RNi-In/SiO₂) 673 K/H₂) catalyst, the conversion of F was 96% with yield of FA that was much lower than that of Ni-In(2.0)/AA under the same reaction conditions (entry 7). The XRD patterns of this catalyst are shown in Fig. S5 in the ESI, and the physicochemical properties are summarized in table S1 in the FSI Moreover, by using the bulk Ni-In(2.0) catalyst (XRD patterns a₁₇₇ shown in Fig. S6 in the ESI), the conversion of F was only 42% under the same reaction conditions (entry 8).

3.2.3. Effect of thermal treatment on Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH catalysts

Among the synthesized $\lim_{x\to\infty} \ln(x)/AA$ catalysts, Ni-ln(2.0)/AA demonstrated a very high activity and selectivity towards the desired product of FA. Therefore, we investigated the effect of temperature during hydrogen treatment on Ni-In(2.0)/AA at 573-873 K for 1.5 h, and the XRD patterns are shown in Fig. 4. After H2 treatment at 573 K, the diffraction peaks of the aluminium hydroxides (e.g., bayerite and gibbsite) totally disappeared, and the broadened peaks at $2\theta = 42-44.5^{\circ}$ were hardly distinguished due to the overlap of the bimetallic alloy Ni-In phases and Ni metal diffraction peaks. Peak formation of NiIn (PDF#07-0178) at $2\theta = 30.2^{\circ}$ and the remaining In_2O_3 at $2\theta = 22.3^{\circ}$ and 31.9° was clearly observed (Fig. 4a-b). The increase in temperature from 673 K to 873 K transformed the NiIn alloy species to Ni₂In (PDF #65-3486), Ni₃In (PDF#65-3522)

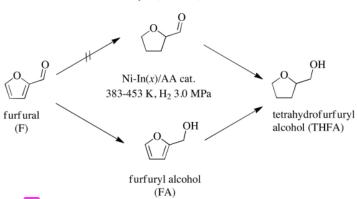
Table 2

Results of the catalytic hydrogenation of biomass-derived furfural over the various as-prepared bimetallic Ni-M/AlOH catalysts (M = Sn, In, Ga, Ag, Nb, and Zr).

Entry	Catalyst	Ma/mmolg-1	Conversion ^b /%	Yield ^b /%	
				FA	THFA
1	Raney Ni	-	99	48	51
2	R-Ni/AlOH	-	>99	1	99
3	Ni-Sn/AlOH	1.0	95.0	91	3
4	Ni-In/AlOH	1.4	47.0	40	7
5	Ni-Ga/AlOH	1.1	12.8	0	0
6	Ni-Ag/AIOH	1.2	44.9	7	16
7	Ni-Nb/AlOH	1.2	47.3	6	17
8	Ni-Zr/AlOH	1.1	>99	0	96

Reaction conditions: catalyst (50 mg), F (1.1 mmol), iso-PrOH (3 mL), H2 (3.0 MPa), 453 K, 75 min.

tetrahydrof urf uryl aldehyde (THFAld)



scheme 1. Reaction pathways of furfural hydrogenation over bimetallic Ni-In catalysts.

Table 3 Results of the catalytic hydrogenation of biomass-derived furfural over as prepared bimetallic Ni-In(x)/AIOH catalysts with various loading amounts of indium (In).

Entry	Catalyst ^a	$In^b/mmolg^{-1}$	Conversion ^c /%	Yield ^c /%	
				FA	THFA
1	Ni-ln(5.1)/AIOH	1.4	47	40	7
2	Ni-In(3.1)/AlOH	2.3	53	47	6
3	Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH	4.5	61	55	6
4 ^d	Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH	4.5	96	92	4
5 ^e	Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH	4.5	45	40	5
6 ^f	Ni-In(2.0)/AlOH	4.5	17	5	2
7	Ni-In(1.1)/AlOH	6.2	59	51	8
8	Ni-In(0.8)/AlOH	9.4	42	39	3
9 ^g	R-Ni-In/SiO ₂	2.7	43	39	4
10	In/AIOH	4.5	28	0	0
11	In_2O_3	-	28	6	3
12	InCl ₃ ·4H ₂ O	-	52	3	1
13	Neat (no catalyst)	-	15	0	0

Values between parentheses are the Ni/In molar ratio. Reaction conditions: catalyst (50 mg), F (1.1 mmol), iso-PrOH (3 mL), H2 (3.0 MPa), 453 K, 75 min.

Loading amount of In was determined by ICP-AES.

Conversion and yield were determined by GC analysis using an internal standard.

Reaction time was 180 min.

- Initial pressure of H2 was 2.0 MPa.
- Reaction occurred in the absence of H₂.

 Precursor of nickel was Raney Ni and supported on SiO₂.

and Ni₂In₃ (PDF # 65-3486) alloy phases (Fig. 4c-e), and the peaks became intensified at a temperature of 873 K (Fig. 4e).

The results of the catalytic hydrogenation of F to FA and THFA over Ni-In(2.0)/AA treated with H2 at different temperature treatments are summarized in Table 5. For Ni-In(2.0)/AA catalysts at 573 K (entry 1) and 673 K (entry 2), a small amount of THFA product was obtained over those catalysts (5% and 1% yield of THFA, respectively). The best catalytic performance was achieved over Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K (entry 3) and Ni-In(2.0)/AA 873 K (entry 4). We also intentionally carried out the hydrogenation reaction of FA as substrate over Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K under the same reaction conditions, and only 5.2% of FA was converted into THFA with a yield of

^a Loading amount of In was determined by ICP-AES.



Table 4

Results of the catalytic hydrogenation of biomass-derived furfural over bimetallic Ni-In(x)/AA catalysts after H₂ treatment at 673 K for 1.5 h.

Entry	Catalyst ^a	Inb/mmol ^{g-1}	Conversion ^c /%	Yield ^c /%	
				FA	THFA
1	Ni-In(5.1)/AA	1.4	98	94	4
2	Ni-In(3.1)/AA	2.3	97	95	2
3	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	4.5	>99	100	0
4 ^d	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	4.5	>99	99	1
5	Ni-In(1.1)/AA	6.2	99	96	3
6	Ni-In(0.8)/AA	9.4	97	93	4
7	RNi-In/SiO ₂	2.7	96	87	9
8 ^e	Bulk Ni-In(2.0)	2.0	42	42	0

Values between parentheses are the Ni/In molar ratio. Reaction conditions: catalyst (50 mg), F (1.1 mmol), iso-PrOH (3 mL), H₂ (3.0 MPa), 453 K, 75 min. Loading amount of In was determined by ICP-AES.

Table 5
Results of furfural hydrogenation over various Ni-In(2.0)/AA catalysts after H₂ treatment at various temperature of 573–873 K for 1.5h.

Entry	Catalyst	Temp. H ₂ treatment/K	Conversion ^a /%	Yield ^a /%	
				FA	THFA
1	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	573	>99	95.0	5.0
2	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	673	>99	99.0	1.0
3	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	773	>99	99.9	0
4	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	873	>99	99.9	0
5 ^b	Ni-In(2.0)/AA	773	5	-	5.0

Restrion conditions: catalyst (50 mg), furfural (1.1 mmol), iso-PrOH (3 mL), H2 3.0 MPa, 453 K, 75 min.

5%, even after the reaction time was prolonged to 180 min (entry 5). These results suggest that the addition of igg um to R-Ni/AlOH to form the bimetallic Ni-In alloy retards the C=C hydrogenation activity of nickel, and as a result, further hydrogenation of the C=C furan ring in F did not proceed in the presence of the Ni-In(2.0)/AA catalyst.

3.2.4. Effect of temperature

The effect of temperature on the catalytic hydrogenation of F to FA was evaluated over both Ni-In($_{8}^{\circ}$)/AA 773 K/H $_{2}$ and bulk Ni-In($_{2}^{\circ}$ 0) catalysts, and the results are shown in Fig. 5. Differences in the activity of each catalyst were clearly observed. On the bulk Ni-In($_{2}^{\circ}$ 0) catalyst, the conversion of F gradually increased as temperature increased, and the highest conversion of F ($_{7}^{\circ}$ 6%) was achieved at 453 K at the current reaction conditions. In contrast, F was converted completely at 443 K over the Ni-In($_{2}^{\circ}$ 0)/AA 773 K/H $_{2}^{\circ}$ catalyst. These results are very similar to the bimetallic Ni-Sn alloy catalyst system, in which bulk Ni-Sn catalysts have much lower activity and reactivity during F hydrogenation compared with the supported Ni-Sn catalysts, as reported previously [11].

3.2.5. Effect of mitial H₂ pressure

The effect of the initial H_2 pressure on F conversion and product selectivity was evaluated over the Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/ H_2 catalyst, and the results are shown in Fig. 6. F conversion and FA selectivity gradually increased as the initial H_2 pressure increased, whereas the THFA selectivity decreased smoothly to almost 0% between 2.5 and 3.0 MPa and then gradually increased between 3.5–4.0 MPa.

3.2.6. Kinetics

The kinetics of F hydrogenation at $453 \,\mathrm{K}$ on the bulk and supported Ni-ln(2.0)/AA $773 \,\mathrm{K/H_2}$ alloy catalysts are shown in Fig. 7. When the bulk Ni-ln(2.0) catalyst was used, FA was slowly

 $\label{eq:table 6} \textbf{Results of the re-usability tests for the Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/H_2 catalyst in the selective hydrogenation of furfural.}$

Runª	1	2	3	4	5
Conversion (%)	>99	95	93	91	91
Selectivity ^b (%)	100	99	99	99	99

Reaction conditions: F, 1.1 mmol (F/Ni ratio = 15); iso-PrOH (3 mL); H₂, 3.0 MPa, 453 K, 75 me.

a The recovered catalyst 1924 reused without any further treatment.
b Selectivity to FA was determined by GC analysis using an internal standard technique.

increased to achieve a 75% yield, even after 180 min. Therefore, a similar explanation can be applied to the current results as follows. The induction periods could be associated with the slow formation of oxidic tin (Sn^{n+}) from metallic tin (Sn^0) , as reported by Sordelli et al. (Rh-Sn) [36] and Margitfalvi et al. (Pt-Sn) [37]. Since the crystallite size or dispersion of Ni-In alloy could affect the length of the induction period, the induction period of Ni-In(2.0)/AA diminished, and a 100% F conversion (>99% FA yield) was achieved after 75 min. The excellent catalytic performance of Ni-In(2.0)/AA produces a promising candidate suitable for the large-scale production of FA from the selective hydrogenation of furfural (F).

3.2.7. Re-usability test

A re-usability test was performed on the Ni-ln(2.0)/AA 773 K/H₂ catalyst, and the results are summarized in Table 6. The used Ni-ln(2.0)/AA dalayst was easily separated by either

The used Ni-In(2.0)/AA call alyst was easily separated by either simple centrifugation or filtration after the reaction. The activity of the catalyst slightly decreased, while a high selectivity was maintained for at least five consecutive runs. The amount of Ni and In that leached into the reaction solution was 0.7% and 1.4%, respectively, after four runs. The small amount of leached metal is consistent with the XRD patterns of the recovered Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/H₂ cata-

Conversion and yield were determined by GC analysis using an internal standard. d Reaction time was 360 min.

Bulk Ni-In(2.0) catalyst was synthesized via hydrothermal treatment of NiCl₂ and InCl₃·4H₂O in an ethanol/H₂O mixture at 423 K for 2 h, subsequently followed by reduction with H₂ at 673 K for 1.5h. The XRD patterns of the as-prepared and H₂-treated bulk Ni-In(2.0) samples are shown in Fig. S6 in the ESI.

a Conversion and yield were determined by GC analysis using an internal standard

b Furfuryl alcohol (FA) was the substrate, and reaction time was 180 min.

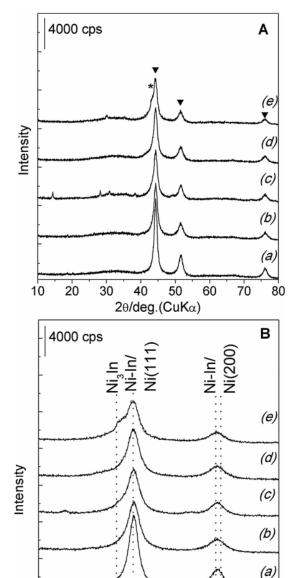


Fig. 2. XRD patterns of the H_2 -treated Ni-ln(x)/AA at $\frac{3}{2}$ mperature of 673 K for 1.5 h and selected area at $2\theta = 40-50^\circ$ for (a) 5.1, (b) 3.1, (c) 2.0, (d) 1.1, and (e) 0.8. (\mathbf{v}) Ni(0); (*) bimetallic Ni₃In (#JCPDS-21-404).

2θ/deg.(CuKα)

45

48

57

lyst, and no obvious phase separation or agglomeration of the Ni₂In nanoparticles was observed in the used Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/H₂ catalys 67 indicated by the XRD patterns (Fig. S7 in the ESI).

4. Conclusions

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A novel preparation method for bimetallic nickel-indium alloy catalysts supported on amorphous alumina (Ni-In(x)/AA; x = Ni/In molar ratio) catalysts has been developed and evaluated for the

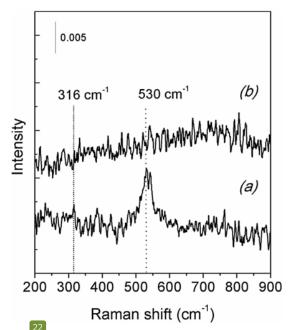


Fig. 3. Raman spectra of (a) the as-prepared Ni-In(2.0)/AIOH and (b) after H_2 treatment at 673 K for 1.5 h (Ni-In(2.0)/AA)).

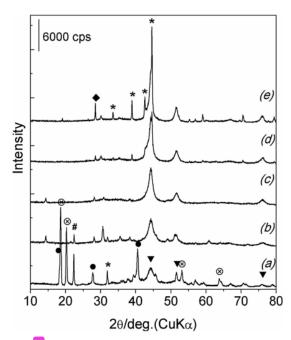


Fig. 4. ②D patterns of (a) as-prepared Ni-ln(2.0)/AlOH and H₂ treated (Ni-ln(2.0)/AA) at different temperatures of (b) 573, (c) 673, (d) 773, and (e) 873 K for 1.5 h. (\bullet) bayerite; (\otimes) gibbsite; (#) ln(OH)₃; (\bullet) Ni(0); (*) Ni₂ln (#JCPDS-21-404); (\bullet) Ni₂ln₃ (#JCPDS-65-3486).

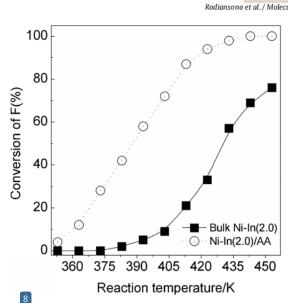


Fig. 5. Effect of reaction temperature on the conversion of furfural (F) over the bulk and supported Ni-In(2.0)/AA 773 K/H2 alloy catalysts. Reaction conditions: catalyst, 50 mg; F, 1.1 mmol; iso-PrOH, 3 mL; H2, 3.0 MPa, 75 min.

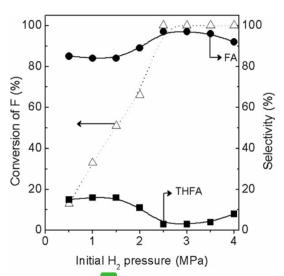


Fig. 6. Effect of the initial H. pressure on the conversion and selectivity in the hydrogenation of furfural (F) over the Ni-ln(2.0)/AA 773 K/H2 alloy catalyst. Reaction conditions: catalyst, 50 mg; F, 1.1 mmol; isoPrOH, 3 mL; 453 K, 75 min.

highly selective hydrogenation of biomass-derived furfural. The formation of Ni-In alloy phases such as Ni_3In_2 , Ni_3In , and Ni_2In in Ni-In(2.0)/AA was clearly observed the H₂ treatment at 873 K for 1.5 h. Ni-Sn(2.0)/AA contained an Ni₂In alloy as the major phase, which exhibited the best catalytic performance for the selective hydrogenation of furfural to furfuryl alcohol exclusively and stable for at least five consecutive reaction runs.

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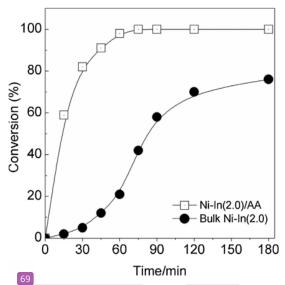


Fig. 7. Kinetics of the hydrogenation of furfural (F) over bimetallic bulk Ni-In(2.0) and Ni-In(2.0)/AA catalysts. Reaction conditions: catalyst, 50 mg; F, 1.1 mmol; iso-PrOH, 3 mL; H2, 3.0 MPa, 453 K.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.mcat.2017.11.

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