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Electrospun TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ Nanofibers with Innovative Structure and Chemical Properties for Highly Efficient Photocatalytic H$_2$ Generation

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Abstract. Innovative TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers were fabricated via electrospinning an innovated precursor solution and used for photocatalytic H$_2$ generation. The nanofibers exhibited greatly enhanced H$_2$ evolution rate compared to bare TiO$_2$ nanofiber and P25. The enhanced efficiency of the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers was attributed to its excellent synergistic properties: 1) its good mesoporosity; 2) the red-shift of absorbance spectra to enhance light absorbance capability; 3) its long nanofibrous structure and 4) anatase TiO$_2$ - rutile TiO$_2$ - rutile SnO$_2$ ternary junctions favorable for the separation of electrons and holes. Based on our experimental results, the optimum ratio of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with 3% Sn demonstrated the highest efficiency in H$_2$ generation.

Keywords: Electrospinning, Hydrogen generation, Nanofibers, SnO$_2$, TiO$_2$

1. Introduction
Hydrogen (H₂) as an ideal clean energy source has attracted large attention by researchers [1] in response to the pressing global warming issue particularly from the utilization of fossil fuel. Photocatalytic H₂ generation from water splitting is one of the promising long-term solutions to tackle the issue [2-4]. TiO₂-based semiconductor has been widely-studied for H₂ production since it was first reported by Fujishima and Honda in 1972 [5-9]. However, it has inherent rapid recombination of photo-generated electron-hole pairs and wide band gap [10] resulting in low photocatalytic activity for the production of H₂ from water which restricts its practical applications.

Coupling TiO₂ with another semiconductor such as SnO₂ could modify and improve its photocatalytic activities [2, 11]. A few studies have reported that addition of SnO₂ into TiO₂ nanoparticles could promote UV-vis light absorption [12, 13], as well as inducing the formation of anatase TiO₂ - rutile TiO₂ heterojunctions thus enhancing charge separation [2]. However, photocatalytical nanoparticles tend to form aggregates which serve as recombination centers for the photogenerated electrons and holes [14]. On the other hand, TiO₂ nanofibers demonstrated higher photocatalytic activity than TiO₂ nanoparticles owing to its intrinsic properties such as: (1) one-dimensional long structure promoting charge transfer [15]; (2) high porosity and large surface area enhancing mass transfer and light utilization rate; and (3) lower tendency to form aggregates that impedes the recombination of photogenerated electrons and holes [14].

Electrospinning is a versatile method to tune and control the morphology and chemical composition of nanofibers [16]. Recently, our group has reported a novel fully-exposed side-by-side bicomponent TiO₂/SnO₂ nanofibers obtained from electrospinning. This bicomponent TiO₂/SnO₂ nanofibers exhibited excellent photocatalytic activity as a result of its nanofibrous morphology and special heterojunction structure which retard the recombination of photogenerated electrons and holes [17]. However, the benefit from the heterojunction was limited only to the central joint where both TiO₂ and SnO₂ components were in contact on this nanofiber. Thereafter, Hwang et al [18] reported the synthesis
of SnO$_2$-embedded TiO$_2$ nanofibers with enhanced contact area between TiO$_2$ and SnO$_2$ for organic photo-oxidation. However, there was no improvement on its porosity, surface area, and light utilization rate which also dictate the photocatalytic reaction. Therefore, researchers are still searching for ways to fabricate TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ encompassing benefits of long nanofibrous morphology, modified electronic properties, high dispersion of heterojunctions, and enhanced porosity, surface area, and light absorption.

To date, there has not been any report on H$_2$ generation potential over TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers [19-21]. Herein, for the first time, TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers combining the advantages of SnO$_2$ coupling and their nanofibrous structure was successfully synthesized via electrospinning of an innovative precursor and used for H$_2$ generation. Briefly, SnO$_2$ could be easily incorporated into TiO$_2$ at any amount by improvising the preparation of precursor solution from our previous work [17]. Instead of separate preparation, precursor solutions for TiO$_2$ and varying SnO$_2$ were mixed together using a magnetic stirrer without high temperature, high speed mixing, dispersive equipment, or corrosive chemicals [18, 22]. The as-synthesized TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers exhibited remarkably enhanced H$_2$ generation rate than bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and the benchmark P25 photocatalyst. The nanofibers were well-characterized and the optimum Sn content and factors affecting its H$_2$ evolution efficiency were determined and discussed, as follows.

2. Experimental

2.1 Preparation of bare TiO$_2$ and TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers

Ethanol and acetic acid were mixed at a ratio of 4:1 by volume. The polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP; M$_{w}$=1300 000) (7 wt%) was then dissolved in the mixture, followed by the addition of appropriate amount of Ti(oBu)$_4$ and Sn[CH$_3$(CH$_2$)$_3$CH(C$_2$H$_5$)CO$_2$]$_2$ to prepare a blend consisting of 1% mol Sn (1% Sn), 3% mol Sn (3% Sn), 6% mol Sn (6% Sn), 10% mol Sn (10% Sn) and 40% mol Sn (40% Sn), respectively. Instead of separate preparation, precursor solutions for TiO$_2$ and varying SnO$_2$ were mixed together at
room temperature using a magnetic stirrer for 6 hours to obtain a homogenous clear solution. The morphology was controlled by maintaining the humidity at < 40% using N₂ gas throughout the electrospinning process to prevent pre-mature hydrolysis of the precursor solution [16, 23]. The same procedure was employed to prepare the precursor for bare TiO₂ nanofiber (0-ST) but without addition of SnO₂ precursor. The respective precursor solution was loaded into a hypodermic syringe with a 1.1 mm diameter stainless steel nozzle [23]. An electrical potential of 19 kV was applied between the nozzle and an aluminium foil collector. A dense nanofiber webs were consequently obtained at the collector.

The electrospun nanofibers were left in air for at least 2 hours to enable complete hydrolysis. Then, the hydrolysed electrospun nanofibers were calcined in the air at 450°C for 30 minutes to obtain TiO₂/SnO₂ nanofibers.

2.2 Characterization

The morphology of the electrospun nanofibers was studied using a field-emission scanning electron microscope (FESEM, JEOL JSM-6340F and HITACHI SU 70) as well as the transmission electron microscope (TEM, JEOL JSM-1400 at 200 kV). The crystallization and crystal lattice of the composite nanofibers were observed on the high resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM, JEOL JEM-2010) working at an accelerated voltage of 200 kV. The crystalline structure was obtained using a Bruker D8 Advance X-ray diffractometer (XRD) with monochromated high-intensity Cu Kα radiation (λ = 1.5418 Å). Scherrer equation which is well-used to measure the crystal size according to the XRD pattern was adopted for the estimation of nanocrystalline size. The Scherrer Equation is $L = \frac{K\lambda}{\beta \cos \theta}$ where $L$, $K$, $\lambda$, $\beta$, and $\theta$ are size of particles in nm, a constant of 0.891, wavelength of X-ray, full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the XRD peak, and angle of diffraction, respectively [10, 24].

The content of anatase TiO₂ relative to rutile TiO₂ phase was quantified based on the equation $X_A = \frac{1}{1 + 1.26I_R/I_A}$, where $X_A$ denotes content of anatase phase, and $I_R$ and $I_A$ are intensities of the most intense XRD peaks for anatase and rutile phases, respectively [24]. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was carried out using a Kratos Axis Ultra Spectrometer with a monochromatic Al Kα excitation source at
1486.7 eV, with a voltage of 15 kV and an emission current of 10 mA. All binding energies were referenced to C 1s at 284.6 eV. Elemental composition of the photocatalyst was analyzed using an energy dispersive X-ray spectrometer (EDS) attached to the TEM (JEOL JSM-1400). The Brunauer, Emmett, and Teller (BET) specific surface area were determined at liquid nitrogen temperature (77 K) using a Micromeritics ASAP 2040 system. The samples were degassed at 200°C for 3 hours prior to measurement. The Barret-Joynier-Halenda (BJH) method was employed to obtain the pore size distribution of the photocatalysts. The Thermo Scientific Evolution 300 UV-Vis spectrometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Massachusetts, USA) equipped with the integrating sphere and a xenon lamp source was used to record the absorption spectra of the photocatalysts. The spectra were further analyzed to obtain new indirect bandgap energy of the photocatalysts by the Kubelka-Munk function which converts diffusive reflectance measurements into the equivalent absorption coefficients [24, 25]. It is the photon energy (hv) value when \([F(R_\infty)]^{0.5}=0\), obtainable when the vertical segment of the plot of \([F(R_\infty)]^{0.5}\) against \(hv\) is extended to intersect the X-axis (hv) [26].

### 2.3 Photocatalytic H₂ generation

After calcination at 450°C for 30 minutes, the as-prepared TiO₂/SnO₂ nanofibers were used for photocatalytic H₂ evolution in a methanol/water mixture. Schematic 1 illustrates the schematic diagram of the suspended system of H₂ generation reactor setup. The photocatalytic H₂ generation test was carried out in an inner irradiation type Pyrex reactor with a volume of 270 mL with a 400W high-pressure Hg lamp (Riko, UVL-400HA) as the light source. This lamp emits light source within the UV-visible range from 250 – 600 nm, with peak irradiation at 365 nm, 430 nm, 540 nm, and 580 nm. The distance between the light source and the suspended photocatalysts was approximately 1.0 cm. Recirculated tap water was utilized as heat exchange cooling water to maintain a constant reactor temperature of 298K (25°C). The TiO₂/SnO₂ nanofibers were suspended at a concentration of 0.5 g/L into sacrificial reagent comprising 1:9 v/v methanol-water mixtures. Prior to irradiation and reaction, the reactor was purged with nitrogen gas for 30 minutes to de-aerate the reactor. Subsequently, the
slurry mixture was continuously mixed using a magnetic stirrer to ensure homogeneity throughout the reaction. Gas produced from the photocatalytic reaction was analyzed using a TCD-type gas chromatography (Agilent 7890A, HP-Plot MoleSieve/5A) [27, 28]. The as-prepared bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and P25 were also tested for H$_2$ generation for comparison.

3. Results and discussion

Figs. 1(a)-(b) show the morphology of the electrospun nanofibers measured by FESEM. The length of the nanofibers was more than 10 um after calcination. The diameter was less than 100 nm and was highly uniform along the entire length without any beads. The aspect ratio was around 30-50, which was a typical nanofibers structure. Fig. 1(b) clearly illustrates the nanofibrous structure of the nanofibers. The surface was rough and porous due to the burning of PVP during calcinations.

The TEM image in Fig. 2(a) shows the microstructure of the nanofiber with a diameter of approximately 100 nm. The corresponding selected area electron diffraction (SAED) pattern in the insert of Fig. 2(a) suggests that the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers were polycrystalline [22, 29]. In the EDS spectrum observed from Fig. 2(b), peaks of Ti and Sn were prominent. The mapping of a single nanofiber as shown in Figs. 2(c)-(e) depict that all the main elements (Ti, Sn, and O) were well-dispersed throughout the bulk of the nanomaterial.

To further elucidate on the crystal structures of the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers, HRTEM analysis was carried out for the composite nanofibers with 6% mol Sn. The bright field TEM images at different magnifications in Fig. 3(a)-(b) showed clear mass contrast between Ti (light spot) and Sn (dark spot) owing to their different atomic weights [30, 31]. The images also revealed good dispersion of Sn in the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers. The high magnification HRTEM image in Fig. 3(c) obviously indicated three distinctive lattice fringes of 0.325 nm, 0.296 nm, and 0.335 nm; which could be ascribed to the (101) plane of anatase TiO$_2$, the (110) plane of rutile TiO$_2$, and the (110)
plane of rutile SnO$_2$, respectively [18, 26, 32]. Fig. 3(c) also indicated the overlapping of mixed fringe lattices, suggesting the presence of mixed phases of well-crystallized anatase TiO$_2$/rutile TiO$_2$/rutile SnO$_2$ heterojunctions within the composite nanofibers [26]. In addition, the lattice fringes of rutile SnO$_2$ appeared consistently on the dark part of the nanofibers, which served as another good indication that it could be attributed to rutile SnO$_2$. Meanwhile, anatase TiO$_2$ and rutile TiO$_2$ were observed on the light part of the nanofibers.

The crystal structures of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers were further examined using XRD. As shown in Fig 4(a), the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers were indexed to anatase TiO$_2$ phase (JCPDS file No. 21-1272) at Sn content below 3% while SnO$_2$ peak was not discernable at all due to the detection limit of the XRD [33]. At a composition of 3% Sn and beyond, peaks corresponding to rutile TiO$_2$ phase (JCPDS file No. 21-1276) as well as rutile SnO$_2$ phase (JCPDS file No. 41-1445) started to appear in addition to the anatase TiO$_2$ phase, but with considerably low rutile SnO$_2$ peaks. The weak peak of rutile SnO$_2$ phase was ascribed to the high dispersion of the Sn species within the bulk of the photocatalysts therefore rendering none or too little SnO$_2$ on the surface for detection by the XRD [27, 33]. A close-up XRD pattern of the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with 3% mol and 6% mol Sn across the region of $2\theta = 26^\circ - 40^\circ$ has been plotted against that of the pristine TiO$_2$ nanofibers to enable a clearer visualization on the phase existence within the composite nanofibers (Fig 4(b)). The sharp peaks at $2\theta$ of 25.10$^\circ$, 26.50$^\circ$, and 27.50$^\circ$ in composite nanofibers with 6% mol Sn could be ascribed to the (101) peak of anatase TiO$_2$, the (110) peak of rutile SnO$_2$, and the (110) peak of rutile TiO$_2$, respectively [20, 22, 34, 35]. This observation is in good agreement with the HRTEM image in Fig.3(c); where the (101) plane of the anatase TiO$_2$, the (110) plane of rutile TiO$_2$, and the (110) plane of rutile SnO$_2$ were centered at d-spacing of 0.325 nm, 0.296 nm, and 0.335 nm, respectively. A similar XRD pattern in which the anatase TiO$_2$, rutile TiO$_2$, and rutile SnO$_2$ phases co-existed was also reported by Zhang et al. (2009) for their TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers [22]. Zhang et al. (2009) also observed the strengthening peak for rutile TiO$_2$ at higher Sn loading of 10% mol and above [22]. In another study, Hirano et al. (2011) has reported the co-existence of anatase TiO$_2$ and rutile TiO$_2$ at Sn loading of 10 – 20% mol in the composite nanoparticles synthesized via hydrothermal method [31]. However, at Sn loading of 30% mol and above, they observed XRD pattern shifting from rutile TiO$_2$ into rutile SnO$_2$ [31]. Possible explanation to this discrepancy could be the different synthesis methods, thus producing different materials of unique crystal structure. On the basis of the
close-up XRD pattern (Fig. 4(b)) and the HRTEM image (Fig. 3(a)-(c)), it is reasonable that the anatase TiO$_2$/rutile TiO$_2$/rutile SnO$_2$ heterojunctions were present in the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers. Table 1 summarizes the calculated percentage and crystalline size of anatase TiO$_2$ phase decrease with increasing Sn content. There was broadening of the most intense anatase TiO$_2$ peak at 2θ value of 25.1º which corresponded well to smaller crystalline size based on the Scherrer equation [24]. Decrease in the crystalline size suggests that there was anatase TiO$_2$ crystal lattice defect following the incorporation of Sn which promoted the formation of rutile TiO$_2$ at a lower transitional temperature [10, 24]. This justifies the diminishing peak of anatase TiO$_2$ phase with increasing Sn content in the XRD patterns. The presence of the ternary phases is expected to facilitate photogenerated electrons and holes separation thus increasing their availability for a more efficient photocatalytic activity.

The chemical composition of the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers was studied by XPS analysis. The results were observed in Fig. 5(a) – (d). The binding energy for C1s peak at 284.6 eV was used as the reference for calibration. The survey spectrum as presented in Fig. 4(a) confirms that only Ti, Sn, and O were present in the composite TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers, which are in consistent with the EDS spectrum. High resolution XPS spectrum of Ti 2p, Sn 3d, and O 1s were observed in Fig. 5(b) – (d), respectively. The peaks in the Ti 2p spectra (Fig. 5(b)) were indicative of Ti 2p$_{3/2}$ and Ti 2p$_{1/2}$ of Ti$^{4+}$ [17, 27], located at the binding energy of 457.8 eV and 464.0 eV, respectively. As shown in Fig. 5(c), the symmetrical peaks located at binding energy of 486.0 eV and 494.0 eV were ascribed to the Sn 3d$_{5/2}$ and Sn 3d$_{3/2}$ of Sn$^{4+}$ [17, 36], respectively. Fig. 5(d) shows the asymmetrical peak of O 1s spectrum consisting of three smaller peaks. The peak at binding energy of 528.9 eV was attributed to the O in TiO$_2$ and SnO$_2$ [27, 37], whereas the peaks at higher binding energy of 531.2 eV and 533.0 eV were indicative of surface contamination by hydroxyl and carbonate groups respectively, from the atmosphere [27, 37].

The surface structures of the prepared TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers were analyzed by N$_2$ sorption-desorption isotherm technique. The curve (Fig. 6(a)) revealed type IV isotherm with obvious H3-type hysteresis
behaviour according to IUPAC classification, which characterized the nanofibers to be mainly mesoporous [38]. The BET specific surface area of the composite nanofibers was promoted by Sn coupling and is shown in Table 2 to be two folds that of the bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and P25. The BJH method was employed to analyze the corresponding pore size distribution and has depicted a narrow distribution between 3-20 nm with peaking position at 4 nm (Fig. 6(b)).

Compared to bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers, TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers have demonstrated increased light absorption in the UV region and have even extended the photoresponse into the visible light region between 400-550 nm (Fig. 7(a)). A narrower bandgap of between 2.90 eV to 3.00 eV was recorded (Fig. 7(b)). Hence, it was evident that the electronic structure and optical properties of the bare TiO$_2$ semiconductor has been modified. As revealed by the XRD patterns, much stronger rutile TiO$_2$ peaks were observed in a comparison to that of rutile SnO$_2$. So the formation of rutile TiO$_2$ become a dominant factor in red-shifting the UV-vis spectrum [39]. Meanwhile, the enhanced mesoporosity and surface area of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers further promote the light utilization by enabling more light scattering and reflections on the surface and within the nanostructures [40]. With this, it is suggested that the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers will be able to enhance the light utilization rate for better photocatalytic activity.

The photocatalytic H$_2$ generation activity of the as-prepared TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofibers was investigated in a water/methanol sacrificial reagent system under UV-Vis light irradiation, with bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and P25 used as control. Fig. 8(a) illustrates the amount of H$_2$ evolution as a function of UV-Vis irradiation time. Clearly, the composite nanofibers with 1% Sn and 3% Sn showed sustained stability and reactivity without sign of deactivation even after 4 hours of irradiation. There was reduction of H$_2$ generation rate over 6% Sn and 10% Sn nanofibers, which could be ascribed to the increased SnO$_2$ coverage and aggregation on the surface of TiO$_2$ semiconductor thus reducing the light accessibility to its active sites to initiate photocatalytic reaction [37]. Since SnO$_2$ by itself is not a good photocatalyst due to its large bandgap of 3.80 eV [41], overloading the TiO$_2$ nanofiber with SnO$_2$ would
subsequently retard the net composite activity [34]. Apart from this, the development of more anatase TiO$_2$ crystal defects due to excessive Sn may act as recombination centers for photogenerated electrons and holes [18], and consequently reduce the H$_2$ generation efficiency of the photocatalysts. The TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with optimum ratio of 3% Sn demonstrated the highest efficiency in H$_2$ generation, with approximated rate of 200 µmol/hr (Fig. 8(b)). It showed an immense enhancement of 2 and 5 times H$_2$ generation rate in comparison to bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and P25, respectively. Its evolution rate was even much higher than its nanoparticles counterpart [20, 21]. Meanwhile, the H$_2$ evolution rate as a function of concentration of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers was investigated to obtain the optimum photocatalyst quantity for the H$_2$ generation. TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with 3% Sn were used as it contains the optimum ratio of Sn for H$_2$ generation in this study. The dosage of photocatalyst is also a significant factor dominating the H$_2$ generation rate. As shown in Fig. 9, concentration of 0.5 g/L yielded the highest H$_2$ evolution rate under the same experimental conditions, below and above which the efficiency began to wane.

The efficient H$_2$ generation over TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers can be attributed to the synergistic effect from: (1) enhanced mesoporosity and surface area as verified by Fig. 6 and Table 2 thus engendering more reaction sites for reactants adsorption, mass transfer and effective light scattering (2) red-shifting of the UV-vis light absorption as well-witnessed by Fig. 7 thus improving light utilization rate; and (3) long nanofibrous structure as presented in Fig. 1 [15] as well as anatase TiO$_2$ - rutile TiO$_2$ - rutile SnO$_2$ ternary phases [17, 42] further inhibiting recombination of photogenerated electrons and holes. A schematic diagram (Scheme 2) was proposed based on the XRD and HRTEM results in the previous section to elucidate the probable electrons and holes transfer pathway between the ternary systems within the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofibers. The transfer of photo-generated holes from the valence bands of the anatase TiO$_2$ and rutile SnO$_2$ into the valence band of the rutile TiO$_2$ was promoted due to the lower valence band level of the former two phases. Consequently, the photo-generated electrons on
the conduction band of the anatase TiO$_2$ were easily scavenged for H$_2$ generation since it will have longer life time. Here, methanol acted as holes scavengers and was oxidized into CO$_2$ and H$_2$O [28].

4. Conclusion

In summary, a novel-structured TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofibers was successfully fabricated via electrospinning an innovative precursor solution. The TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofibers embody excellent integration of highly enhanced physical and chemical properties for improved mass transfer, light utilization rate, and photogenerated electrons and holes separation benefiting photocatalytic H$_2$ generation compared to the bare TiO$_2$ nanofibers and the benchmark P25 photocatalysts. Thus, this TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofiber represents an excellent candidate for photocatalytic H$_2$ generation from water.

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REFERENCES


Captions of Tables and Figures

**Table 1.** Summary of physical properties of calcined TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ composite nanofibers

**Table 2.** BET surface area of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with different Sn/Ti ratios

**Scheme 1.** Schematic diagram of the suspended system of H$_2$ generation reactor setup

**Scheme 2.** Schematic diagram of the photo-generated electrons and holes transfer between the ternary phases in the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers

**Figure 1.** (a) FESEM images of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers, (b) High magnification FESEM image of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers showing detailed porous surface morphology

**Figure 2.** (a) TEM images and corresponding selected area electron diffraction (SAED) pattern (inset), (b) the EDS spectrum of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers from the selected area, Elemental mapping of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers for (c) O element, (d) Ti element, and (e) Sn element

**Figure 3.** (a) bright field TEM image showing TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers (6% Sn) with highly dispersed Sn element, (b) bright field TEM image of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers, as magnified from (a) showing clear color contrast between Sn and Ti elements with Sn being darker because it is heavier, and (c) High magnification HRTEM image showing the corresponding crystal lattice of the anatase TiO$_2$/rutile TiO$_2$/rutile SnO$_2$ heterojunction from delineated area of (b)

**Figure 4.** (a) XRD patterns of electrospun TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with different Sn/Ti ratios– 0% Sn (bare TiO$_2$), 1% Sn, 3% Sn, 6% Sn, 10% Sn and 40% Sn, all calcined at 450°C for 30 minutes, and (b) Close-up XRD patterns of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers with 0% Sn, 3% Sn, and 6% Sn between 2θ = 22° - 40°

**Figure 5.** (a) XPS survey spectrum for TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers; High resolution XPS spectrum for (b) Ti 2p, (c) Sn 3d, and (d) O 1s

**Figure 6.** (a) N$_2$ adsorption/desorption isotherm curve of TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers (3% Sn), and (b) BJH pore size distribution of bare TiO$_2$ (black) and TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ (3% Sn) (red) nanofibers

**Figure 7.** (a) The UV-visible spectra of the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers, and (b) the corresponding Kubelka-Munk transformed reflectance spectra to determine indirect new bandgap value for the TiO$_2$/SnO$_2$ nanofibers
Figure 8. (a) Accumulation of photocatalytic H₂ evolution over the irradiation time of 4 hours; and (b) Dependence of H₂ evolution rate on the Sn loading in photocatalysts

Figure 9. Effect of TiO₂/SnO₂ (3% Sn) nanofibers concentration on the H₂ evolution rate
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\(^a\) Calculated based on the procedure given by Ohtani, B. [24]. \(^b\) Calculated by the Scherrer equation [10, 24].
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Scheme 1
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Figure 1
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