

Review

Computational design of promising 2D electrode materials for Li-ion and Li–S battery applications

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Lithium-ion batteries
Lithium-sulfur batteries
2D electrode materials
Computational design

ABSTRACT

Lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) and lithium-sulfur (Li–S) batteries are two types of energy storage systems with significance in both scientific research and commercialization. Nevertheless, the rational design of electrode materials for overcoming the bottlenecks of LIBs and Li–S batteries (such as low diffusion rates in LIBs and low sulfur utilization in Li–S batteries) remain the greatest challenge, while two-dimensional (2D) electrodes materials provide a solution because of their unique structural and electrochemical properties. In this article, from the perspective of *ab-initio* simulations, we review the design of 2D electrode materials for LIBs and Li–S batteries. We first propose the theoretical design principles for 2D electrodes, including stability, electronic properties, capacity, and ion diffusion descriptors. Next, classified examples of promising 2D electrodes designed by theoretical simulations are given, covering graphene, phosphorene, MXene, transition metal sulfides, and so on. Finally, common challenges and a future perspective are provided. This review paves the way for rational design of 2D electrode materials for LIBs and Li–S battery applications and may provide a guide for future experiments.

1. Introduction

Energy storage has become an important issue of global concern because of the rapid growth of renewable energy applications and increasing demand on carbon emission reduction.^{1,2} Among all the energy storage technologies, lithium-ion batteries (LIBs), because of their high energy density, have been widely used in portable electronic devices and electric vehicles.^{3–5} Since the first appearance on the market by Sony company in 1991, LIBs have become the most widely used commercialized batteries so far. A typical LIB system may consist of Li intercalated transition metal oxide (cathode), graphite (anode), and complex of Li-ion with an organic compound as electrolyte (Fig. 1a). Current LIBs are still facing some technological challenges, such as capacity fading and low diffusion rates. With respect to these shortcomings, the exploration of new battery systems has never stopped, and one effective solution is to design and employ new electrodes.

As a promising alternative to LIB, the lithium-sulfur (Li–S) battery has

gained attention since early 1960s.^{6–8} It is constructed with metallic lithium anode and sulfur cathode immersed in electrolyte (Fig. 1b). On discharge, the Li metal anode is oxidized to Li^+ , and Li^+ moves through electrolyte towards the cathode. At the cathode, Li^+ combined with sulfur to form various polysulfides (Li_2S_8 , Li_2S_6 , Li_2S_4 , Li_2S_2 and Li_2S), and the ultimate product is Li_2S . Thus, the electrochemical reaction can be described as $2\text{Li} + \text{S} \leftrightarrow \text{Li}_2\text{S}$.^{9,10} Li–S battery has many attractive features, including: (1) high theoretical specific capacity (1675 mA h g⁻¹) and high theoretical specific energy (2500 W h kg⁻¹), (2) natural abundance and low cost of sulfur.^{11,12} However, Li–S batteries have not yet reached mass commercialization because of the low sulfur utilization and poor long-term cycling.^{13,14} Thus, further investigation on suitable host materials for Li–S battery is in great demand.

Since the successful exfoliation of graphite into a single atomic layer of graphene, the study of two-dimensional (2D) materials has entered into a new era.^{15,16} Thanks to the progress of high-performance computers and the development of accurate and efficient computational

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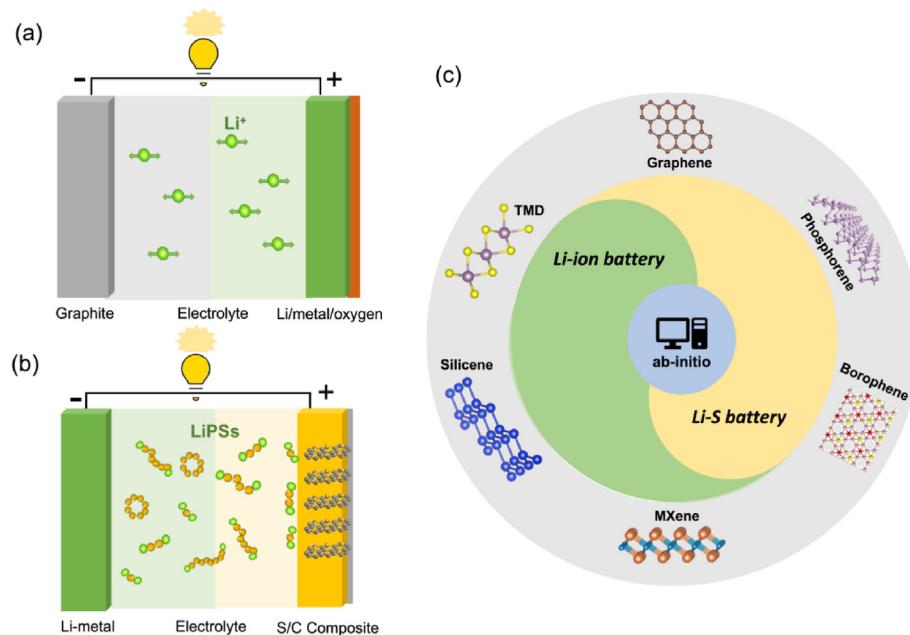


Fig. 1. (a) Schematic illustration of a typical Li-ion battery. (b) Schematic illustration of a typical Li-S battery. (c) Schematic illustration of 2D electrode materials in Li-ion and Li-S batteries based on *ab-initio* calculations.

methods, first-principles calculations have been widely used to explore the properties of known 2D materials and predict unknown 2D materials.¹⁷ The great success of first-principles density functional theory (DFT) simulations lies in the fact that they can be independent of experiments, which provides fast and reliable estimations for some critical properties of the electrode materials, such as storage capacity, ion diffusion barrier, open-circuit voltage and so on. Thus, DFT simulations can greatly save experimental cost and research time.

Although there are some review articles about the 2D materials in metal-ion batteries,^{18–24} a comprehensive review on theoretical design principles of promising 2D electrode materials and current progress in applications of 2D materials in Li-ion and Li-S batteries from a computational perspective is still lacking. In this review, our objective is to propose a general standard and summarize the current progress of potential 2D electrode materials in Li-ion and Li-S batteries based on DFT calculations (Fig. 1c). We hope this work could give a valuable insight into the design of next-generation rechargeable Li-ion and Li-S batteries.

2. Theoretical background

The general ideas of DFT of quantum systems were first proposed by Thomas and Fermi in 1927.^{8,9} In the original Thomas-Fermi method, the kinetic energy of electrons is approximated as an explicit functional of the density, while the potential energy of electron density is equal to the local density at any given point. However, the Thomas-Fermi approximation is too crude, which lacks the essential physics and chemistry of a system. In 1964, Hohenberg and Kohn put forward two important theorems that allowed DFT to achieve unprecedented development.

Theorem I: The external potential (and hence the total energy) is a unique functional of the electron density.

$$E = E[n(\vec{r})] \quad (1)$$

Theorem II: The functional that delivers the ground-state energy of the system gives the lowest energy, if and only if the input density is the true ground-state density.

$$E[n(\vec{r})] > E_0[n_0(\vec{r})] \quad (2)$$

Thus, Hohenberg-Kohn theorem proved the existence of a general

density functional which linked the energy of a system to its electron density distribution, but did not give a method of constructing this functional. This leads to the Kohn-Sham approach,^{18,25} where the construction of an auxiliary system rests upon two assumptions: (1) The exact ground state density can be represented by the ground state density of an auxiliary system of non-interacting particles. (2) The auxiliary Hamiltonian is chosen to have the usual kinetic operator and an effective local potential $V_{\text{eff}}(r)$ acting on an electron of spin σ at point r .

The Kohn-Sham approach to the full interacting many-body problem is to rewrite the Hohenberg-Kohn expression for the ground state energy functional in the form:

$$E_{\text{KS}} = T_s[n] + \int dr V_{\text{ext}}(r)n(r) + F_{\text{Hartree}}[n] + E_{\text{II}} + E_{\text{xc}}[n] \quad (3)$$

Here, $V_{\text{ext}}(r)$ represents the external potential which is caused by the nuclei and any other external fields. E_{II} is the interaction between the nuclei. T_s is the independent-particle kinetic energy, which is given by:

$$T_s = -\frac{1}{2} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{i=1}^{N^{\sigma}} \langle \psi_i^{\sigma} | \nabla^2 | \psi_i^{\sigma} \rangle = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{\sigma} \sum_{i=1}^{N^{\sigma}} \int d^3 r \left| \langle \nabla \psi_i^{\sigma} \rangle \right|^2 \quad (4)$$

and the classical Coulomb interaction energy of the electron density $n(r)$ interacting is defined as:

$$E_{\text{Hartree}}[n] = \frac{1}{2} \int d^3 r d^3 r' \frac{n(r)n(r')}{|r - r'|} \quad (5)$$

Besides, all the many-body effects about exchange and correlation are grouped into the exchange-correlation energy E_{xc} that can be written as:

$$E_{\text{xc}}[n] = \langle \hat{T} \rangle - T_s[n] + \langle \hat{V}_{\text{int}} \rangle - E_{\text{Hartree}}[n] \quad (6)$$

Here, $[n]$ denotes a functional of the density $n(r, \sigma)$ which depends upon both position in space r and spin σ . Through the Kohn-Sham approximation, a complex multi-electron problem can be transformed into a single-electron problem.

In general, with the development of DFT theory, almost all the materials can be explained and predicted well by DFT theory, and the computational efficiency has been greatly improved.

3. Principles of 2D materials design for batteries

2D materials have emerged as potential candidates for diverse applications such as superconductors, optoelectronic materials, and electrodes in batteries.^{15,26} So far, nearly 50 compounds have been synthesized or exfoliated as single layers, which are far less than the experimentally known 3D compounds (~108,400).²⁷ In fact, recent high-throughput data studies indicate that hundreds of 2D materials could be exfoliated from known layered bulk crystals.^{22,28–30} Thus, we believe those 2D monolayers that we already know are only the tips of a much larger iceberg and deserve further study.

First-principles calculations are commonly used in the prediction of new 2D materials and have achieved notable results.^{31–35} For instance, Tománek et al. predicted the phosphorus carbide (α_1 -PC) compounds through the unbiased structure searching technique, and this novel material was synthesized in the following year by Tan et al.^{36,37} In this section, we systematically introduce the general criteria for designing novel 2D materials and the general conditions which judge whether a proposed 2D material is a promising electrode material, with all these standards established in the computational aspect. To be specific, the basic requirements for ideal host materials are shown in Fig. 2.³⁸ Above all, high stability (i.e., structural, dynamical, and thermal stability) is a prerequisite, since they work in the electrolyte and will be repeatedly cycled during the charge/discharge process. Secondly, materials with excellent electronic conductivity contribute to the electrochemical performance. Thirdly, high capacity is practically important to ensure a long service (or discharge) time for the battery. From the perspective of the rate capability of the battery, fast ion diffusion is also required. Moreover, for practical applications, accommodation of volume expansion, flexibility and lightweight of electrodes should be taken into consideration. Finally, low cost, large-scale synthesis, and environmental friendliness also need to be considered.

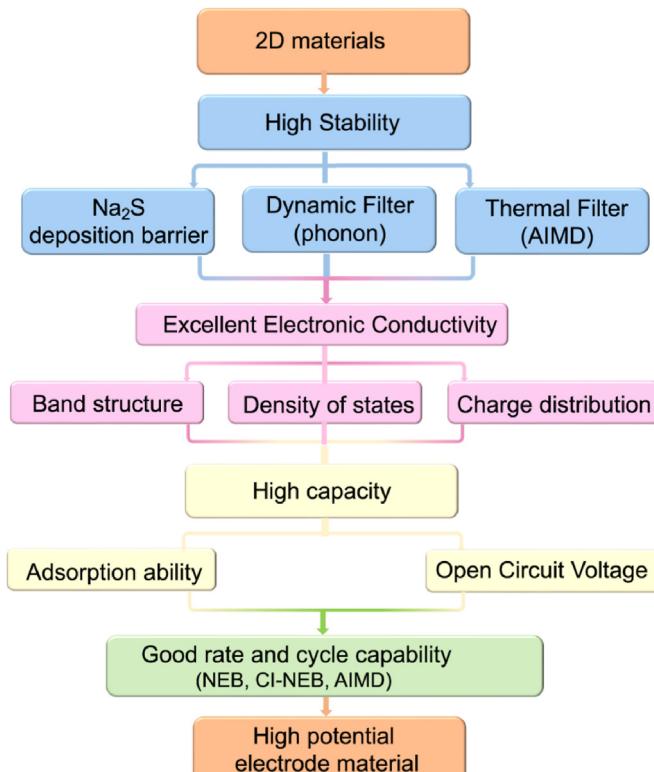


Fig. 2. Workflow for predicting the structural and physical properties of potential 2D electrode materials.

3.1. Stability

Electrode materials have high requirements for stability because they work in electrolytes and will be used repeatedly in the charge/discharge process. Therefore, the determination of 2D material stability is a prerequisite before studying its specific properties.³⁹

3.1.1. Energy filter for the stability of 2D materials

Exfoliation energy: Exfoliation energy, which describes the energy required to peel off an atomic layer from the surface of a bulk material, is fundamentally important in the science and engineering of 2D materials.³² A crucial criterion to judge the feasibility of mechanical exfoliation is energy cost, which is not only the key to explaining why existing 2D materials can be exfoliated experimentally, but also a guide to predicting whether an unknown 2D materials can be separated from their bulk counterparts. For instance, Mounet et al. proposed that the materials with an exfoliation energy less than $30 \text{ meV } \text{\AA}^{-2}$ can be easily exfoliated, and those with an exfoliation energy above $130 \text{ meV } \text{\AA}^{-2}$ are considered unable to exfoliate.³²

Exfoliation energies are typically calculated by DFT methods, usually using the slab model. For the traditional slab model, exfoliation energy is defined as the energy difference before and after exfoliation of an atomic layer from the N -layer thick slab (Fig. 3a). Thus, the exfoliation energy E_{exf} can be described as:

$$E_{\text{exf}}(n) = (E_{\text{II}'}) + (E_{\text{III}'}) - (E_{\text{I}'}) / A \quad (7)$$

where $E_{\text{I}'}$, $E_{\text{II}'}$, and $E_{\text{III}'}$ are energies of the N -layer thick slab (I'), the exfoliated layer (II'), and the remaining ($N-1$)-layer slab (III'), respectively, and A refers to the in-plane area of the slab unit cell.

However, the slab method ignores possible lattice relaxation during the exfoliation process and requires a heavy computational load. Thus, great efforts have been made by many researchers.^{40–45} For example, Shulenburger et al. proposed that the value of the exfoliation energy should lie in the range of interlayer binding energy of the bulk material and the binding energy of the two-atomic-layer system.⁴⁰ Recently, Jung et al. built up an impressive method to obtain the exfoliation energy of a given material which is exactly the ground-state energy difference between a single isolated layer and its bulk material (per atomic layer).⁴¹ An and coworkers proposed a Green's function surface model, which can be used to study the exfoliation of ultrathin 2D layered materials from not only their bulk crystals but also semi-infinite substrates.⁴² These newly developed methods greatly save computational resources and supplement the shortcomings of the traditional slab method.

Zhou et al. found that the alloying with Ti can significantly enhance the exfoliation of V_2AlC into V_2C MXene for LIB anodes.⁴⁶ This conclusion has been demonstrated by both experiments and first-principles calculations. Based on the XRD results, they found that with increasing amount of alloying Ti, the relative intensities of the residual $(\text{V}_{1-x}\text{Ti}_x)_2\text{AlC}$ phase decrease significantly, and the characteristic peaks of $(\text{V}_{0.7}\text{Ti}_{0.3})_2\text{C}$ are very strong, indicating that nearly pure 2D MXenes are obtained. Moreover, they also simulated the exfoliation process and estimated the exfoliation energy, as shown in Fig. 3b. It is obvious that alloying Ti significantly reduces the exfoliation energy for V_2AlC , which means the exfoliation of the bulk phases becomes much more energetically feasible.

Convex hull: To quantify the thermodynamic phase stability of materials, the construction technique of formation-energy convex hull (E_{hull}) has been developed.^{49,50} In this technique, based on the systematical study of all possible mixtures of competing phases with the same compositions, a series of stable and meta-stable compounds are shown above or near the convex hull (Fig. 3c).⁴⁷ More specifically, compounds located at the energy convex hull, $E_{\text{hull}} = 0$, is a thermodynamically stable phase at 0 K. Those with $E_{\text{hull}} > 0$ but close to the convex hull can be considered thermodynamically meta-stable, and when $E_{\text{hull}} > 100 \text{ meV/atom}$, the material is difficult to synthesize. So far, the thermodynamic phase

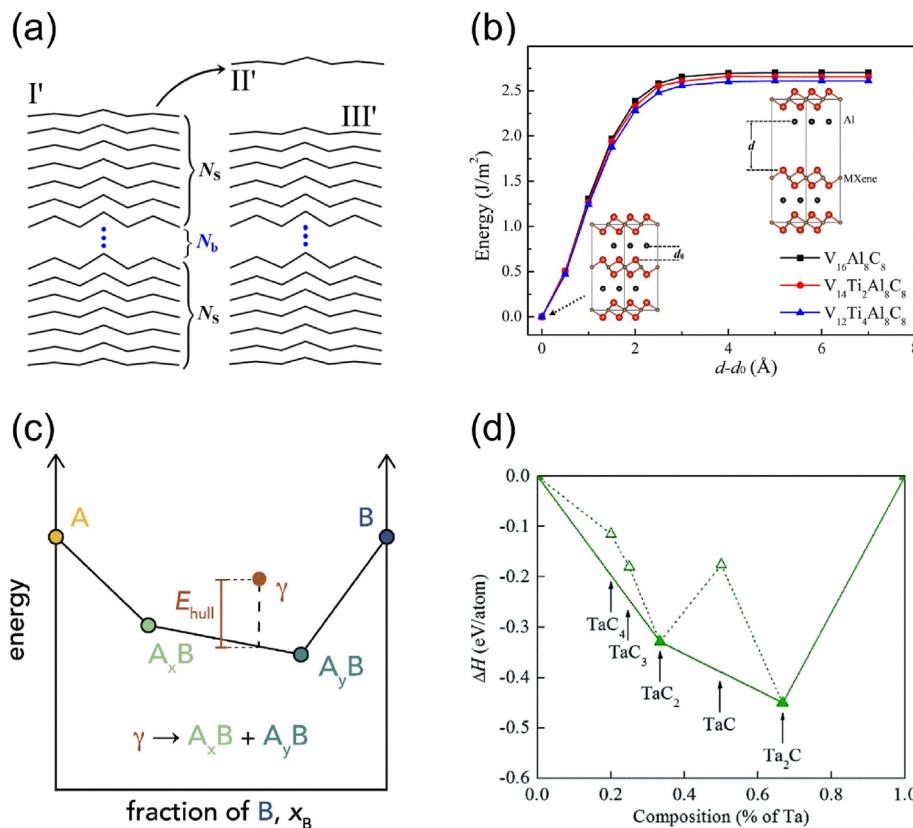


Fig. 3. (a) Schematic of traditional slab model to evaluate the exfoliation energies of 2D layered materials. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 42. (b) The calculated exfoliation energy vs separation d between MXene and Al layers. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 46. (c) Schematic of an energy convex hull. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 47. (d) Relative stabilities of 2D Ta_xC_y monolayers with respect to elemental Ta and graphene at 0 K. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 48.

stability of many new materials has been predicted by using E_{hull} metrics successfully.

Structure discovery algorithms are very important for the design and exploration of unknown stable crystal structures with fixed composition ratios. At present, various prediction codes have been developed, such as USPEX, AIRSS, and CALYPSO,^{51–55} and aided by these codes, novel 2D materials with potential applications in batteries are proposed. As an example, Yu and coworkers performed first-principles structural searches to explore structural and phase stabilities of 2D Ta_xC_y ($x = 1$ and $y = 1–4$, or $x = 2$ and $y = 1$) in an effort to find promising anodes.⁴⁸ As shown in Fig. 3d, only TaC_2 and Ta_2C are lied on the convex hulls, which indicate that they are thermodynamically stable and feasible for experimental synthesis. However, the existence of 2D counterparts of a 3D parent compound does not ensure that the exfoliated monolayers would still be stable. Therefore, further research on the dynamic and mechanical stability of the material is still necessary.

3.1.2. Dynamic filter for the stability of 2D materials

An important criterion for dynamic stability is that the potential energy of the material should be a minimum against any combination of atomic displacements at equilibrium. The phonon filter is the most widely used approach in the analysis of the dynamic stability of 2D materials.^{56–59} In this method, vibrational spectra are used to determine the stability of a certain material. Actually, the equilibrium condition can be described as a state in which all the phonons have real and positive frequencies in the harmonic approximation. Take the phonon dispersions of 2D-MoSe₂ and NbS₂ as an example.⁶⁰ For 2D-MoSe₂, all the frequencies in the phonon dispersion spectra are positive, which implies that the 2D material is dynamically stable (Fig. 4a and b). In contrast, for 2D-NbS₂, imaginary frequencies can be clearly observed (Fig. 4c and d).

implying that it is unlikely to be realized experimentally and may lead to other structures through continuous lattice deformations and atomic displacements.

It is worth noting that the phonon analysis deals with small atomic displacements. Thus, it is hard to study complex lattices which involve lattice phase transformation or lattice reconstruction. Therefore, satisfying the phonon filter is a necessary but not sufficient condition to identify the dynamic stability of material.

3.1.3. Thermal filter for the stability of 2D materials

The stability of material under different temperature, at the first-principles level, is generally verified by *ab initio* molecular dynamics (AIMD) simulations.^{62–64} One can observe the structural integrity of a certain material by performing the AIMD simulation at a fixed temperature within a specified time period. For example, Van Huis et al. used AIMD simulations to study a series of atomically thin transition metal oxides.⁶¹ Their simulation results indicate that the hexagonal h-Mn₂O₃ phase is thermally stable due to the fact that the 300 and 700 K AIMD configurations reconstruct into the smoothly-tilted hexagons at 0 K (Fig. 4e and f). The square sq-MnO, on the other hand, has meta-stable character, which is thermally stable at 300 K (remained corrugated square structure) but unstable at 700 K (transformed into a hexagonal phase) (Fig. 4g and h). Finally, the h-TiO shows a thermally unstable character. After 300 K simulation, their AIMD final configurations relax into structures that are no longer atomically thin (Fig. 4i). Despite being a powerful tool, AIMD simulation requires a large computational resource.⁶⁵ Thus, they are limited to small systems with less than a few hundreds of atoms and very short physical timescale (tens to thousands of picoseconds).

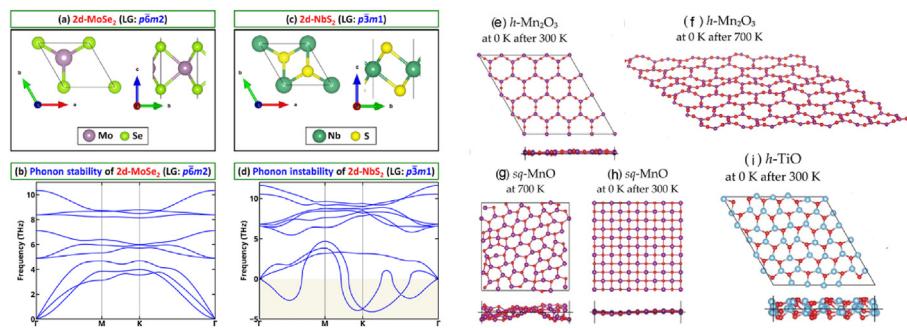


Fig. 4. Examples of application of phonon filter to analyze the stability of (a) 2D-MoSe₂ and (c) 2D-NbS₂, and corresponding phonon dispersions of (b) 2D-MoSe₂ and (d) 2D-NbS₂. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 60. AIMD simulation output configurations of (e) h-Mn₂O₃ at 0 K after 300 K, (f) h-Mn₂O₃ at 0 K after 700 K, (g) sq-MnO at 700 K, (h) sq-MnO at 0 K after 300 K, (i) h-TiO at 0 K after 300 K. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 61.

3.2. Electronic property

The electronic structure can be used to judge electrical conductivity, which is also a prerequisite for battery materials. There are several commonly investigated electronic properties for electrode materials to analyze their performance, including energy band structures, the density of states (DOSs), and charge density distribution.³⁹

3.2.1. Band structure

The electronic band structure describes the range of energy levels that the electrons within a certain material may have, and it is directly related to the conductivity.⁶⁶ The band structure of a solid can be divided into three well-known parts: conduction band, valence band, and forbidden band. For an insulator, the band gap between the valence and conduction band is very large, and electrons transition from the valence to conduction bands almost cannot happen. In other words, insulators cannot conduct electricity. For a semiconductor, on the other hand, the band gap is small (usually from 0 to 3 eV). The valence band electrons can easily jump to the conduction band, forming conductive carriers. For a metallic band structure, an overlap between the conduction band and the valence

band occurs, so the electrons can move to the conduction band without any obstacles, leading to good conductivity. It is worth noting that semiconductors can be divided into direct band gap and indirect band gap semiconductors according to the different paths of electron transition from the valence band to the conduction band.^{67,68} Taking the bulk and monolayer MoS₂ materials as an example, the bulk MoS₂ is an indirect-gap semiconductor with a valence band maximum (VBM) at the Γ point and a conduction band minimum (CBM) along Γ -K symmetry lines (Fig. 5a),⁶⁹ while the monolayer MoS₂ is a direct-gap semiconductor with VBM and CBM located at the same K-point.

Li et al. used first-principles calculations to investigate the band structures of pristine and lithiated phosphorene (Fig. 5b).⁷⁰ According to their calculations, the pristine phosphorene shows semiconducting behavior, while after the Li-ion intercalation, the product shows a metallic character with zero band gap, indicating that the electronic conductivity of phosphorene can be enhanced by lithiation.

3.2.2. Density of states

The density of states (DOS) represents the number of states with a particular energy level that electrons are allowed to occupy, in other

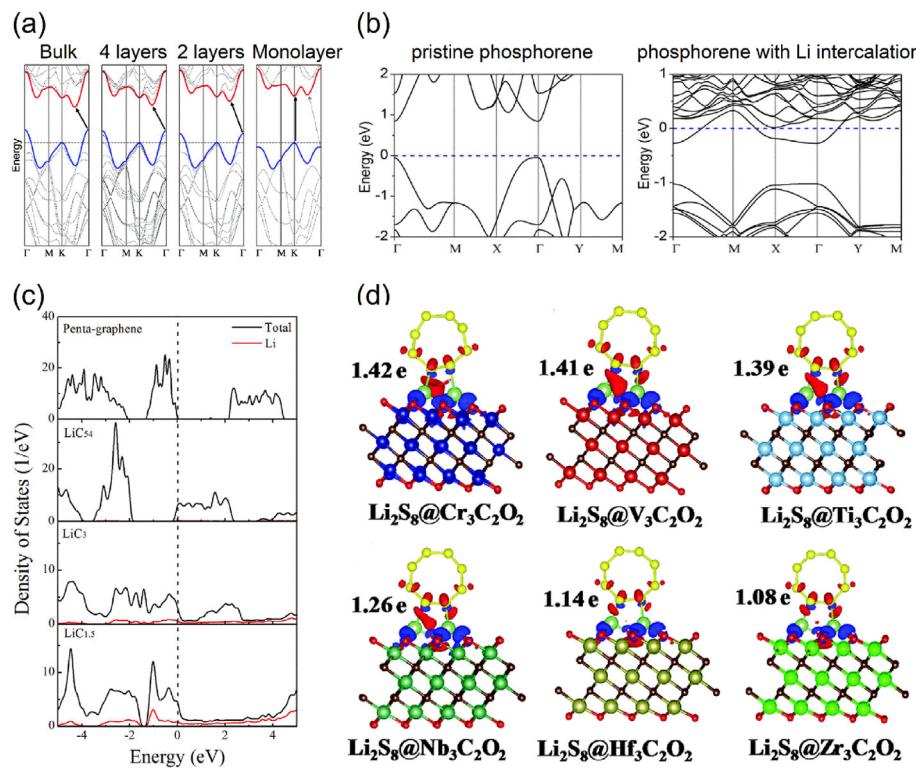


Fig. 5. (a) Evolution of the band structure of 2H-MoS₂ with decreasing thickness. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 69. (b) Electronic band structures of pristine phosphorene and phosphorene with Li intercalation. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 70. (c) DOSs of pure penta-graphene, LiC₅₄, LiC₃, and LiC_{1.5}. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 71. (d) Differential charge density between Li₂S₈ and M₃C₂O₂ surfaces (Cr₃C₂O₂, V₃C₂O₂, Ti₃C₂O₂, Nb₃C₂O₂, Hf₃C₂O₂ and Zr₃C₂O₂). Bader charge numbers indicate the number of electrons transferred from the LiPSs to the host material. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 72.

words, the number of electron states per unit energy per unit volume.²¹ In principle, the DOS can be understood as a more intuitive visualization of the band structure. From DOS, one can also analyze the energy gap characteristics. If the DOS value at the Fermi level is zero, the system can be a semiconductor or an insulator. Otherwise, the system is metallic. The partial density of states (PDOS) related to certain atoms or orbitals can give more detailed bonding information.

From a recent example of DOS analysis, Xiao and coworkers found that the doping of Li⁺ in penta-graphene can affect its electronic structure and improve its electrochemical performance in LIBs.⁷¹ The pure penta-graphene exhibits semiconductor properties with a calculated band gap of 2.33 eV. After adopting one Li atom on the penta-graphene (LiC₅₄), this new system showed a metallic character (Fig. 5c). With increasing content of Li atoms (LiC₃ and LiC_{1.5}), the electronic conductivity of penta-graphene is further enhanced. This semiconductor-to-metal transition greatly facilitates the charging and discharging rate in LIBs.

3.2.3. Charge density distribution

The charge density distribution figures can theoretically show the chemical environment of the atoms in a certain material, which fills the gap that the charge distribution is difficult to be directly measured in experiments. In DFT calculation, the effect of adatom adsorption on charge distribution is calculated by the differential charge density, which is defined as the difference between the valence charge densities before and after bonding^{73,74}:

$$\Delta\rho = \rho_{\text{sub+adsorp}} - \rho_{\text{sub}} - \rho_{\text{adsorp}} \quad (8)$$

where $\rho_{\text{sub+adsorp}}$, ρ_{sub} and ρ_{adsorp} represent the charge density distribution of the substrate-adatom system, bare substrate, and adsorption atom, respectively. For instance, Li et al. investigated the electronic structures of Li₂S₈ adsorbed on M₃C₂O₂ surfaces (M = Cr, V, Ti, Nb, Hf, and Zr) (Fig. 5d) through charge density distribution.⁷² For all six M₃C₂O₂ systems, the electron transfer from Li₂S₈ to substrates can be observed, indicating the strong interactions. This can be further ascribed to the strong covalent bonds between Li and O. Moreover, the amount of charge transfer in a certain material can be estimated quantitatively by methods such as the Bader charge analysis.⁷⁵

3.3. Capacity

In practical applications, the storage capacity is a key indicator of electrode performance and a target for improvement.³⁹

3.3.1. Adsorption

The adsorption of ions plays a key role in the electrochemical reaction of battery materials. Therefore, the adsorption kinetics must be considered when designing new electrodes, since it has a great impact on the capacity of the cells.^{76–78} Indeed, the adsorption energy between electrodes and metal atoms should be moderate.^{79,80} Too weak adsorption results in a low capacity of the battery. However, too strong binding may lead to difficult desorption of the adatoms or the decomposition of adsorbed species, thereby deteriorating the cycle performance of the material.

The adsorption energy between substrate and adatoms can be calculated as follows^{81,82}:

$$E_{\text{ad}} = E_{\text{sub+adsorp}} - E_{\text{sub}} - E_{\text{adsorp}} \quad (9)$$

where $E_{\text{sub+adsorp}}$ is the total energy of substrate-adatom system, E_{sub} and E_{adsorp} are the total energy of the pristine system and the total energy of adsorbed atoms, respectively. Theoretically, smaller adsorption energy can bring about more favorable interaction between the substrate and the adatoms. Through comparing the E_{ad} values at different sites, the preferred adsorption sites can be determined.

For instance, to investigate the nature of metal atom adsorption on MoN₂ monolayer, Yang's group discussed four possible adsorption sites (denoted as S₁–S₄) as depicted in Fig. 6a.⁸³ They found that all the studied metal atoms can be adsorbed on MoN₂ monolayer and the adsorption above the center of the honeycomb lattice (S₃ site) is the most favorable adsorption site.

3.3.2. Open circuit voltage

Open circuit voltage (OCV) is a crucial indicator to determine the capacity and also the energy density of battery materials.^{85,86} A positive value of voltage indicates that the adsorbed atoms can successfully adsorbed on the substrate surface, while a negative value means that the adsorbed atoms are more inclined to form clusters rather than be adsorbed on the substrate surface. Thus, when the OCV value drops to 0 eV, the material is considered to have reached its maximum capacity.

The average OCV within the adatoms coverage range from x_1 to x_2 can be estimated by:

$$\text{OCV} \approx \frac{\Delta G}{(x_2 - x_1)} \quad (10)$$

where ΔG is approximately equal to the change in internal energy ($\Delta G = \Delta E + p\Delta V - T\Delta S$), because volume effects and entropy make little contribution to the voltage at room temperature (<0.01 V).

For example, the average cell voltage of LiCoO₂ lithiation range ($x_1 \leq x \leq x_2$) can be estimated as:

$$V_{\text{ave}} = -\frac{E_{\text{Li}_{x_2}\text{CoO}_2} - E_{\text{Li}_{x_1}\text{CoO}_2} - (x_2 - x_1)E_{\text{Li}_{(s)}}}{(x_2 - x_1)e} \quad (11)$$

The relationship between the formation energy and voltage profile has been perfectly illustrated by Ceder's group.⁸⁷ And the computational voltage profile has been proved to fit well with the experimental one for sodium intercalation in Na_xMnO₂ system.

Based on the OCV, the maximum adatom content x_{max} can be evaluated, and the maximum capacity C_M (mA h g⁻¹) can be further calculated as:

$$C_M = \frac{1}{M_{\text{sub}}} [x_{\text{max}} \times z \times F \times 10^3] \quad (12)$$

where z is the valence number, F is the Faraday constant (26.810 Ah mol⁻¹), and M_{sub} is the atomic mass of substrate material.⁸⁸

Shenoy's group evaluated the OCVs as a function of the concentration of adatoms (Li, Na, K, and Ca) by varying x in the Ti₃C₂M_x system.⁸⁹ According to Fig. 6b, the OCV of Na, K, and Ca decrease as x increases, while Li is less sensitive to the variance of x in the range $x \leq 1$ and starts to decrease when $x > 1$. According to their calculations, the OCVs for Li, Na, K, and Ca are 0.413, 0.137, 0.128, and 0.087 V, respectively. Therefore, the corresponding theoretical capacities of Ti₃C₂Li_x, Ti₃C₂Na_x, Ti₃C₂K_x and Ti₃C₂Ca_x systems are calculated to be 447.8, 351.8, 191.8, and 319.8 mA h g⁻¹, respectively (Fig. 6c).

3.4. Ion diffusion mechanism

The ion diffusion process is closely related to the rate performance of a cell and has instructive significance for studying the electrochemical performance of electrode materials.³⁹ The current mainstream research methods are the nudged elastic band (NEB) method, modified climbing-image nudged elastic band (CI-NEB) method, AIMD method and Monte Carlo simulation.

3.4.1. NEB method

NEB method is efficient for studying the ion diffusion.⁹⁰ The aim of this approximation is to find the minimum energy path (MEP) of a mobile ion and to obtain the corresponding energy barrier. Along the MEP, the maximum energy position on the potential energy surface is the saddle

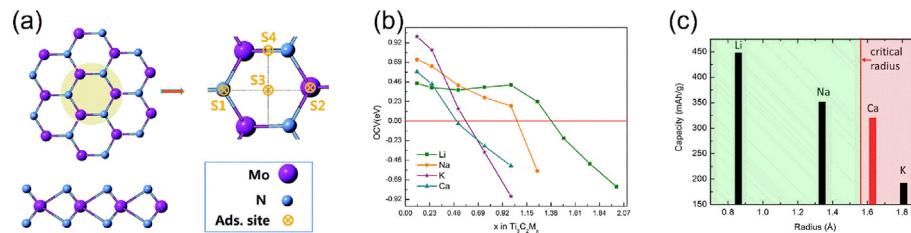


Fig. 6. (a) Atomic structures and possible adsorption sites of MoN₂ monolayer. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 83. (b) OCV changes with adatom content for the single-side adsorption of Li, Na, K, and Ca on Ti₃C₂ surface. (c) Relationship between capacity and ionic radius for adsorption on both sides of Ti₃C₂ surface. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 84.

point, and the energy of the highest saddle point is usually considered as the energy barrier for ion diffusion on the material.

In the calculation process, a set of image replicas ($R_0, R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N$) of the system have been constructed between the initial (R_0) and final state (R_N), and the number of images is usually chosen based on the length of the diffusion path (Fig. 7a).¹⁷ For NEB method, the basic feature is the force projection, which decomposes the true force ($\nabla E(\vec{R}_i)$) and the spring force (\vec{F}_i^s) into components parallel (\parallel) and perpendicular (\perp) to the path by “nudging”. Thus, it can ensure that the spring force will not interfere with the convergence of the elastic band to the MEP and that the true force will not affect the distribution of images along with the MEP. The total force acting on an image (\vec{F}_i) can be described by the following equation:

$$\vec{F}_i = \vec{F}_i^s \parallel - \nabla E(\vec{R}_i) \perp \quad (13)$$

An example of a NEB calculation of the Li-ion diffusion path and energy barrier in two-dimensional phosphorene is shown in Fig. 7b and c.⁹¹ The authors discussed two possible diffusion paths: one is in-plane diffusion, and the other is out-of-plane diffusion. Based on their results, the diffusion of Li is preferred in the in-plane direction of the

phosphorene monolayer with a barrier of 0.76 eV.

It should be noted that the key point of NEB method is to ensure that the highest saddle point is found. In fact, it is common for MEPs to have one or more intermediate minima, but there is no clear range about where the highest saddle point should be. If the path is curved at the saddle point, it may lead to an overestimation or underestimate of the saddle point energy. To solve this problem, one could run a second elastic band between the two images adjacent to the barrier to get a more accurate estimation of the saddle point energy, but this would require much more computational effort.

3.4.2. Climbing-image NEB method

The CI-NEB method as a modification of the NEB one, is more accurate for saddle point search.⁹³ As shown in Fig. 7a, using the CI-NEB method to find the MEP can not only retain the similar shape as obtained in the NEB calculation, but also keep the climbing image with a rigorous converge on the highest saddle point. By using the same number of images in CI-NEB, a more accurate activation energy than the regular NEB would be obtained, while this does not add any significant calculation workload.

The force on CI-NEB method is not given by Equation (13) but rather by:

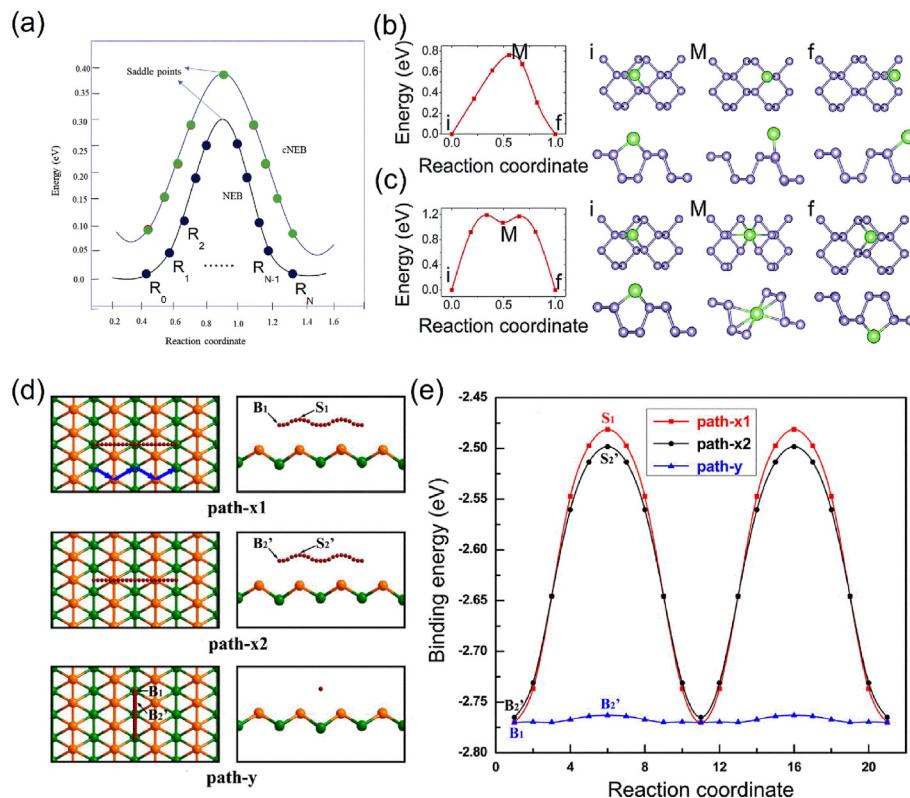


Fig. 7. (a) Saddle points obtained from NEB and CI-NEB modifications. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 17. Energy barrier and diffusion path of a Li atom on the phosphorene monolayer: (b) in-plane diffusion and (c) out-of-plane diffusion. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 91. (d) Top (left panel) and side (right panel) views of Li diffusion on borophene surface along path-x1, path-x2, and path-y. Corresponding binding energies along the diffusion pathways are shown in Fig. 7e. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 92.

$$\vec{F}_{i_{\max}} = -\nabla E(\vec{R}_{i_{\max}}) + 2\nabla E(\vec{R}_{i_{\max}})|_{\parallel} \quad (14)$$

This is the full force due to the potential with the component along the elastic band inverted. Here, i_{\max} represents the highest saddle point, and $\vec{F}_{i_{\max}}$ is the total force acting on a maximum energy image. $\nabla E(\vec{R}_{i_{\max}})$ and $\nabla E(\vec{R}_{i_{\max}})|_{\parallel}$ are true forces at the highest saddle point and the parallel ($|_{\parallel}$) component. The maximum energy image is not affected by the spring forces at all.

According to transition state theory, the ion diffusion rate can be expressed as^{94,95}:

$$k(T) = v^* \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta E^+}{k_B T}\right) \quad (15)$$

where T is the temperature, and k_B is the Boltzmann constant. The activation energy ΔE^+ represents the energy difference between the transition state and the initial one.

The vibrational prefactor v^* can be expressed as:

$$v^* = \frac{\prod_i^{3M} v_i}{\prod_j^{3M-1} v'_j} \quad (16)$$

where M is the total number of atoms, and v_i is the corresponding normal mode frequency.

Zhang and coworkers predicted that the borophene layer has ultra-high diffusivity along an uncorrugated direction.⁹² As depicted in Fig. 7d, they considered three diffusion pathways, i.e., path-x1, path-x2, and path-y. For path-x1 and path-x2, the energy barriers are calculated to be 0.289 and 0.267 eV, respectively. The diffusion pathway of path-y shows a rather small energy barrier of 0.007 eV, indicating that the Li-ion diffusion along the uncorrugated direction is much easier than that along the corrugated direction (Fig. 7e). Such an anisotropic diffusion behavior can be attributed to the anisotropic structure of the borophene layer.

To conclude, computational studies based on the NEB and CI-NEB methods have significantly increased the understanding of the static energy state of ion migration pathways in electrode materials. However, one of the difficulties in NEB calculations is the initial guessing of ion-hopping sites and pathways, which becomes much more complicated when it comes to some highly disordered and low symmetry lattice systems.

3.4.3. AIMD method

The real-time ion dynamics from AIMD simulations could show the diffusion mechanisms directly without the need for a priori assumption of diffusion pathways.

The diffusivity D from AIMD simulations can be calculated from the Einstein–Smoluchowski equation:

$$D = \frac{1}{2d\Delta t} \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left\langle \left| \vec{r}_i(t + \Delta t) - \vec{r}_i(t) \right|^2 \right\rangle \quad (17)$$

where $\left| \vec{r}_i(t + \Delta t) - \vec{r}_i(t) \right|^2$ represents the mean-squared displacement (MSD) of the ions, $r_i(t)$ corresponds to the position of the ion i at time t in the AIMD calculation, N is the total number of ions, and d is the lattice size.

The diffusivity D at different temperatures can be fitted from the Arrhenius relationship^{65,96,97}:

$$D = D_0 \exp\left(-\frac{E_a}{k_B T}\right) \quad (18)$$

Through this fitting, the overall activation energy E_a and the pre-exponential factor D_0 are obtained. Then, the diffusivity can be

evaluated at different temperatures.

The ionic conductivity σ can be further evaluated by Nernst–Einstein equation:

$$\sigma(T) = \frac{N_L q^2}{V k_B T} D(T) \quad (19)$$

where V is the volume of the simulation model, and q is the charge.

A typical example is the study conducted by Mo et al. who determined the diffusion pathways and the corresponding diffusion coefficients of $\text{Li}_{10}\text{GeP}_2\text{S}_{12}$ (LGPS) by AIMD simulations.⁹⁸ Three facile Li diffusion pathways were observed, and one of them is a one-dimensional diffusion channel along the c -direction, which is consistent with the hypothesis of Kamaya et al.⁹⁹ Two additional diffusion pathways in the ab plane were first proposed and were confirmed five years later in neutron powder diffraction experiments by Weber et al.¹⁰⁰ Besides, the overall activation barrier (0.21 eV) and Li^+ conductivity (9 mS cm^{-1}) were also calculated, which are in remarkable agreement with experimental results, thus confirming the accuracy of AIMD simulations for the study of diffusion mechanisms in crystal structures. It is worth noting that a large number of ion migration events are absolutely necessary during the AIMD simulation in order to obtain convincing diffusion properties.

3.4.4. Monte Carlo simulation and cluster expansion method

Monte Carlo (MC) simulation can well overcome the limitations of computing power for first principles and extend the system size to millions of atoms.¹⁰¹ However, discussing the diffusion mechanism involves large-scale atomic emulations that need the cluster expansion method as an effective medium.^{102–104}

The cluster expansion method is a powerful tool for linking quantum mechanics with large-scale atomic emulations, which usually works as a bridge between first-principles calculations and MC simulations.^{105,106} The method is mainly divided into the following two steps. Firstly, the ground state energies of a small number of configurations are calculated by first principles. By fitting the output data obtained from the first-principles, an important effective cluster interaction (ECI) can be achieved. Secondly, the cluster expansion can be used as a Hamiltonian for MC simulations to calculate the energy of larger supercells. Finally, material properties (such as phase diagram, structure and ion diffusion mechanism) can be obtained from the simulation output.

For example, Van der Ven et al. used the above mentioned method to study lithium ion hopping mechanism and diffusion barrier in Li_xCoO_2 system.¹⁰⁷ First they used the first principles to identify the possible lithium migration mechanisms and found two lithium ion migration paths (ODH and TSH) which greatly depend on the lithium-vacancy arrangement environment. Then, they used cluster expansion method to calculate the activation barrier in every local lithium vacancy environment. Finally, they implemented this procedure of calculating activation barriers in kinetic Monte Carlo simulations to calculate lithium diffusion coefficients. The average activation barrier decreased with the increase of Li concentration.

4. Two-dimensional electrode materials for LIBs

4.1. 2D carbon-based materials

Carbon-based materials are widely used as electrode materials for Li-ion batteries due to their high stability and excellent conductivity. Among them, graphene is a typical 2D representative. Up to now, a large number of 2D carbon materials have been found, and some of them have been proved to have great potential as lithium-ion electrode materials.

4.1.1. Graphene

The single atomic layers of graphene were successfully exfoliated from graphite by Novoselov and coworkers in 2004.¹⁰⁸ Owing to its irreplaceable unique features, graphene has been intensively studied as

Li-ion battery anodes in recent years.

DFT calculations revealed that a single Li atom cannot be adsorbed on the defect-free single-layer graphene (SLG) surface. On the contrary, Li atoms prefer to form clusters on the surface of graphene. For example, Lee et al. discussed Li adsorption and intercalation in single-layer and few-layer graphene.¹⁰⁹ They found that no Li atoms could be arranged on the surface of SLG due to the positive absorption energy (Fig. 8a). Moreover, they found Li atoms could intercalate into few-layer graphene, while the capacity is far below that of bulk graphite. This is highly in agreement with the in-situ Raman spectroscopy results obtained by Pollak et al. who found low surface coverage of Li (about 5%) on SLG and few-layer graphene, equivalent to the capacity of LiC₂₀.¹¹⁰ Fan et al. proposed that, under some favorable conditions, the formation of small Li clusters on the surface of defect-free graphene is possible (Fig. 8b).¹¹¹ However, it should be noted that with increasing Li content, Li dendrites can be formed and thus poses stability issues. The process of Li cluster formation on graphene has been studied by Liu and coworkers.¹¹² They believed that the driving force for the nucleation could be the low-energy electrons localized inside the Li clusters.

Regarding the poor Li adsorption on pristine graphene and the Li clustering, recent achievements have proved that heteroatom-doped graphene could enhance the storage capacities. For example, Wu et al. found that the layered nitrogenated holey graphene (C₂N) nanosheets can achieve an extremely high specific capacity of Li storage up to 2939 mA h g⁻¹, which is nearly 6–8 times that of graphite (Table 1).¹²¹ Si-doped graphene can not only improve the storage capacity (1171 mA h g⁻¹) of Li atoms but also reduce the volume expansion effect (0.4%).¹²² Germagraphene can achieve a high Li storage capacity up to 1734 mA h g⁻¹ at the optimal Ge concentration, C₁₇Ge.¹²³ Compared with monodoping, the integration of two heterogeneous species into graphene is easier to achieve. Denis's group studied the adsorption of Li onto X-monodoped (X = Al, Si, P, and S) and XY dual-doped graphene (Y=B, N, and O).¹²⁴ Based on the analysis of the 18 different systems, the

researchers found that the performance of dual-doped graphene is better than the mono-doped one due to better control of the interaction energy of Li onto graphene and the electronic properties of graphene.

It has been found that the presence of defects can improve the ratio of Li/C greatly, and different types of defects significantly affect the performance of electrodes.¹²⁵ Generally, the common defects can be classified as: single vacancy (SV), divacancy (DV), Stone-Wales (SW) defect and grain boundary (GB). Okamoto discussed the Li insertion and adsorption in three types of graphene (defect-free, defective, and hydrogen-terminated carbon vacancies),¹²⁶ and found that the carbon vacancies strongly enhance the interaction between Li and graphene because of the dangling bonds. Datta et al. further discussed the Li adsorption on graphene with different percentages of DV and SW defect densities.¹¹³ They found that the underlying charge-transfer mechanism is responsible for enhanced adsorption on defective graphene (Fig. 8c). Moreover, for the maximum possible DV defect density, Li storage capacities have been predicted to be 1675 mA h g⁻¹, while for SW defects, the maximum capacity can be up to 1100 mA h g⁻¹. Moreover, the heteroatom-doped defective graphene also exhibits great potential as electrode. Hardikar and coworkers discussed five different types of boron-doped defective graphene, including: (i) DV, (ii) SW, (iii) pristine boron doped, (iv) boron doped mono-vacancy, (v) one-, and two-boron doped DV.¹²⁷ Among these systems, two-boron doped mono-vacancy graphene has been predicted as the most suitable anode material because of the low energy barrier of 0.31 eV and good adsorption effect. Moreover, the GBs of graphene which consist of pentagons, heptagons and octagons also exhibit great influence on the performance of Li adsorption and diffusion on graphene.¹²⁸

4.1.2. Graphene-like 2D carbon structures

Apart from graphene, various 2D carbon allotropes have been predicted theoretically, some of which have also been prepared experimentally.

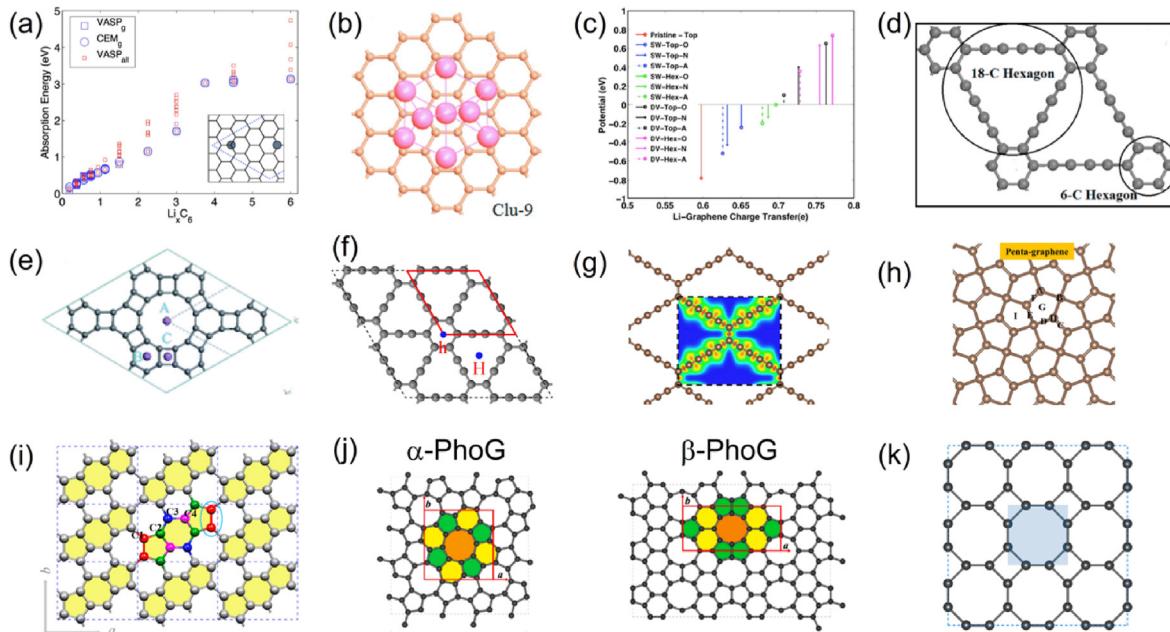


Fig. 8. (a) Absorption energy on defect-free single-layer graphene predicted by the DFT calculations. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 109. (b) Schematic representations of the Li_9 adsorbed on graphene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 111. (c) Charge-transfer vs lithiation potential on defective graphene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 113. (d) Optimized geometries of graphdiyne. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 114. (e) Layer structure of graphenylene in a 2×2 supercell. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 115. (f) 2×2 supercell of monolayer graphyne. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 116. (g) The structure of carbon ene-yne. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 71. (h) Schematic illustration of all the possible Li adsorption sites on penta-graphene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 118. (i) Optimized structure of ψ -graphene with the s-indacene skeletons highlighted in yellow. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 119. (j) Structures of phographene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 119. (k) Crystal structures of T-graphene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 120.

Table 1

Summary of performance parameters for 2D materials used in Li-ion batteries.

Electrode materials	Adsorption energy (eV)	Diffusion barrier (eV)	Capacity (mA h g ⁻¹)	Ref.
Pristine G	-1.463	0.311	N.A.	109
N-doped G	-2.868	0.356	2939	121
Si-doped G	-1.54	0.1333	1171	122
Ge-doped G	-0.94	0.151	1734	123
GDY	-2.63	0.18	N.A.	114
CEY	-1.098	0.58	2680	117
Penta-G	-0.30	0.17	1489	71
ψ -graphene	-0.64	0.265	372	118
α -PhoG	-0.38	0.28	892	119
β -PhoG	-0.38	0.15	557	119
T-graphene	-1.155	0.44	2233.2	120
Borophene	-1.12	0.0026	1860	131
β_{12} borophene	-1.766	0.66	1984	132
χ_3 borophene	-1.433	0.6	1240	132
β_1^s	-1.62	0.40	1239.56	133
BG	-1.92	0.33	1653	134
h-borophene	-1.06	0.53	5268	135
Borophane	-2.58	0.27	504	136
Phosphorene	-1.8	0.76	432.79	91
Blue phosphorus	-2.02	0.12	865	137
Silicene	-2.27	1.33	1196	138
MoSSe	-2.8	0.23	776.5	139
VS ₂	-2.13	0.22	466	140
ReS ₂	-2.28	0.33	428	141
WS ₂ /NbSe ₂	-3.26	0.18	842.4	142
Ti ₃ C ₂	-3.535	0.07	320	143
Ti ₃ C ₂ S ₂	-1.94	0.25	462.6	144
Ti ₂ N	-0.71	0.017	487	145
Ti ₃ CN	-2.57	0.024	320	146
V ₃ C ₂	-1.01	0.04	606.42	74
V ₂ C	-1.573	0.045	940	147
Mo ₂ C	-0.97	0.043	526	148
Mn ₂ C	-1.93	0.05	879	149
Sc ₂ C	-0.31	0.018	462	150
Nb ₂ C	-0.71	0.036	305	151
Hf ₃ C ₂	-2.23	0.027	1034.70	152
TiNbC	-0.802	0.018	351	153
VC ₂ - α	-0.61	0.51	1073	154
VC ₂ - β	-0.65	0.11	1073	154
MoN ₂	-1.81	0.78	432	83
NiC ₃	-0.89	0.5	1698	155

As a carbon allotrope, graphdiyne (GDY) consists of a sp - and sp^2 -hybridized carbon network (Fig. 8d).¹¹⁴ For GDY monolayers, it shows high storage capacity comparable to LiC₃, and excellent mobility with diffusion barriers from 0.17 to 0.84 eV. Graphylene, because of its unique dodecagonal holes, exhibits a low energy barrier (<0.99 eV) both on and through graphylene layers (Fig. 8e).¹¹⁵ Monolayer and bilayer graphylene compounds with the maximum Li contents are Li₃C₆ and Li_{2.5}C₆, which correspond to capacities of 1116 and 930 mA h g⁻¹, respectively. Zhang et al. found the capacity of graphyne increases with strain (Fig. 8f).¹¹⁶ Under the 12% strain, the Li capacity of the Li₆C₆ configuration for graphyne reaches 2233 mA h g⁻¹. Moreover, the structure of graphyne monolayer can keep intact below the 16% strain. Carbon ene-yne (CEY), another graphyne-based structure, was successfully synthesized by the solvent-phase reaction recently (Fig. 8g).¹¹⁷ CEY exhibits a high theoretical charge capacity of 2680 mA h g⁻¹ for Li-ion batteries (Table 1). Penta-graphene was first proposed by Zhang et al. who found that a single Li-ion prefers to absorb on the A-site of penta-graphene with the adsorption energy of -0.30/-0.41 eV (Fig. 8h).⁷¹ ψ -graphene, which can be synthesized by using s-indacene derivatives as molecule precursors, has the lowest energy among all hitherto reported 2D allotropes of carbon composed of 5–6–7 carbon rings (Fig. 8i).¹¹⁸ Thomas et al. predicted that ψ -graphene possesses a capacity of 339 mA h g⁻¹ and a diffusion barrier less than 0.21 eV¹²⁹ α - and β -phographenes (PhoG) consist of 5-, 6- and 8-membered rings that show great potential as electrodes (Fig. 8j).¹¹⁹ Both systems exhibit fast Li

mobility and low average OCV. Particularly, α -PhoG shows a higher theoretical specific capacity of 892 mA h g⁻¹ (Li_{2.4}C₆). Because of low atomic mass and special periodic lattice structure, T-graphene shows an extremely high capacity of 2233.2 mA h g⁻¹ (Fig. 8k).¹²⁰ Moreover, it exhibits good cycling performance with very small lattice change of about 1.0% after lithium adsorption.¹³⁰

4.2. Elemental 2D materials

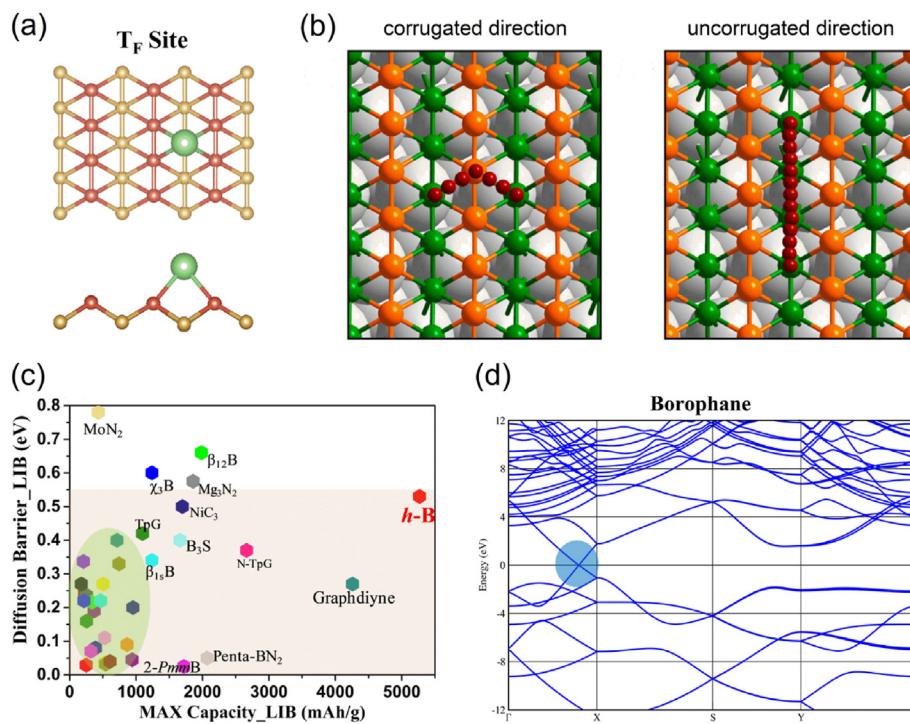
4.2.1. Borophene

Boron is the fifth element in the periodic table and located just near carbon. In 2015, 2D borophene (δ_6 B) was successfully synthesized by Mannix et al. Before that, a large variety of planar 2D boron sheet structures have already been theoretically predicted.^{156–160} Very recently, triangular borophene (Δ B), β_{12} -borophene (β_{12} B), and χ_3 -borophene (χ_3 B) have been successfully grown on some metal (Ag (111), Cu (111) and Au (111)) surfaces with novel physicochemical properties.^{161–163} Because of the metallicity, light weight and the porous configurations, 2D borophenes have been expected as promising electrode materials.

Jiang et al. suggested that borophene can be applied to Li-ion battery with ultrahigh theoretical capacity.¹³¹ They found that the most stable site for Li adsorption is above the top of boron atoms (T_F site) with the adsorption energy of -1.12 eV (Fig. 9a), and the binding energy between Li atoms and borophene generally decreases with the increase of the Li content. In addition, the capacity of borophene is predicted to be 1860 mA h g⁻¹, which is four times higher than that of graphite (372 mA h g⁻¹). Besides, borophene as an anode in Li-ion battery also exhibits ultrahigh rate capability.⁹² Because of the anisotropic ripple structure, the energy barrier of the Li-ion along uncorrugated direction is predicted to be 0.033 eV, which is highly energetically favorable compared with the corrugated direction (0.274 eV) (Fig. 9b). This finding suggests that lithium diffusion on borophene can be extremely fast.

Different types of borophene exhibit different properties as electrodes. For β_{12} borophene and χ_3 borophene, the full lithium storage phases correspond to Li₈B₁₀ and Li₈B₁₆ with theoretical specific capacities of 1984 mA h g⁻¹ and 1240 mA h g⁻¹, respectively.¹³² Borophene β_1^s is a semiconductor with a band gap of 0.74 eV.¹³³ Theoretical calculations find that it shows metallic characteristics after lithiation, thus improving the conductivity of the electrode materials. A new structure B_G has been found to show special electronic property with double Dirac cones.¹³⁴ The energy barriers of Li-ion and Li vacancy diffusion on B_G are calculated to be 330 and 110 meV, respectively, which imply fast charge and discharge ability for B_G as an anode material. It is worth noting that the honeycomb borophene (h-borophene) exhibited the highest theoretical capacity (5268 mA h g⁻¹) among all the 2D materials for the LIBs (Fig. 9c).¹³⁵ This can be explained by the non-buckled structure of h-borophene which has the least molar mass per unit cell and the highest density of hexagonal holes, offering more adsorption sites.

To circumvent the stability issues of borophene synthesis process, hydrogenation of borophene has been proposed theoretically.¹⁶⁴ Borophane, as the hydrogenated counterpart of borophene, is a gapless Dirac material (Fig. 9d).¹³⁶ Based on DFT calculations, the borophane with the maximum Li content is Li_{0.445}B₂H₂. Shukla and coworkers found that the diffusion barrier of Li ion on bilayer is much lower than that on hydrogen boride single layer.¹⁶⁵ Although borophane can be an attractive anode for LIBs, only complete hydrogenation of borophene can achieve a stable structure. Besides, introducing metal elements to provide extra electrons to π -orbitals has also been proved to be an effective way to overcome the limitation of kinetic instability of borophane.¹⁶⁶ Zhou's group systematically investigated the feasibility of BeB₂ and MgB₂ monolayers as anode materials for Li ion batteries.¹⁶⁷ The BeB₂ and MgB₂ monolayers exhibit great dynamical and thermodynamical stability. During the lithiation/delithiation process, the maximum percentage changes of the lattice parameters of the Li-BeB₂ and Li-MgB₂ systems are as low as -1.66% and 1.75%, which further prove their good cycle stability.



Meanwhile, the storage capacities of Li atoms on the BeB₂ and MgB₂ monolayers can reach 1749.8 and 1750.9 mA h g⁻¹.

4.2.2. Phosphorene

2D phosphorene was first isolated in 2014 by Liu and coworkers through mechanical exfoliation method.^{168,169} It consists of single layers of the artificially made layered black phosphorus and exhibits a unique puckered structure with sp^3 hybrid. The following two unique characters of phosphorene make it a promising anode material for Li-ion battery: (1) nonzero fundamental band gap which can be modulated by Li atoms; (2) puckered structure which can expose more surface area for Li adsorption.¹⁷⁰⁻¹⁷²

Zhao and coworkers used DFT calculations to investigate the adsorption and diffusion properties of Li atoms on single-layer and double-layer structures of phosphorene.⁹¹ The results show that Li atoms bind strongly with phosphorene, especially for the double-layer

Fig. 9. (a) Top and side views of high-symmetry Li adsorption T_F site in borophene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 131. (b) Two possible pathways of Li diffusion along corrugated (path-x) and uncorrugated (path-y) directions of the borophene layer fabricated on an Ag (111) surface. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 92. (c) DFT calculated diffusion barriers and the maximum storage capacities of h-borophene and other typical 2D anode materials for LIB. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 135. (d) Band structures of borophane. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 136.

phosphorene. The diffusion barriers and theoretical capacities of Li on monolayer and double-layer phosphorene are 0.76 eV and 432.79 mA h g⁻¹, 0.72 eV and 324.59 mA h g⁻¹, respectively. It is worth noting that there exists a semiconductor-to-conductor transition during the lithiation process (Fig. 10a). The diffusion properties of lithium ion on phosphorene have been further studied.^{70,173} The results implied that the diffusion along the zigzag direction is highly favorable with a shallow energy barrier of 0.08 eV, while the diffusion along the armchair direction is almost prohibited (0.68 eV) (Fig. 10b). Guo et al. compared the performance of pristine and defect-containing phosphorenes.¹⁷⁴ They found that the defect can greatly increase the binding energy between the Li atom and the substrate by about 1 eV. More importantly, the defect opens a novel channel (between two adjacent grooves) for Li diffusion with an extremely low energy barrier of 0.13 eV (Fig. 10c). However, the diffusion barrier of Li ions along the zigzag direction increases sharply in the range from 0.17 to 0.49 eV.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the ultrafast migration of Li ions

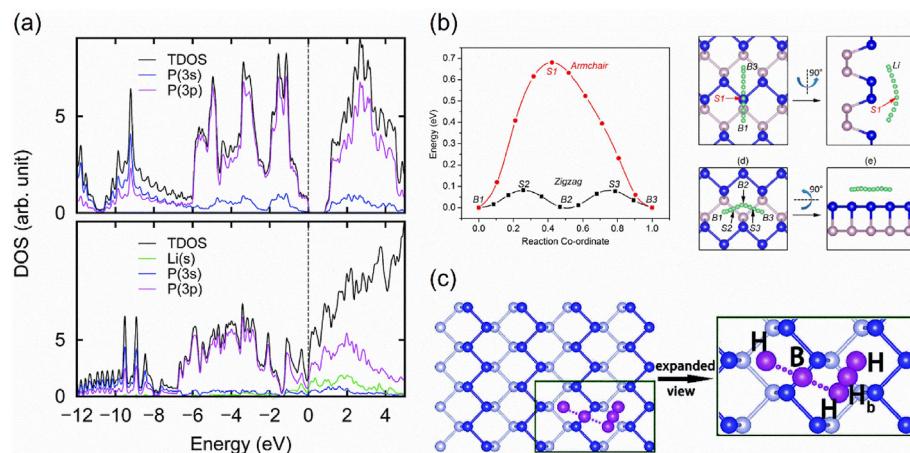


Fig. 10. (a) Total and projected density of states of the pristine phosphorene and fully lithiated phosphorene monolayers. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 91. (b) Energy profiles of Li diffusion along armchair and zigzag directions on phosphorene surface. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 70. (c) Diffusion path between two nearest H sites on phosphorene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 174.

along the zigzag direction would be blocked by the vacancy effect. Unlike black phosphorene, 2D blue phosphorus is isotropic, and there is only one diffusion path between the nearest stable adsorption sites with an energy barrier less than 0.4 eV.¹³⁷ The blue phosphorus shows high charge capacities (865 mA h g⁻¹ for single-layer and 649 mA h g⁻¹ for double-layer blue phosphorus) during the lithiation process.

4.2.3. Silicene

Bulk silicon exhibits a remarkably high theoretical capacity of 4200 mA h g⁻¹, which is more than ten times of graphite (372 mA h g⁻¹).^{176,177} However, the huge volume change (~400%) of silicon during lithium insertion/extraction process would cause rapid decay of Si electrode performance. In contrast to bulk phases, the associated change in 2D silicene is found to be minimal, and the possible use in LIBs has also been theoretically studied.¹⁷⁸

Xu et al. found that the adsorption pattern of Li atoms on silicene changes with the concentration of Li.¹³⁸ At a very low concentration (<1.56%), Li-ions are adsorbed on hollow sites. At a high concentration, the Li chains with up-down pairs on top sites become popular (Fig. 11a). They predicted that the capacity of silicene can reach 1196 mA h g⁻¹ (Table 1). Seyed-Talebi and coworkers reported that the adsorption of Li atoms turns silicene into a narrow gap semiconductor with the band gap ranging from 0.044 to 0.067 eV on different adsorption sites.¹⁷⁹

Strain, defects, and heteroatom doping could greatly influence the performance of silicene in Li-ion batteries. For instance, Wang and co-workers found the tensile strain could enhance Li binding on silicene because of the increased charge transfer between Li and silicene.¹⁸⁰ Setiadi et al. discussed three kinds of defects (Stone-Thrower-Wales (STW), SV, and DV silicene) and found that the types of vacancy would affect the value of diffusion barrier (Fig. 11b).¹⁸¹ Moreover, the diffusion barrier for the DV is much lower than the SV. Momeni and coworkers explored Li adsorption and diffusion on defective silicenes (Si-5559 and Si-5105).¹⁸² The diffusion barriers of Li on the surface of Si-5559 and Si-5105 were calculated to be 0.24 and 0.29 eV, respectively. Based on AIMD simulations, fully lithiated Si-5559 is not stable and cannot accommodate lithium atoms (Fig. 11c). On the contrary, Si-5105 is stable and could store a certain amount of lithium atoms. The theoretical capacity of Si-5105 was calculated to be 664 mA h g⁻¹. This group also

investigated the potential of heteroatom (Al-, B-, P-, and N-) doped silicenes as electrodes in Li-ion batteries.¹⁸³ They found that the adsorption energy of Li atoms on doped silicenes is larger than that on pristine silicene, and Al- and B-doped silicenes show a stronger interaction with Li than P- and N-doped silicenes, which is confirmed by the OCV results (Fig. 11d). Besides, based on the spin electronic difference plot of N-doped silicene, spin density is mostly concentrated around the nitrogen and three neighboring silicon atoms (Fig. 11e). For Li diffusion, doping silicene with nitrogen and phosphorus atoms facilitates the mobility of Li on the surface (diffusion barriers of 0.05 and 0.11 eV, respectively), while doping with aluminum can speed up Li diffusion in the perpendicular direction. Wu et al. designed a fluorinated penta-silicene and observed that the fluorine-concentration-induced transition from semiconductor to metal.¹⁸⁴ B-substituted silicenes (H-BSi₃ and R-BSi₃) exhibit unusual planar geometry which ensures a high theoretical capacity of 1410 mA h g⁻¹ for single-layer and 846 mA h g⁻¹ for double-layer BSi₃ silicenes.¹⁸⁵ Besides, the existence of GBs greatly improves the binding with Li, which can be ascribed to the donation of Li 2s electron to the GBs.¹⁸⁶

4.3. Metal compound

4.3.1. Transition metal sulfides

2D transition metal sulfides (TMDs) are an important class of 2D materials with the general formula of MX₂, where M denotes a transition metal and X is a chalcogen (S, Se, Te).^{187–189} Among all the structures, 2H, 1 T and 1' T phases are considered to be the three relatively stable phases in TMD materials. Depending on the type of constituent elements and the synthesis method, one of the phases may be thermodynamically more stable than the other two.

Mo-based TMDs (such as MoS₂) as the most representative TMDs have been widely investigated as anode in Li-ion batteries. For example, 1 T-MoS₂ monolayer as the electrode has more advantages than 2H-MoS₂, since the continuous intercalation of Li ions would produce structural dissociation and induce structural transition from the 2H to the 1 T phase (Fig. 12a).¹⁹⁰ Based on the DFT calculations, the maximal adsorption capacity could reach 7 layers for Li on 1 T-MoS₂ monolayer with the value of 1172 mA h g⁻¹.¹⁹¹ Besides, the application of tensile strain on

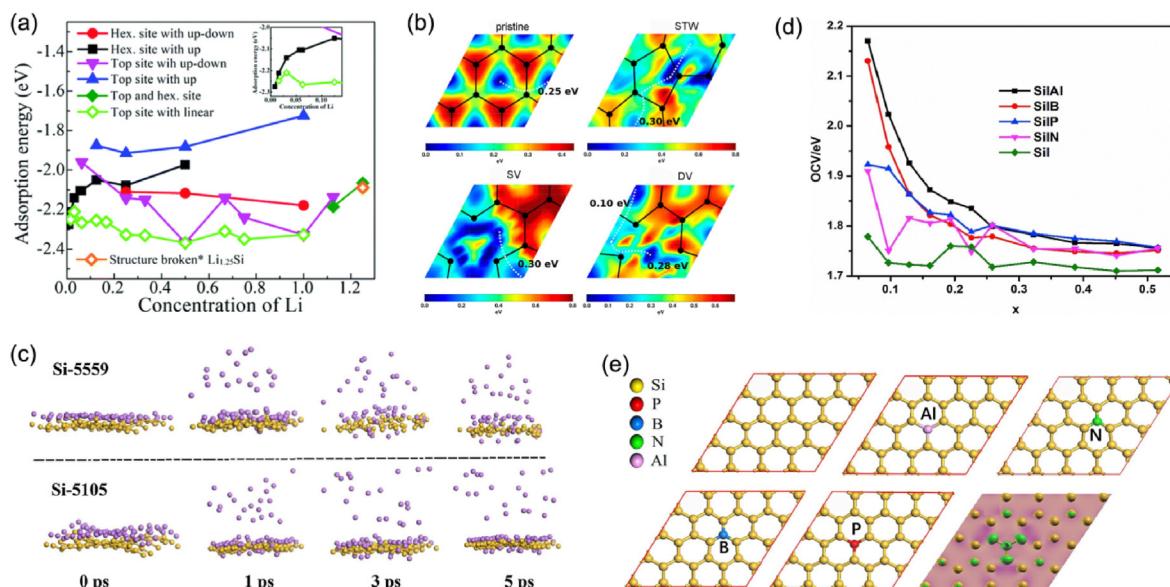


Fig. 11. (a) Adsorption energy as a function of Li concentration on silicene for different models. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 138. (b) Pseudo-color plot of energy profile of lithium diffusion on the surface of pristine, STW, SV, and DV silicene. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 181. (c) Snapshots of fully lithiated defective silicenes during AIMD simulations. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 182. (d) Variation of OCV as a function of Li concentration. (e) Optimized structure of pristine and doped silicenes, as well as spin electron density of N-doped silicene (the green areas show the spin densities). Reproduced with permission from Ref. 183.

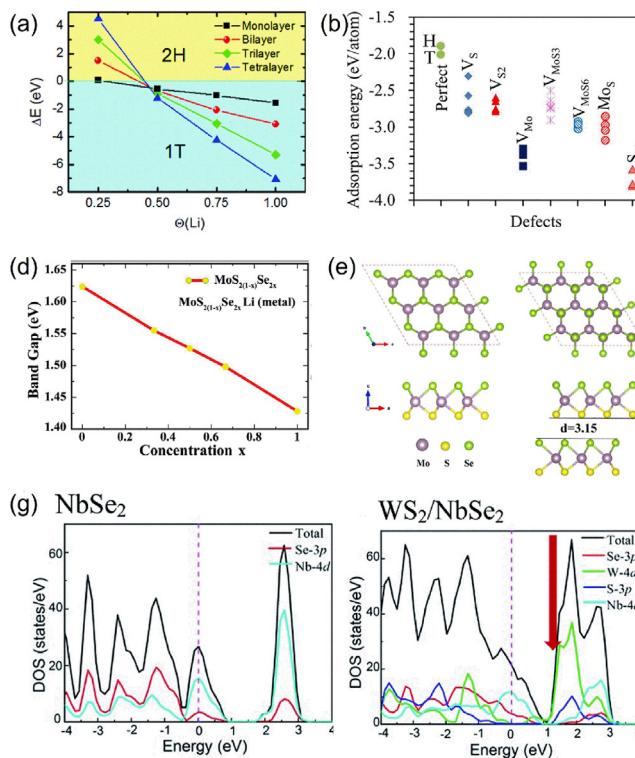


Fig. 12. (a) Energy difference (ΔE) between 2H and 1T phases in four Li-intercalated MoS₂ nanosheets as a function of Li coverage. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 190. (b) Adsorption energies of Li adsorbed on different sites of MoS₂ around the point defect. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 192. (c) Diffusion energy profiles for Li on metal (upper) and nonmetal (lower) atom-doped monolayer MoS₂. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 193. (d) Variation of band gaps with and without lithium adsorption. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 194. (e) Top view and side view of the SLM (upper row) and DLM (lower row). Reproduced with permission from Ref. 139. (f) Band structures of WSe₂ under 0% (upper) and 10% (lower) strains. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 195. (g) Total DOS and orbital-resolved PDOS of the NbSe₂ monolayer and the WS₂/NbSe₂ heterostructure. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 142.

MoS₂ can greatly increase the adsorption energy and improve the conductivity. Compared with the pristine MoS₂, the existence of defects (including single- and few-atom vacancies, antisite, and grain boundary) on MoS₂ would enhance the adsorption energies in the range between 2.81 and 3.80 eV (Fig. 12b).¹⁹² Sun et al. investigated the heteroatom-doping effect by substituting S with non-metal elements (N, P, As, F, Cl, and I) and Mo with metal elements (Fe, Co, Ni, Cu, and Zn) on a MoS₂ monolayer through DFT calculations.¹⁹³ The results showed that the S-rich or Mo-rich conditions exhibit different adsorption energies and diffusion barriers. To be specific, under the Mo-rich conditions, the substitutions of S with P, As, Cl, and I lead to negative formation energies. Under the S-rich conditions, the formation energies are negative only when Mo is substituted by Fe atoms. For the diffusion barrier, except Ni, Cu, and Cu dopants with energy barriers of 0.82, 0.62, and 0.72 eV, respectively, the others are around 0.25 eV (Fig. 12c). Ersan and co-workers examined the properties of lithium on the MoS_{2(1-x)}Se_{2x} monolayers with different contents of x.¹⁹⁴ They found that the band gap of MoS_{2(1-x)}Se_{2x} compounds varies with x and this semiconductor can be metalized by Li adsorption (Fig. 12d). Moreover, the penetration energy barrier for a single lithium atom to pass through the MoS_{2(1-x)}Se_{2x} monolayers is large and would decrease from 2.5 to 1.3 eV with increasing selenium concentration. For Li-ion on the single-layer MoSSe (SLM) and the double-layer MoSSe (DLM) (Fig. 12e), Li-ions can be stored by both systems due to their intrinsic dipole moment and charge redistribution.¹³⁹ The theoretical capacity of the SLM is higher than that of the DLM, which are 776.5 and 452.9 mA h g⁻¹, respectively.

Except for the typical Mo-based TMDs, other TMDs also exhibit great potential as electrodes for Li-ion batteries. For example, VS₂ monolayer has been predicted to have a high theoretical capacity of 466 mA h g⁻¹ and a low average open-circuit voltage of 0.93 V (vs Li/Li⁺).¹⁴⁰ Pristine ReS₂ has been found to show a strong binding with Li atoms with an adsorption energy of -2.28 eV.¹⁴¹ Strain-engineered WSe₂ monolayer shows decreased band gap from 1.4 eV to 0.7 eV after being imposed 10% tensile strain (Fig. 12f).¹⁹⁵ Moreover, the TMD/TMD double-layered heterostructures also exhibit excellent performance as an electrode material. Liu et al. systematically investigated the performance of WS₂,

NbSe₂, and WS₂/NbSe₂ heterostructure as electrodes in Li-ion batteries.¹⁴² They found that new electronic state occupation appear in the heterostructure, which enhances the conductivity of the system (Fig. 12g). Moreover, the Li diffusion barrier on the WS₂/NbSe₂ heterostructure is 0.18 eV, which is much lower than that on single WS₂ and NbSe₂ monolayers. Most importantly, the heterostructure was predicted to have a desirable theoretical specific capacity of 842.4 mA h g⁻¹. Wang et al. investigated the properties of MX₂ (M = Mo, W; X = S, Se) single-layer and double-layered heterostructures by the first-principles calculations.¹⁹⁶ They found that the heterostructures, such as MoS₂/WS₂ and MoS₂/MoSe₂, can increase the Li binding energy to 2.1 eV, compared with 1.4–1.8 eV for the monolayer MoX₂.

4.3.2. MXenes

Since the first discovery of Ti₃C₂T_x in 2011, transition metal carbides and nitrides (MXenes) have attracted widespread interest.^{197,198} The general formula of MXenes is M_{n+1}X_nT_x ($n = 1\text{--}3$), where M represents the transition metal (such as Ti), X refers to carbon and/or nitrogen, and T stands for the surface terminations (for example, -O, -F, or -OH). Similar to TMDs, MXenes have been predicted to have both 1T and 2H phase by DFT calculations. However, only 1T phases have been experimentally prepared. It is worth mentioning that all the investigated MXenes show metallic properties which are beneficial for their application as energy storage materials.

Ti-based MXene: Titanium-based MXenes (such as Ti₂C, Ti₃C₂, Ti₂CT_x, and Ti₃C₂T_x), as the most representative MXene materials, have attracted several computational investigations on its electronic properties and Li storage capability.

Tang and coworkers found that the bare Ti₃C₂ monolayer shows magnetic metal characters which is beneficial for enhancing the electronic conductivities (Fig. 13a).¹⁴³ Moreover, because of the low diffusion barrier (0.07 eV), Li atoms can easily transport on the surfaces of Ti₃C₂ monolayers. Er et al. observed that the adsorption energies of Li atoms on Ti₃C₂ monolayer depend on the coverage, and predicted that the capacity of Ti₃C₂ is 447.8 mA h g⁻¹.⁸⁹ Xie et al. focused on the Ti₃C₂O₂Li system and calculated the corresponding electron localization

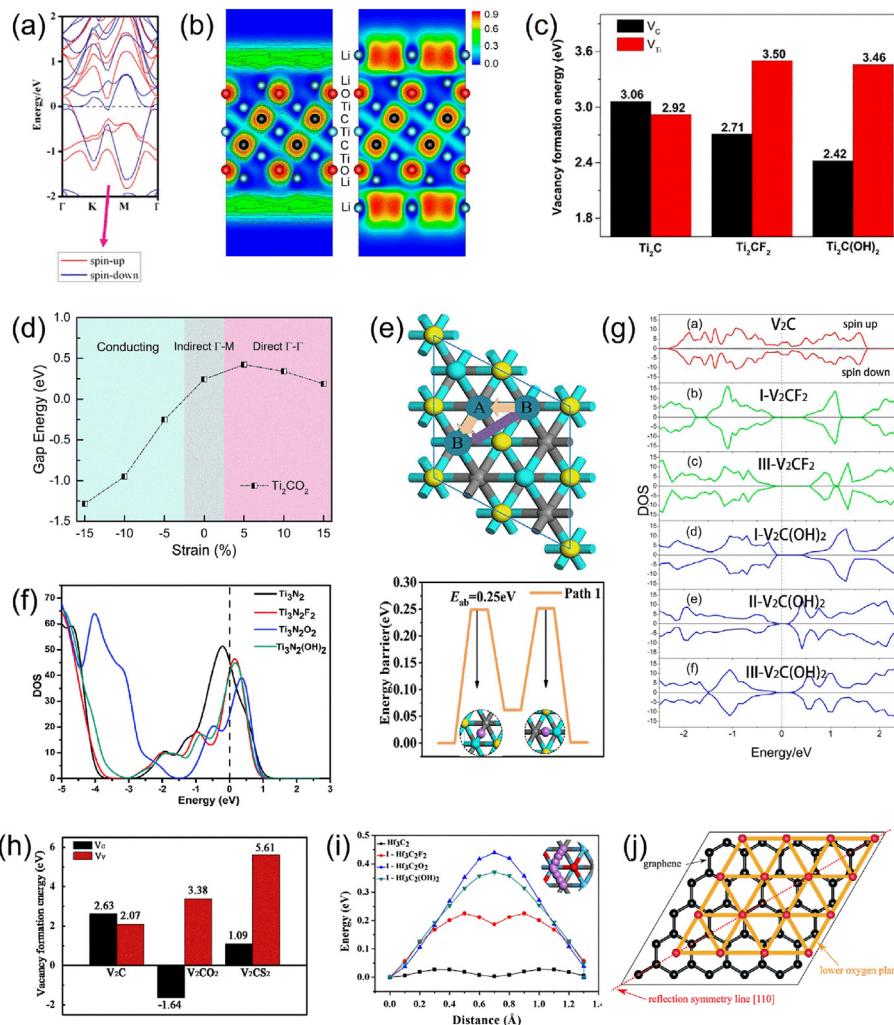


Fig. 13. (a) Band structures near the Fermi level for the Ti_3C_2 monolayer. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 143. (b) Valence ELF of (110) sections of lithiated $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{O}_2\text{Li}_2$ monolayer and that with an extra Li layer. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 199. (c) Vacancy formation energies of Ti_2C and Ti_2CT_2 ($T = \text{F}$ and OH) monolayers. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 200. (d) Strain dependence of band gap energy for Ti_2CO_2 . Reproduced with permission from Ref. 202. (e) Schematic illustration of the Li-ion migration path on $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{O}_2$ and the corresponding energy profiles. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 144. (f) Total DOS of Ti_3N_2 , $\text{Ti}_3\text{N}_2\text{F}_2$, $\text{Ti}_3\text{N}_2\text{O}_2$ and $\text{Ti}_3\text{N}_2(\text{OH})_2$. The Fermi levels are set to zero and are indicated by the dashed lines. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 203. (g) Spin-resolved total DOS of V_2C , I-V₂CF₂, III-V₂CF₂, I-V₂C(OH)₂, II-V₂C(OH)₂, and III-V₂C(OH)₂. The Fermi levels are set to zero. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 147. (h) Vacancy formation energy for V_2C , V_2CO_2 and V_2CS_2 monolayer. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 204. (i) Diffusion barrier profiles of Li atom on Hf_3C_2 and I-Hf₃C₂T₂ ($T = \text{F}, \text{O}, \text{OH}$) monolayers. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 152. (j) $\text{M}_2\text{CX}_2/\text{graphene}$ heterostructure in its ground state stacking. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 205.

function (ELF) plot (Fig. 13b), in which the electron transfer between Li and O and that between Ti and C can be visualized, and the interaction between two extra Li layers indicates the ability of binding an extra layer.¹⁹⁹ The effect of vacancies on Ti_2C and Ti_2CT_2 monolayers have been studied by Wan et al.²⁰⁰ For the carbon vacancy (V_{C}), the surface is suggested to be modified with -OH groups (Fig. 13c). For the titanium vacancies (V_{Ti}), all the functional groups are suggested to be removed. Si-doped Ti_2C nanosheets can better satisfy the capacity demand of energy storage for lithium-ion batteries compared with pristine Ti_2C . The Si-doped Ti_2C exhibited a storage capacity of 439.4 mA h g⁻¹ which nearly increased by 32% than pristine Ti_2C .²⁰¹ Strain engineering could tailor the conduction behavior.²⁰² The indirect band gap in pristine Ti_2CO_2 changes to a direct band gap under tensile strain and turns to close under compressive strain (Fig. 13d). Chalcogenated- $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{X}_2$ (X = O, S, Se, and Te) MXene has been systematically investigated as anode in Li-ion batteries.¹⁴⁴ Among these four systems, $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{S}_2$ exhibits enhanced Li-ion storage with a capacity of 462.6 mA h g⁻¹ and a low diffusion energy barrier of 0.25 eV (Fig. 13e). Moreover, chalcogenation yields expanded interlayer spacing, which improves the Li-ion accessibility in $\text{Ti}_3\text{C}_2\text{X}_2$.

Nitride MXenes, owing to the high electrical conductivities, have also attracted intensive attention. For example, Ti_3N monolayer as electrode has a high OCV of 0.53 V, a large specific capacity of 487 mA h g⁻¹, and an extremely low diffusion barrier of 21.5 meV.¹⁴⁵ Yu et al. discussed the electronic properties and storage capabilities of Ti_3N_2 and $\text{Ti}_3\text{N}_2\text{X}_2$ (X = O, F, and OH) monolayers as anode materials in rechargeable

batteries.²⁰³ Both bare and terminated Ti_3N_2 monolayers exhibit metallic behavior before and after Li-ion adsorption (Fig. 13f). The existence of functional groups, except for $\text{Ti}_3\text{N}_2\text{O}_2$, is proven to be unfavorable to metal ion migration and will decrease the corresponding storage capacities. Chen and coworkers use DFT calculations to systematically discuss the mechanism of Li adsorption and diffusion on Ti_3CN and Ti_3CNT_2 (T = F, O, and OH) monolayers.¹⁴⁶ Based on their results, the diffusion barrier of Li ions on bare Ti_3CN is extremely low (less than 0.03 eV), and the barrier increases a lot after the introduction of surface groups (as high as 0.24–0.26 eV). It is worth noting that Li atoms prefer to be adsorbed on the nitrogen side for Ti_3CN without functional groups and the carbon side for Ti_3CN with functional groups.

V-based MXenes: Vanadium carbides have been predicted to exhibit excellent properties such as fast charge-discharge and high theoretical storage capacity. Fan et al. revealed that the diffusion barrier for Li on V_3C_2 is 0.04 eV and the storage capacity can reach up to 606.42 mA h g⁻¹.⁷⁴ Hu et al. performed DFT calculations to study the properties of V_2C and its F/OH functionalized derivatives.¹⁴⁷ The V_2C monolayer is an antiferromagnetic metal, while V_2CF_2 and $\text{V}_2\text{C}(\text{OH})_2$ are antiferromagnetic semiconductors with a small gap (Fig. 13g). Moreover, the bare V_2C monolayer shows a very high Li storage capacity (~940 mA h g⁻¹), while the functional groups on its surface largely reduce the Li storage capacity. V_2CO_2 and V_2CS_2 exhibit larger absorption energy and lower diffusion barrier than V_2CF_2 or $\text{V}_2\text{C}(\text{OH})_2$ monolayer.²⁰⁶ Li et al. found that the diffusion barrier for Li-ion on V_2CS_2 is lower than that of O-functionalized.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the presence of atomic

vanadium vacancy on V_2CS_2 monolayer exerts more prominent effects on enhancing adsorption strength than that of carbon vacancy for Li-ion (Fig. 13h). Besides, V_4C_3 monolayer exhibits excellent rate ability with the energy barriers as low as 0.048 eV for Li ions diffusion along its surface.²⁰⁷

Other MXenes: Except for Ti-based and V-based MXenes, other kinds of MXenes are also widely explored by researchers. Mo_2C was predicted to be an appealing anode material because of the high storage capacity of 526 mA h g⁻¹ and small diffusion barriers of 43 meV.^{148,208} For Mn_2C sheet, Li atoms exhibit strong binding effect with adsorption energy of -1.93 eV, which implies high theoretical capacity (879 mA h g⁻¹).¹⁴⁹ The diffusion barriers of Sc_2C monolayer are as low as 0.018 eV for Li, which illustrates the high mobility and cycling ability.¹⁵⁰ Bare Nb_2C has shown better performance than Nb_2CX_2 (X = O, F, OH) monolayers.¹⁵¹ A similar phenomenon has been found on Hf-based MXenes (Hf_3C_2 , its derivatives, and hybrid passivated).¹⁵² Bare Hf_3C_2 monolayer exhibits the lowest diffusion energy barrier of 0.027 eV for Li (Fig. 13i) and the highest theoretical capacity of 1034.70 mA h g⁻¹ among all of the Hf-based MXenes. Xie et al. discussed the Li-ion storage capacities of a series of 2D MXenes (Sc_2C , Ti_2C , Ti_3C_2 , V_2C , Cr_2C , and Nb_2C).¹⁹⁹ They recommended that the O-terminated or bare MXenes with light atomic mass (Sc, Ti, V and Cr) are more suitable as electrodes. Zhu et al. found that using S groups to replace O/F/OH functional groups could improve electric conductivities and cycling rates for Zr-based MXenes in Li-ion batteries.²⁰⁹ Wu and coworkers systematically discussed the influence of a single vacancy in the M_2C (M = Sc, Ti, V, Zr, Nb, Mo, Hf, Ta, W) MXene.²¹⁰ They found that vacancy of M atom in MXene is easy to form with the formation energy ranging from 0.96 to 2.85 eV, and the vacancy defect can enhance the adsorption of Li. Aierken et al. combined graphene with six members of the MXene monolayers (M_2CX_2 , where M = Sc, Ti, V, and X = OH, O) (Fig. 13j)²⁰⁵ and found two promising heterostructures for Li intercalation: Ti_2CO_2 /graphene and V_2CO_2 /graphene. These two monolayers exhibit large binding energies of 1.43 eV per Li atom for Ti_2CO_2 /graphene and 1.78 eV per Li atom for V_2CO_2 /graphene when fully loaded with Li atoms, yet the interlayer friction is small. The electrochemical performances of double-metal MXenes, TiNbC and TiNbCT_2 , as anode materials for LIBs, have also been studied.¹⁵³ Based on the results, TiNbC and TiNbCO_2 monolayers are predicted to be excellent anode materials for LIBs with the theoretical Li-ion storage capacity up to 351 mA h g⁻¹ on TiNbC monolayer and 290 mA h g⁻¹ on TiNbCO_2 monolayer, while TiNbC(OH)_2 is unstable for the adsorption of lithium and TiNbCF_2 is unfavorable due to the formation of ring structure between F-groups and Li-ions. For nitride MXenes, Cr_2N monolayer is not suitable for direct use as an electrode material due to its strong chemical interaction with Li ions, while its derivatives

(Cr_2NF_2 and Cr_2NO_2 monolayers) are promising candidates for LIB electrodes.²¹¹ The theoretical specific capacities of Cr_2NF_2 and Cr_2NO_2 monolayers are predicted to be 583 and 556 mA h g⁻¹, respectively.

4.3.3. Other metal compounds

In the above discussion, the advantages of MXenes as LIB electrodes have been presented. However, the stability of MXenes will be challenged when it is exposed to water or air. In fact, 2D metal carbides (MCs) and 2D metal nitrides (MNs), as a new class of materials, have shown excellent performance in terms of stability. In addition, it is worth to note the possible carbon/nitrogen to metal ratio in this kind of materials. For instance, Xu et al. used a global-structure search method to predict two stable 2D carbide structural isomers, $\text{VC}_{2-\alpha}$ and $\text{VC}_{2-\beta}$ monolayers (Fig. 14a).¹⁵⁴ These two systems show the same large theoretical capacity of 1073 mA h g⁻¹, but the diffusion barrier of Li^+ on $\text{VC}_{2-\beta}$ monolayer is much lower than that on $\text{VC}_{2-\alpha}$ monolayer. Zhang et al. proved that MoN_2 monolayer can be exfoliated from its bulk counterpart and is suitable for a LIB cathode.⁸³ Both the pristine and doped MoN_2 are metallic, and Li atoms possess moderate/low migration barriers on MoN_2 , which imply the good charge-discharge rates as battery electrodes. The capacity of MoN_2 monolayer is predicted to be 432 mA h g⁻¹. Zhu et al. identified an entirely planar NiC_3 monolayer as a highly symmetric anode material.¹⁵⁵ The NiC_3 monolayer is metallic and has antiferromagnetic ground state. The calculated diffusion barrier is 0.50 eV for Li (Fig. 14b), and the storage capacity reaches up to 1698 mA h g⁻¹. Yu and coworkers used the unbiased structural search calculations to discuss the potential of 2D Mo_xC_y structures as anodes for LIBs.²¹² They found that both MoC and MoC_2 monolayers exhibit excellent electrode performances (Fig. 14c). In particular, the MoC_2 monolayer exhibits a high theoretical storage capacity of 893.5 mA h g⁻¹ and a small diffusion energy barrier of 0.13 eV.

Metal phosphides as anodes for LIBs have attracted the attention of researchers due to their high average voltage as well as high gravimetric capacity (ranging from 500 to 2000 mA h g⁻¹).²¹³⁻²¹⁶ Harper et al. combined four different crystal structure searching techniques on copper phosphide to screen 42 systems that met the stability criteria from about 20,000 test structures, four of which (CuP_{10} , Cu_2P_7 , CuP_2 and Cu_3P) have already been reported experimentally.²¹⁷ Based on the calculation results, the Cu_2P phase is strongly suggested to be experimentally synthesized and predicted to have a theoretical gravimetric capacity of 508 mA h g⁻¹ as a Li-ion battery electrode, which is greater than both Cu_3P (363 mA h g⁻¹) and graphite (372 mA h g⁻¹). It is worth noting that the actual capacities of the electrode depend on the experimental preparation method. For example, the powdered Cu_3P anodes show an initial capacity ranging from 272 mA h g⁻¹ by using high-temperature synthesis

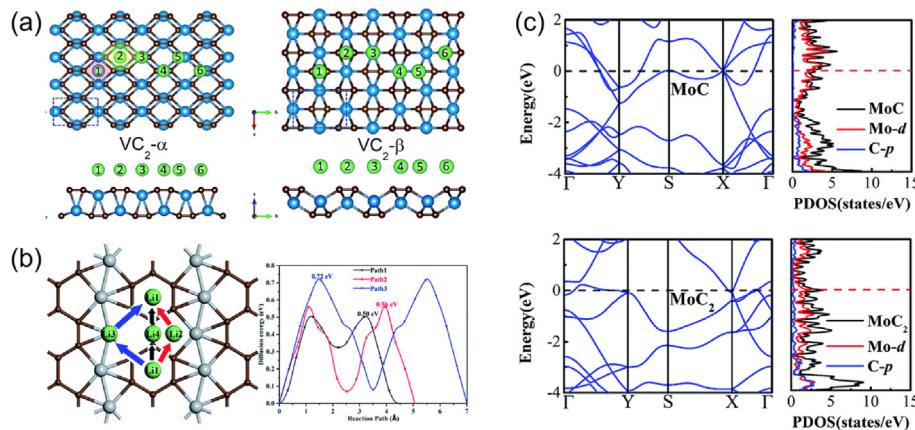


Fig. 14. (a) Structures of $\text{VC}_{2-\alpha}$ and $\text{VC}_{2-\beta}$. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 154. (b) Proposed Li ion migration pathways on the NiC_3 monolayer and the corresponding diffusion energy barriers. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 155. (c) Calculated band structures and projected DOS (PDOS) for MoC and MoC_2 . Reproduced with permission from Ref. 212.

in a silica tube to 527 mA h g⁻¹ using low-temperature solvothermal synthesis.²¹⁸ Besides, Li and coworkers found that layered GeP anode for LIBs exhibit the best performances among all Ge-based anode materials studied.²¹⁹ According to the first-principles calculations, the initial layered crystal structure of GeP can be reconstructed during charging due to its low formation energy, thus providing significant reversibility during cycling. This unique healing phenomenon may be an important reason for the large capacity of lithium storage.

In general, 2D materials possess many unique advantages and exhibit excellent performance (conductivity, capacity, and multiplication capability) as anode for Li-ion batteries. However, cell performance depends not only on the inherent properties of the anode material, but also on the crystallinity or amorphous structure of the anode material as well as the shape, size, and component state. Thus, a rational design of the crude material is more beneficial for its practical application during charging and discharging. Here, we propose two possible future directions for advanced 2D anode compounds. First, the development of co-doping techniques remains crucial to the exploitation of the synergistic effects of different heteroatom doping. The second is to use the hierarchical structure of 2D nanomaterials to create interconnected conduction channels for facilitated Li-ion transfer.

5. Two-dimensional electrode materials for Li-S batteries

The charging and discharging process of Li-S batteries is a complex electrochemical process. It can be divided into four stages according to the phase change of sulfur substances. First, lithium metal reacts with sulfur (S₈) to produce long-chain soluble Li₂S₈. After further reaction of the dissolved Li₂S₈ and lithium, the long-chain Li₂S₈ is reduced into low-order Li₂S₄, accompanied by steeply declined battery voltage and a gradual increase in solution viscosity. Then, with the occurrence of the two-phase liquid-solid reduction reaction, the low-order dissolved Li₂S₄ is transformed to insoluble Li₂S₂ or Li₂S. The last stage involves a solid-solid reduction from the insoluble Li₂S₂ to Li₂S. In fact, the dissolution of lithium polysulfide (LiPS) intermediates in liquid electrolyte would trigger a shuttle process, which is detrimental to the electrode and may cause a significant decline in capacity. 2D materials possess the following two unique advantages which could potentially solve the problems mentioned above. On the one hand, 2D materials have uniform and tunable exposed lattice planes which provide LiPSs with sufficient

reactive sites, depressing the shuttle problem. On the other hand, the unique morphology of some 2D materials, such as the pore-like structure of carbon-based materials, can offer a large free space for high S loading and volume buffering, improving the safety performance. Therefore, anchoring polysulfides within the cathode have proven to be an effective approach to designing high-performance Li-S batteries.³⁸

Graphene and its derivatives have found numerous applications in Li-S battery, because of their large specific area, high electrical conductivity, and mechanical stabilities.^{220,221} For instance, N-doped graphene (NG) is one of the most promising anchoring materials, because the N dopant induces chemical interaction in carbon-based materials and promotes reactivity compared with pure carbon materials. Yin et al. carried out a systematic study of the interactions between LiPSs and NG with different doping configurations (including isolated/clustered amino, graphitic, pyridinic, and pyrrolic N-dopants) (Fig. 15a).²²² They found that the clustered pyridinic N-dopants in NG exhibit a much stronger binding ability to LiPSs than others, implying that the clustered pyridinic N-dopants in NG are effective immobilizers of soluble LiPSs. This can be explained by that pyrrolic N can form the coordination bond of LiN₃ with Li₂S_n.²²³ However, too strong interactions would cause the decomposition of molecules.²²⁴ To solve this problem, Yi et al. proposed a LiNG model, which is an optimized structure of Li-trapping on pyridinic NG.²²⁵ The results showed that the trapped Li atoms interact with S atoms in a LiPS molecule to form a Li–S bond and result in a decreased binding energy always larger than the binding energies of LiPS with DOL or DME. Thus, the LiNG effectively prevents the dissolution of LiPS into the electrolyte and avoids the structural decomposition of the LiPS molecule. Other heteroatom doped 2D carbon nanosheets are also beneficial for the performance of Li-S batteries. Wasalathilake et al. studied the interactions between bare or oxygen-containing functional graphene (hydroxyl, epoxy, and carboxyl groups) and sulfur (S₈) or long-chain lithium polysulfides (Li₂S₈ and Li₂S₄).²²⁶ During the initial unlithiated stage, the interaction between sulfur and bare graphene or oxygen-containing functional graphene (OFG) is nearly the same and is dominated by van der Waals attraction. During the lithiation stage, functional groups significantly enhance the interaction with Li₂S₈/Li₂S₄ by forming a coordinate covalent Li–O bond. Hou et al. performed a systematical study of various heteroatom (including B, N, O, F, P, S, and Cl) doped nanocarbon materials.²²⁷ Based on the calculation results of binding energy (Fig. 15b), the N/O-doped graphene nanoribbons (GNRs)

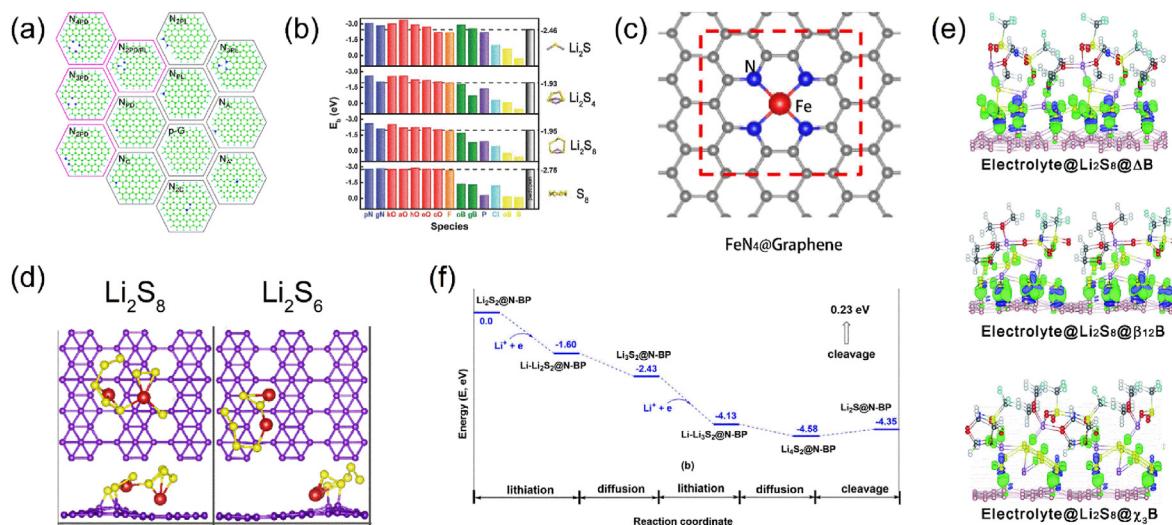


Fig. 15. (a) Structural diagrams of p-G and N-G with different doping configurations. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 222. (b) Binding energy of Li₂S, Li₂S₄, and S₈ interacting with X-doped GNRs and undoped G. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 227. (c) Top view of fully optimized structure of the iron and nitrogen co-doped graphene surface. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 229. (d) Top and side views of Li₂S₈-β₁₂-borophene and Li₂S₆-β₁₂-borophene systems. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 79. (e) Charge density differences of Li₂S₈ on borophenes with electrolytes (DOL and DME). Reproduced with permission from Ref. 237. (f) Energy profiles for Li₂S₂ → Li₂S conversion on N-BP surfaces. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 238.

can trap soluble intermediates better than undoped GNR because of the dipole-dipole electrostatic interaction, thus greatly improve the capacity and Coulombic efficiency. Hybridization of graphene with more than one inorganic material is also considered as an effective approach to improving the rate capability and cycling stability. Li and coworkers designed B and N co-doped graphene sheets through substituting one N dopant with a B atom.²²⁸ Due to the synergistic contribution of *N*-Li and B–S interactions, the polysulfide diffusion is found to be effectively retarded in G–B–N-pyrrolic and G–B–N-hex systems. Zhang and coworkers revealed that iron and nitrogen co-doped graphene monolayer is a good anchoring material because of the unique ring structure of four-membered (Li–S–Fe–N) (Fig. 15c), which not only ensures the stability of adsorption structure but also improves the catalytic effect.²²⁹ Except for iron element, other transition metals also exhibit very good anchoring and catalytic effects.^{230–233} Recently, Zeng et al. systematically investigated a series of graphene-supported transition metal SACs (from 3 d, 4 d, and 5 d) for application in Li–S batteries to deepen the understanding of the Li₂S oxidation and SRR processes.²³⁴ The Mo₄@G and WN₄@G were screened out as optimal catalysts for catalyzing Li₂S oxidation with the energy barrier E_b values of 0.58 and 0.55 eV, respectively, as well as competitive trapping capability and reduction activity. For defective graphene, Kaghazchi's group found the defect sites cannot improve too much the ability of graphene to catch lithium polysulfides in Li–S batteries, and the performance of S cathodes in Li–S batteries will not be better on the defective graphene, which agrees with experimental results.²³⁵ As carbon allotropes, 2D GDY-based monolayers, have also been proposed as promising anchoring materials for Li–S Batteries.²³⁶ Sun's group used first-principle simulations to study the anchoring performance of porous triphenylene-graphdiyne (TPGDY), boron-GDY, triphenylene-GDY, and nitrogen-GDY (NGDY–C₁₈N₆ and NGDY–C₃₆N₆) monolayers.²³⁶ All the five substrates exhibited moderate adsorption energies with Li₂S_n molecules, and the electronic conductivities of all the hosts exhibit great improvement after adsorption.

Borophene, because of the metallicities and the porous configuration, has attracted intense interest as cathodes for Li–S cells.²³⁹ Grixti et al. used DFT to investigate the potential of β_{12} -borophene as the host material.⁷⁹ They found that the borophene has strong binding with Li₂S_n species, especially for Li₂S₈ and Li₂S₆ which show a slight structure deformation during the anchoring process (Fig. 15d). Zhao's group proposed a solution by introducing the vacancy,²⁴⁰ and they found that the defective borophene exhibits moderate adsorption ability, which can maintain a balance between adsorption strength and the intactness of Li₂S_n species. Besides, the construction of the heterogeneous structure (borophene/graphene) can also restrain the deformation of borophenes.²⁴¹ Moreover, the competition between hosts and electrolytes has also been deeply discussed by Rao and coworkers.²³⁷ The charge accumulations are mainly distributed between the S and B atoms rather than Li₂S_n and electrolyte (Fig. 15e), implying that the Li₂S_n species prefer to adsorb on borophene surfaces rather than to dissolve in electrolytes.

Phosphorene is a kind of 2D material with a unique puckered structure, whose large exposed surface area makes it a promising anchoring material for polysulfide immobilization.^{169,171} Zhao et al. revealed that all the Li₂S_n species can interact with phosphorene with moderate binding energies (1.0–2.0 eV).²⁴² Moreover, considering the unique structure of phosphorene, Li₂S_n species exhibit small diffusion barriers in both zigzag (\sim 0.20 eV) and armchair directions (\sim 0.58 eV). Similar to borophene, the defective phosphorene exhibits better anchoring effect.²⁴³ Lin et al. studied three types of defective black phosphorene (SW, SV and DV) as host materials.²⁴⁴ The LiPSs on defective black phosphorene (BP) exhibit larger binding energy (1.13–3.03 eV) than those on BP (1.12–2.12 eV), suggesting that the introduction of vacancies in BP could enhance its capture ability of LiPSs. Besides, the defective phosphorene exhibits better electrical conductivity with reduced band gap, which greatly improves the rate capability.²⁴⁵ The heteroatom doping of BP exhibits excellent catalytic properties. Liu's group systematically

discussed the performance of polysulfide on B-doped BP, Al-doped BP, N-doped BP, and pristine BP.²³⁸ They found that the Li₂S₂ to Li₂S conversion on BP surfaces undergoes lithiation-diffusion twice (Li₂S₂ \rightarrow Li₄S₂), and a final cleavage step (from Li₄S₂ to Li₂S) (Fig. 15f). For the lithiation processes, all of the systems show exergonic characters. However, for the cleavage step, BP and N-BP show endoergic while B-BP and Al-BP not. Therefore, B-BP and Al-BP not only promote the kinetic process but also favor the LiPS conversion.

The application of silicene in Li–S battery has also been theoretically studied. Very recently, Fan's group proposed embedding a series of 3d transition metals into siloxene to form single-atom catalysts (TM-SA-siloxenes) as sulfur hosts.²⁴⁶ Among them, Co-SA-siloxene is identified as the optimal candidate with moderate adsorption energies for polysulfides in the range of 0.58–4.43 eV and outstanding bifunctional electrocatalytic activity for SRR and Li₂S decomposition.

Metal sulfide electrodes not only exhibit excellent conductivities but also good catalytic effects. For example, Lv and coworkers studied the interaction features between MX (M = Ge, Sn; X = S, Se) monolayers and LiPSs.²⁴⁷ The MX monolayers exhibit moderate adsorption energies with LiPSs and a low diffusion barrier of Li and polysulfides. Chen et al. summarized the periodic law for the strong anchoring of polysulfides on the first-row transition-metal sulfides (TMSs).²⁴⁸ They found the following three rules: (1) For TMSs, S-binding is more favorable than Li-binding. (2) Among the first-row TMSs, VS exhibits the highest binding energy of -4.89 eV. (3) For most of the first-row TMSs, the surface lithium diffusion barrier is less than 0.30 eV (Fig. 16a). This work deeply discussed the role of TMSs as polar sulfur hosts and provided valuable guidance to the rational design of sulfur cathode. Moreover, the design of bilayer heterostructure can be a good additive for sulfur cathodes. Fang et al. constructed a unique asymmetric polar Ti₂CO/WS₂ heterostructure to simultaneously trap LiPSs and achieve Li₂S catalytic activity.²⁴⁹ The Ti₂CO-side can restrain the LiPSs effectively, and the WS₂ side possesses a lower diffusion or decomposition barrier which is good for fast electrochemical processes. Very recently, a machine learning (ML) method, which is an optimization method based on a large amount of DFT data, has been proposed to rapidly and accurately predict the binding energies of LiPS adsorbed on the surface of AB₂ structures of TMSs.²⁵⁰ Zhang and coworkers selected MoSe₂ as a case study in this work and found that the ML method shows six orders of magnitude faster than the DFT calculation (Fig. 16b) with relatively low mean absolute error (0.1 eV) in the prediction. Besides, researchers also found the ML method can be extended to other 2D similar AB₂-typed structures (such as WSe₂) for screening the host materials and understanding the adsorption mechanisms.

Metal oxides have strong chemical anchoring abilities with polysulfides because of the strong polar surfaces induced by oxygen anions. Zhu and coworkers investigated the anchoring ability of MgO nanotubes (MgONT) and defective MgO nanotubes (MgONTv) with LiPSs by DFT.²⁵¹ Based on band gap analysis, the conductivity of MgONTv is better than MgONT with the band gap decreased from 3.33 to 1.61 eV, and the adsorption of LiPSs can further reduce the gap. Besides, based on the adsorption energies, the presence of an oxygen vacancy greatly enhances the binding strength between the hosts and the LiPSs.

Transition metal carbides and nitrides (MXenes) are good electrode materials for Li–S batteries due to their large surface areas and interlayer spaces.^{253–256} Among 2D MXenes, Ti-based carbides are the most widely reported electrodes in Li–S batteries. Based on DFT calculations, the bare Ti-based MXenes cannot be directly used in Li–S batteries due to the extremely strong Ti–S interaction (Ti atoms in Ti-based MXenes and S atoms in Li₂S_n species), which would decompose the Li₂S_n species.^{252,257} Thus, surface modification is required to obtain suitable adsorption strength with Li₂S_n species. For example, Zhao et al. found that Ti₂CO₂ and Ti₃C₂O₂ monolayers exhibit a good balance between the binding strength and intactness of the Li₂S_n species because of the Li–O bonds (Li-ions in Li₂S_n species and O atoms in Ti₂CO₂ and Ti₃C₂O₂ monolayer).²⁵⁸ Rao et al. discussed the interactions of LiPSs on bare and surface functionalized (–F, –O, and –OH groups) Ti₂C.²⁵⁷ They found that

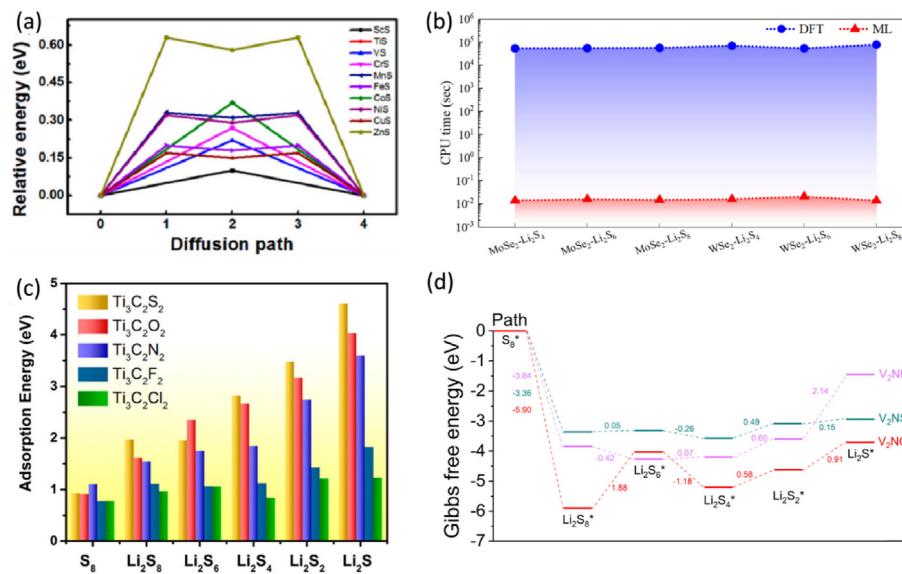


Fig. 16. (a) Energy profiles for diffusion processes of Li ion on the first-row TMSs surface. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 248. (b) Comparison of CPU computational time for MoSe₂/WSe₂ towards three lithium polysulfides. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 250. (c) Adsorption energies of S₈ and Li₂S_n on Ti₃C₂T₂. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 252. (d) Gibbs free energy profiles for the sulfur reduction reaction on V₂NO₂, V₂NF₂, and V₂NS₂. Reproduced with permission from Ref. 82.

the Li₂S_n species can maintain their molecular configurations on Ti₂CO₂ and Ti₂CF₂ monolayer. However, the long-chain Li₂S_n clusters on Ti₂C(OH)₂ are distorted without complete dissociation, which can be explained by the fact that OH-terminated material exhibits stronger interaction with Li₂S_n species than O-terminated and F-terminated materials. Chung and coworkers discussed the difference of the anchoring mechanisms in O and F functionalized Ti₂C MXenes.²⁵⁶ They found that the effective suppression of the shuttling can be explained by the strong interaction between Ti₂CF₂ and Li₂S_n intermediates, while for Ti₂CO₂, the shuttle effect can be prevented because the soluble high-order LiPSs (Li₂S₈, Li₂S₆) prefer to be oxidized to insoluble elemental sulfur on Ti₂CO₂. Theoretical study further proved that some other functional groups, such as S and N, can also help suppress the polysulfide shuttling. Wang et al. introduced different surface terminating groups (T = N, P, O, S, F and Cl) to enhance the electrochemical performance of Ti₃C₂.²⁵² They found that Ti₃C₂S₂ and Ti₃C₂O₂ can achieve high performance in Li-S batteries with great anchoring strength and catalytic ability (Fig. 16c). Zhao's group drew the similar conclusion. They believed that strong Ti-S interaction can lead to stable S-terminated Ti₂C MXene (Ti₂CS₂) and the Ti₂CS₂ had the highest affinity to polysulfides compared with Ti₂CO₂ and Ti₂CF₂.²⁵⁹ Except for the typical Ti-based MXenes, other types of MXenes have also been studied. For example, Fan's group systematically discussed the anchoring behaviors between M₃C₂O₂ (M = Cr, V, Ti, Nb, Hf and Zr) MXenes and lithium polysulfides.²⁶⁰ They identified a monotonic relationship between the binding energy and the lattice constant, that is, M₃C₂O₂ MXenes with a smaller lattice constant tend to exhibit a stronger anchoring effect. Wang et al. designed a potential S-functionalized V₂C (V₂CS₂) MXene.²⁶¹ The results suggested that vdW interactions play a major role between soluble Li₂S_n species and V₂CS₂. Very recently, our group found that the functionalized V₂NS₂ exhibits outstanding bifunctional catalytic activities toward sulfur reduction reaction (SRR) with a low Gibbs free energy barrier of 0.49 eV (Fig. 16d).⁸²

In the previous sections, we have reviewed the DFT calculations on different categories of the 2D electrode materials for Li-S batteries. In fact, there are some materials that have not been extensively studied by theoretical calculations but deserve attention. For example, Li et al. proposed a 2D copper-based MOF (Cu-BHT) as a promising sulfur host for high-performance Li-S batteries by the first-principles calculations.²⁶² The Cu-BHT monolayer exhibits synergistic dual interaction based on the Li-S bond and Cu-Cu bond (Ss: sulfur in Cu-BHT, Sa: sulfur in Li₂S_n) with a moderate interaction with LiPSs (binding energy ranging from 0.8 to 2.0 eV). Gao et al. demonstrated that the 2D hexaaminobenzene-based coordination polymers (2D-HAB-CPs) is a promising cathode material

with ultrahigh energy density for Li-S batteries.¹³ Through the combination of DFT calculations and global structural search code, they proved that the theoretical energy density of 2D-HAB-CP can reach 1395 W h kg⁻¹. Song and coworkers predicted that the 2D magnetic Fe₃GeX₂ (X = S, Se and Te) monolayers show bifunctional electrocatalytic activity to the S reduction reaction (SRR) and the Li₂S decomposition reaction in Li-S batteries.²⁶³ To be specific, their calculation results showed that Gibbs free energy of SRR is as low as 0.35 eV, while the Li₂S decomposition barrier is in the range of 0.38–0.94 eV, which greatly improves the conversion efficiencies in discharging and charging processes. Moreover, the metallic features and the anchoring functionality of Fe₃GeX₂ monolayers further imply the potential of Fe₃GeX₂ in Li-S battery. This work not only provides a promising catalyst for the high-performance Li-S batteries but also gives a guide to the catalyst design.

6. Challenges and outlook of 2D electrodes for Li-ion and Li-S batteries

Albeit diverse in mechanisms, there are some common challenges concerning 2D electrodes for Li-ion and Li-S batteries.

The first one is that the bonding chemistry of the 2D electrodes in both Li-ion and Li-S batteries remains unclear. For Li-ion batteries, too weak or too strong bonding between Li-ion and substrate is not beneficial for Li adsorption or desorption on the substrates. For Li-S batteries, too weak adsorption cannot depress the shuttle effect while too strong bonding will lead to decomposition of sulfur species.⁷⁹ However, understanding of the critical boundary of the binding energy is still not sufficient in both theoretical and experimental aspects. Another challenge is the difficulties in the accurate prediction of binding energies of Li-ion and LiPSs on 2D materials, which can play an instructive role in accelerating the electrode design. Recently, Gao et al. built a predictive model for small molecule binding energies on the surface of metals and their oxides by using intrinsic surface properties such as valence and electronegativity of surface atoms,²⁶⁴ and their approaches may be extended to 2D electrode design.

Secondly, although many predicted 2D materials are stable, it is still difficult to synthesize them experimentally. This is because the DFT calculations are usually used to evaluate the stability of the final product, while little attention is paid to the energy barrier from the initial reactants to the final products. Large discrepancies between the experiments and the calculations already emerge in some specific properties. For some significant parameters in experiments such as cycle number, a reasonable method to make preliminary predictions by calculations does

not exist. To bridge the gap between theoretical prediction and experiments, not only should the methods with stricter screening constraints be proposed, but also effective algorithms and theoretical descriptors are urged to develop.

The third challenge is related to the design of novel materials, where more advanced property-oriented inverse design methods need to be developed. For example, in order to facilitate the rate capability of electrodes, new materials with metallic characters are better. At the present stage, the exploration of potential electrode materials is mainly focused on the following two directions. One is to improve the performance of existing materials and expand their application ranges. The other is to design and prepare new materials with intriguing properties. Moreover, due to the limited understanding of the chemistry and physics of some newly developed 2D materials, collaborations between theorists and experimentalists are in great demand for electrode material design.

Last but not least, the concept of sustainability should be included in the framework of electrochemical storage.^{265,266} When designing sustainable electrode candidates, full consideration should be given to the abundance, toxicity, and economic cost of the elements. On the other hand, to improve the overall sustainability of battery technology, there is still an urgent need for easy recycling.

From the perspective of theoretical modelling, the combination of multiscale and diverse computational methods may be a feasible way for screening potential 2D electrode materials for Li-ion and Li-S batteries. For example, Zhang et al. combined high-throughput DFT calculations with ML methods to transfer the research results of MoSe₂ to a similar AB₂ structure for Li-S electrode applications.²⁵⁰ With the development of computing power and new approaches, we also believe that a 2D material database for Li-ion and Li-S batteries can be constructed in the near future originating from the whole 2D material database,^{27,29} taking into consideration the intrinsic principles, we discussed in Section 3 and all the adsorption sites and patterns for Li-ion and LiPSs.

7. Summary

Li-ion and Li-S batteries are two very important types of batteries. For Li-ion batteries, achieving large-scale commercialization is its most eye-catching advantage. For Li-S batteries, it offers substantial increase in specific capacity and specific energy compared with Li-ion batteries. However, it still faces many unsolved problems that prevent its commercialization process.

In this review, we summarize the applications of *ab initio* simulations in Li-ion and Li-S battery materials, with a particular focus on various 2D electrode materials. Benefited from the emergence of new algorithms and new computing resources, theoretical descriptors have made significant contributions to the understanding of the intrinsic properties of battery materials and the electrochemical reaction mechanism, covering the ground state structure, adsorption site, diffusion barrier, catalytic activity, and capacity of 2D materials. It should be emphasized that although many novel 2D materials are discussed in this review, they cannot cover all the 2D systems studied so far. With the help of advanced theoretical computation and experimental techniques, we believe that batteries with higher energy density and longer cycle stability will be realized in the near future.

Declaration of competing interest

Haitao Huang is an editorial board member for *Materials Reports: Energy* and was not involved in the editorial review or the decision to publish this article. The authors declare that they are not aware of any competing financial interests or personal relationships that could influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the Research Grants Council of the Hong

Kong Special Administrative Region, China (PolyU152178/20 E), the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1-W19S), and Science and Technology Program of Guangdong Province of China (2020A0505090001).

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