

Hydrogen generation at irradiated oxide semiconductor–solution interfaces

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Received: 22 January 2007 / Accepted: 16 April 2007 / Published online: 22 May 2007
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Abstract This review focuses on the use of inorganic oxide semiconductors for the photoassisted generation of hydrogen from water. Representative studies spanning approximately three decades are included in this review. The topics covered include a discussion of the types of water photosplitting approaches, an ideal photoelectrolysis system, an examination of why oxide semiconductors are attractive for this application, a review of both classical and more recent studies on titanium dioxide, tungsten trioxide, and other binary metal oxides, perovskites and other ternary oxides, tantalates and niobates, miscellaneous multinary oxides, semiconductor alloys and mixed semiconductor composites, and twin-photosystem configurations for water splitting.

Keywords Photoelectrolysis · Water splitting · Solar energy

1 Introduction and scope

This review article explores the possibility of using sunlight in conjunction with oxide semiconductor/solution interfaces for the production of hydrogen from water. The underlying principles of solar energy conversion using semiconductor/electrolyte interfaces have been discussed in several review articles, book chapters and books [1–22] and will not be repeated here. This field of ‘photoelectrochemistry’ had its early origins in attempts to use inorganic semiconductor/electrolyte interfaces in electronic

devices [23–28]. Subsequently, it was found in ca. 1970 that an electrochemical cell made from a n-TiO₂ photoanode and a Pt counterelectrode evolved H₂ and O₂ from water under UV irradiation or sunlight [29–33]. A flurry of activity ensued in the 1970s and 1980s on the photoelectrolysis of water; indeed, attempts to split water using sunlight and inorganic semiconductor(s) have continued in unabated manner to the present time.

2 Types of approaches

A bewildering array of terms have been deployed in this field; thus, a few clarifying remarks appear to be in order. The term ‘photoelectrochemical’ refers to any scenario wherein light is used to augment an electrochemical process. This process could be either ‘uphill’ (Gibbs free energy charge being positive) or ‘downhill’ (negative ΔG) in a thermodynamic sense. In the former case, the process is called ‘photosynthetic’ (the reaction $\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}_2 + 1/2 \text{O}_2$ being an example) while the latter would be a photocatalytic process (e.g., the oxidation of hydrocarbons at an illuminated n-TiO₂/solution interface in an oxygenated medium). The term ‘photoelectrolysis’ is correctly applied to a case involving semiconductor photoelectrode(s) in an electrochemical cell. The term ‘photocatalysis’ has been generally applied to the case of semiconductor suspensions (see below). The term ‘photoassisted splitting’ is recommended for cases wherein the excitation light energy only *partially* furnishes the voltage needed for the electrolysis process, the rest being accommodated by an applied external bias (see below). Finally, the term ‘solar’ should be reserved for cases where sunlight (or at least simulated sunlight) was used for the semiconductor excitation. In all the cases, the more general term (or prefix) ‘photo’ is appropriate.

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Figure 1 illustrates the interfacial energetics involved in the photoelectrochemical evolution of H_2 . Thus, the electronic energy levels in the semiconductor and in the contacting solution are shown on a common diagram. In a semiconductor, the filled electronic levels (valence band or VB) and the empty levels (conduction band or CB) are separated by a “forbidden” gap, namely, the band gap energy, E_g [34–36]. Photoexcitation of the semiconductor with light of energy equal to or exceeding E_g (i.e., with wavelengths corresponding to or shorter than that corresponding to the energy gap) elicits electron–hole pairs, a fraction of which (as defined by the quantum yield) escape recombination and find their way to the semiconductor/solution interface. For the photosplitting of water (Fig. 1a), the CB and VB edges at the semiconductor surface (E_{CB} and E_{VB} respectively) must bracket the two redox levels corresponding to the hydrogen evolution reaction (HER) and the oxygen evolution reaction (OER) respectively. This is tantamount to stating that the photogenerated electrons have sufficient energy to reduce protons and the photogenerated holes have sufficient energy to oxidize water (Fig. 1a).

This is a stringent requirement indeed as further elaborated in the next section. Instead of actually photosplitting water, sacrificial agents may be added to the solution such

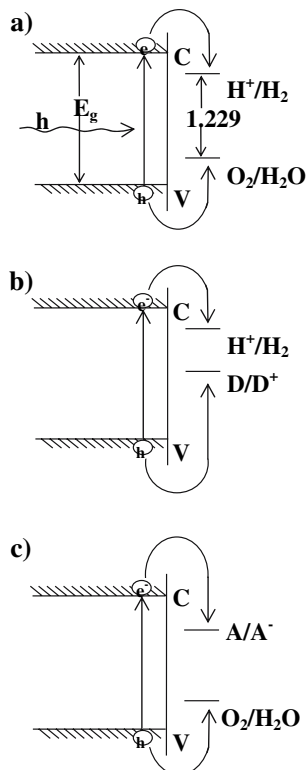


Fig. 1 Interfacial energetics at semiconductor–liquid junctions. D is an electron donor and A is an electron acceptor

that the HER and OER steps may be separately optimized and studied (Fig. 1b and c). It must be borne in mind that now the overall photoreaction becomes thermodynamically “down-hill” and is more appropriately termed: “photocatalytic” (see above). Examples of sacrificial agents include sulfite for the photo-driven HER case (Fig. 1b) or Ag^+ as the electron acceptor for the photocatalytic oxidation of water (Fig. 1c).

Instead of using the semiconductor in the form of electrodes in an *electrochemical* cell, a “wireless” water splitting or HER system could be envisioned where particle suspensions are used (instead of electrodes) in a *photochemical* reactor. Two points regarding such an approach must be noted. First, unlike in the case of a semiconductor electrode, a bias potential cannot be applied in the suspension case. Second, the sites for the HER and OER are not physically separated as in the electrochemical case. Thus, the potential exists in a photochemical system for a highly explosive stoichiometric (2:1) mixture of H_2 and O_2 to be evolved. Nonetheless, strategies have been devised for immobilizing the semiconductor particles in a membrane so that the HER and OER sites are properly separated [37–43].

Bifunctional redox catalysts have been investigated in terms of their applicability for the solar-assisted splitting of water [1, 12, 44–52]. In this approach, Pt (an excellent catalyst for the HER) and RuO_2 (an excellent catalyst for the OER) are loaded onto colloidal TiO_2 particles. But unlike in the approaches discussed above, the oxide semiconductor is not used as a light absorber; instead an inorganic complex [e.g., amphiphilic $\text{Ru}(\text{bpy})_3^{2+}$ derivative, bpy = 2,2′-bipyridyl ligand] is used as the sensitizer [1, 12, 44]. Claims of cyclic and sustained water cleavage by visible light in this system, however, have not been independently verified. Since these “microheterogeneous” assemblies do not involve photoexcitation of a semiconductor, they are not further discussed here.

A photoelectrochemical (photoelectrolysis) system can be constructed using an n-type semiconductor electrode, a p-type semiconductor, or even mating n- and p-type semiconductor photoelectrodes as illustrated in Fig. 2a–c respectively. In the device in Fig. 2a, OER occurs on the semiconductor *photoanode* while the HER proceeds at a catalytic counterelectrode (e.g., Pt black). Indeed, the classical n- TiO_2 photocell alluded to earlier [29–33] belongs to this category. Alternately, the HER can be photodriven on a p-type semiconductor while the OER occurs on a “dark” *anode*.

Unlike the single “photosystem” cases in Fig. 2a and b, the approach in Fig. 2c combines two photosystems. Both heterotype (different semiconductors) or homotype (same semiconductor) approaches can be envisioned, and it has been shown [53] that the efficiency of photoelectrolysis

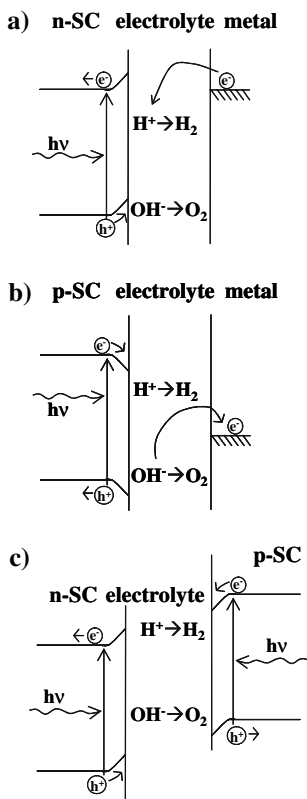


Fig. 2 Photoelectrolysis cell configurations (refer to text)

with solar radiation can be enhanced by using simultaneously illuminated n- and p-type semiconductor electrodes (Fig. 2c). It is interesting to note that this twin-photosystems approach mimics the plant photosynthesis system, intricately constructed by nature, albeit operating at rather low efficiency. The approach in Fig. 2c has at least two built-in advantages. First, the sum of two photopotentials can be secured in an additive manner such that the required threshold for the water splitting reaction can be more easily attained than in the single photoelectrode cases in Fig. 2a and b. Second, different segments of the solar spectrum can be utilized in the heterotype approach, and indeed, many semiconductors (with different E_g 's) can be stacked to enhance the overall solar conversion efficiency of the device [54, 55]. However, the attendant price to be paid is the concomitant increase in the device complexity. Further, the photocurrents through the two interfaces will have to be carefully matched since the overall current flowing in the cell must obviously be the same.

Finally, hybrid approaches for water photosplitting can be envisioned. As illustrated in Fig. 3a, a water electrolyzer can be simply hooked up to a solar panel that delivers the needed photovoltage [18, 55–57]. A conceptually more appealing scenario deploys a p–n junction directly in ohmic (electronic) contact with the electroactive surface where the HER (or less commonly, the OER) occurs (Fig. 3b). A

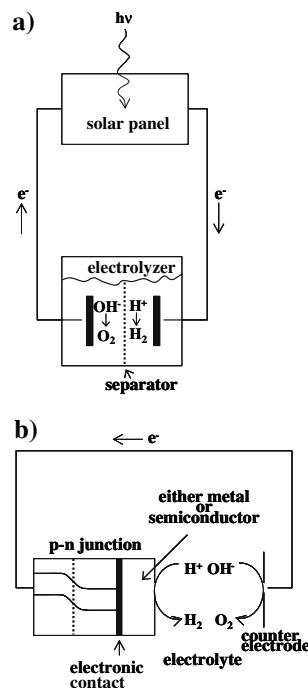


Fig. 3 Two hybrid photoelectrolysis cell configurations

variety of such “monolithic” configurations have been discussed, not all involving oxide semiconductors [58–62]. For example, a p/n photochemical diode consisting of p-GaP and n-Fe₂O₃ has been assembled in a monolithic unit and studied for its capability to evolve H₂ and O₂ from seawater [63].

3 An ideal photoelectrolysis system

What photovoltage and semiconductor bandgap energy (E_g) would be minimally needed to split water in a single photosystem case (c.f., Fig. 2a or b)? To split water into H₂ and O₂ with both products at 1 atm, a thermodynamic potential of 1.23 V is needed. To this value would have to be added all the losses within an operating cell mainly related to resistive (Ohmic components) and the overpotentials (kinetic losses) required to drive the HER and OER at the two electrode/electrolyte interfaces. This would translate to a semiconductor E_g value of ~2 eV if the splitting of water to H₂ and O₂ is the process objective. On the other hand, photovoltaic theory [64] tells us that the photovoltage developed is nominally only ~60% of E_g . Taking all this into account, an E_g value around 2.5 eV would appear to be optimal.

What about a twin-photosystem configuration as in Fig. 2c? Optimal efficiency is reached in such a configuration when one semiconductor has an E_g value of ~1.0 eV and the second ~1.8 eV [65]. On the other hand, it has

been pointed out [66] that an optimal combination would be two matched electrodes of equal 0.9 eV band gap, since, in the absence of other limitations, the photocurrent would have been dictated by the higher E_g electrode of a pair.

An irradiated semiconductor particle in a microheterogeneous system can be regarded as a short-circuited electrochemical cell where that particle is poised at a potential (ΔV) such that the anodic and cathodic current components are precisely balanced (i.e., no *net* current obviously is flowing through that particle [67]. This photovoltage obviously has to attain a value around ~ 2 V for the water splitting reaction to be sustained. Given the need to reduce the kinetic losses and move the photovoltage value down to one around the thermodynamic (ideal) limit of 1.23 V, it is therefore not surprising that many of the studies on semiconductor particle suspensions have utilized (partially) metallized surfaces—the metals being selected to be catalytic toward the HER. The prototype here is the platinumized semiconductor particle (e.g., Pt/TiO₂) and the platinum islands are deposited on the oxide surface using photolysis in a medium containing the Pt precursor (e.g., PtCl₆²⁻) and a sacrificial electron donor (e.g., acetate) [68, 69]. Obviously, the bifunctional catalyst assemblies discussed earlier are motivated by considerations to make the HER and OER processes more facile. Very detailed studies also have appeared on catalytic modification of semiconductor *electrode* surfaces to improve the HER performance; the reader is referred to the many review articles and book chapters on this topic [1, 11, 70–73].

The earlier discussion related to Fig. 1a should have indicated that it is simply not the magnitude of E_g (and the ΔV generated) alone that is the sole criterion for sustaining the water photosplitting process. Where the CB and VB levels lie on the energy diagram for the semiconductor at the interface is crucial. Assuming that we are dealing with thermalized electrons here (i.e., no “hot carrier” processes), the CB edge for the n-type semiconductor has to be higher (i.e., be located at a more negative potential) relative to the H₂/H⁺ redox level in the solution (c.f., Fig. 1a). In the event that this is not true (see Fig. 4), an external bias potential would be needed to offset the deficit energy content of the photogenerated electrons. Other equivalent statements can be made for the requirements for an n-type semiconductor, namely that the semiconductor has to have low electron affinity or that the flat-band potential for that particular semiconductor/electrolyte interface has to be more negative than the H₂/H⁺ redox level.

Interestingly, rutile TiO₂ electrodes have an interfacial situation similar to that schematized in Fig. 4. Thus, the authors in the classical n-TiO₂ water splitting study [29–33] circumvented this problem via a *chemical* bias in their electrochemical cell by imposing a pH gradient between the photoanode and cathode chambers. On the other hand,

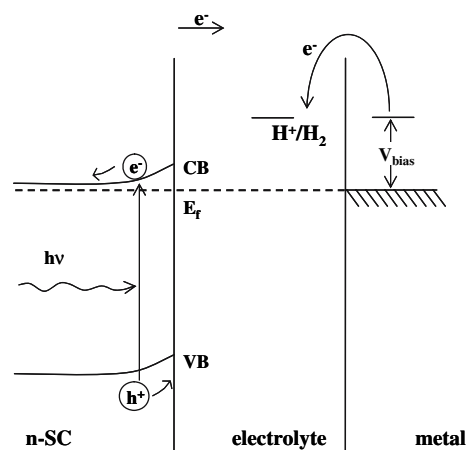


Fig. 4 An interfacial energetic situation in a photoelectrolysis cell where the flat-band potential of the n-type semiconductor photoanode lies positive of the HER potential. V_{bias} is the external bias potential needed in this case to drive the photoelectrolysis process

photogenerated holes in TiO₂ are generated at a very positive potential (because of its low-lying VB edge at the interface) so that they have more than enough energy to oxidize water to O₂. Not too many semiconductor surfaces are stable against photocorrosion under these conditions; i.e., the photogenerated holes attack the semiconductor itself rather than a solution species such as OH⁻ ions. The requirements for a single photosystem for splitting water should have semiconductor energy levels that straddle the two redox levels (H₂/H⁺ and OH⁻/O₂), have an E_g value of ~ 2.5 eV for the semiconductor, and with a semiconductor surface that is completely immune to photocorrosion under OER (or HER) conditions. Additionally, the semiconductor surface has to be made catalytically active toward OER or HER.

Interfacial energetics in two-photosystem cells combining n- and p-type semiconductor electrodes respectively (Fig. 2c) have been discussed [74]. Stability issues in photoelectrochemical energy conversion systems have been reviewed [9, 13, 14].

In a regenerative solar energy conversion system, the device efficiency (η) is simply given by the ratio of the power delivered by the photovoltaic converter and the incident solar power (P_s in W m⁻² or mW cm⁻²). However, we are concerned here with devices producing a fuel (H₂) and several expressions exist for the device efficiency. Thus, this efficiency can be expressed in kinetic terms [55, 75]:

$$\eta_1 = \frac{\Delta G_{\text{H}_2}^0 R_{\text{H}_2}}{P_s A} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

In Eq. 1, $\Delta G_{\text{H}_2}^0$ is the standard Gibbs energy for the water splitting reaction generating H₂, R_{H_2} is the rate (mol s⁻¹) of

generation of H_2 , and A is the irradiated area (m^2 or cm^2). In the above (as well as in the expression below), it is assumed that the H_2 gas is evolved at 1 atm in its standard state. (Corrections have been discussed for cases where the gas is not evolved at 1 atm, see [55]) Another equation for the efficiency refers to the standard (Nernstian) voltage for the water splitting reaction, 1.23 V [13]:

$$\eta_2 = \frac{(1.23 - V_{\text{bias}}) i_t}{P_s A} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

The bias voltage, that is needed in some cases is V_{bias} and i_t is the current corresponding to the maximum power point [11, 65] of the cell.

In some cases, ΔH values are used in place of the free energy, and then the term, 1.23 in Eq. 2, must be replaced with 1.47. This assumes that the products will be burned (i.e., in a thermal combustion process) to recover the stored energy as heat rather than as electrical energy in a fuel cell. Other efficiency expressions have been proposed that take into account the energy throughput or the polarization losses at the photoelectrode(s) and the “dark” counter-electrode where relevant (see for example, [76]). The shortcomings of these alternate expressions have been pointed out [13]. In cases where the energy storage system generates a multitude of products rather than just H_2 , the free energy term in the numerator in Eq. 1 becomes a summation of all the free energies stored in the various products [77].

What about ideal and achievable efficiency values in photoelectrolytic cells? Discussions exist for ideal limits of process efficiency values [13, 55, 75, 78, 80]. Taken as a whole, a 10–12% process efficiency (under, say, AM 1.0 solar irradiation) for a solar photoelectrochemical water splitting system based on a *single* photoconverter, appears to be a reasonable target. Higher efficiencies can be realized in a multi-photosystem or even a tandem (i.e., hybrid, see above) configuration although attendant increase in costs associated with increased system complexity may have to be taken into account here. The sensitivity of η to parameters such as the semiconductor band gap (E_g) has been analyzed by several authors [78–80]. The efficiency peaks at ~ 1.5 eV and ~ 2.2 eV for a twin- and a one-photosystem respectively [79, 80] and at ~ 1.8 eV for a tandem cell combining a solar photovoltaic cell with a single photoanode-based electrochemical cell [55].

The search for satisfactory semiconductor candidates has continued at an unabated rate to the time of writing of this article. In a historical sense, it is interesting that the shift of the research objective from initially photoelectrolysis toward regenerative photoelectrochemical cells (which generate electricity rather than a fuel such as H_2) in the early years (1980s) is undoubtedly a consequence of the

many challenges involved in the discovery (and optimization) of a semiconductor for the solar water splitting application.

3.1 Why oxide semiconductors

Oxide semiconductors are eminently attractive candidates as the photocatalyst materials for photoelectrochemical H_2 generation. A sizable fraction of the total cost of the solar photoelectrolysis assembly resides with the semiconductor photocatalyst itself. Thus given that silicon itself is not an optimal semiconductor for photoelectrochemical H_2 generation, because of stability problems and an insufficient E_g value of 1.1 eV (see above), the remaining option would be compound semiconductors drawn from Groups II, III, V, and VI in the Periodic Table. However, semiconductors containing elements such as Ga or In are hardly attractive because of the scarcity of these metals while compounds such as GaAs, CdTe and CdSe would suffer from concerns with elemental toxicity and concomitant environmental issues associated with materials disposal after the device lifetime. This then leaves oxide semiconductors as the photocatalyst materials of choice for the H_2 generation application.

Oxide semiconductors are generally prepared by ceramic (high-temperature) routes. This would be a handicap for *energy* applications of the synthesized materials. The net energy gain (NEG) is an important concept in energy economics and this refers to the surplus between the energy required to harvest an energy source (in this case, the semiconductor) and the energy provided by that same source. The lower the external energy input for the semiconductor synthesis, the lower the energy payback time (or the higher the NEG). This is where low-temperature synthesis routes such as electrodeposition [81], chemical bath deposition [82], or energy-efficient approaches to semiconductor synthesis such as combustion synthesis [83], become strategically very important.

4 Photoelectrochemistry of oxide semiconductors—early work

The use of oxide semiconductors for the photoelectrolysis of water has been reviewed [84, 85]. Eleven binary and ternary oxides were examined in the first review [84]. Linear correlations were presented between the flat band potential, V_{fb} of these oxides and their band gap energy (E_g); and between V_{fb} and the heat of formation of the oxide per metal atom per metal-oxygen bond. Aligning all the oxide energy levels on a common scale, these authors noted [84] that the position of the conduction band varies

much more than those of valence bands—a trend expected from the cationic (d-band) character of the conduction band in the oxide while the valence band is mainly of O(2p) character. The latter should be relatively independent of the oxide parentage in terms of the metal.

A similar correlation between V_{fb} and E_g was presented [85] but for a much more extensive collection of oxides including oxides with or without partially filled d levels and oxides formed anodically on metals. Only oxides with partially filled d levels (Type ‘‘a’’ in the author’s notation [85]) yielded a straight-line correlation between the two parameters. This plot was used by the authors of the two studies [84, 85] for predictive purposes to assess the efficacy of a given oxide for the photoelectrolysis of water. As seen earlier, the V_{fb} of the material has to be at a negative enough potential to drive the HER, and E_g has to be ~ 2 eV and yet bracket the HER and OER redox levels (c.f., Fig. 1a).

The possibility of introducing new d-bands for Type ‘‘b’’ oxides (with filled d-bands) by introducing dopants into the host lattice was also discussed [85] with examples. Other authors have also advocated this approach [86]. A review [14] contains further examples of this approach for effectively ‘‘shrinking’’ the original E_g and sensitizing the oxide to visible portions of the solar spectrum. We shall return to this aspect for the specific case of TiO_2 later in this chapter.

We now turn to discussions of individual oxide semiconductor materials for the photoelectrolysis of water, starting with the ‘‘mother’’ of all oxides, namely, TiO_2 .

5 Titanium dioxide early work

Historically, this is the material which really sparked interest in the solar photoelectrolysis of water. Early papers on TiO_2 mainly stemmed from the applicability of TiO_2 in the paint/pigment industry [87] although fundamental aspects such as current rectification in the dark (in the reverse bias regime) shown by anodically formed valve metal oxide film/electrolyte interfaces was also of interest (e.g., [28]). Another driver was possible applications of UV-irradiated semiconductor/electrolyte interfaces for environmental remediation [67, 88, 89].

Representative early work on this remarkable material is presented in chronological order in Table 1, with all these studies aimed toward the photoelectrolysis of water. Further summaries of this early body of work are available [2, 4, 9, 14].

5.1 Studies on the mechanistic aspects of processes at the TiO_2 -solution interface

Also contained in the compilation in Table 1 are some early studies oriented toward the *mechanistic* aspects of the

photoelectrochemical oxidation of water (and other compounds) at the n- TiO_2 -electrolyte interface, as exemplified by Entries 23 and 29 [109, 115]. There are recent and representative studies of this genre [121–153].

5.2 Visible light sensitization of TiO_2

Rather problematic with TiO_2 in terms of the attainable process efficiency is its rather wide band gap (3.0–3.2 eV). Consequently, only a small fraction ($\sim 5\%$) of the overall solar spectrum can be harnessed by this material. Thus, the early work (as in Table 1, Entries 16 and 17 [102, 103] respectively) has also included attempts at extending the light response of TiO_2 from the UV to the visible range [for example, 123, 154–160]. Reviews of these works are available [14, 161–163]. For reasons mentioned earlier, we exclude for our discussion, studies oriented toward chemical modification of the TiO_2 surface with a dye. As summarized elsewhere [162, 163] transition metal dopants also modify the interfacial charge transfer and electron–hole recombination behavior of the TiO_2 host. Whether a given dopant exerts a positive or negative effect depends on the particular metal [162, 163].

It must be noted that most studies on metal-doped TiO_2 are oriented toward the photo-oxidation of environmental pollutants (e.g., 4-nitrophenol [164] 4-chlorophenol [165]) rather than toward the photoelectrolysis of water. Other aspects of metal doping include the effect of UV radiation of Ag-doped TiO_2 specimens [166, 167] and plasma treatment [168]. Metal doping by ion implantation of TiO_2 has been discussed [169, 170]. Noble-metal doped (not chemically modified, see above) TiO_2 samples are also of interest [171].

Non-metallic elements such as fluorine, carbon, nitrogen and sulfur have been incorporated into TiO_2 . Table 2 contains a compilation of representative studies on this topic. As with the trend noted earlier with metal dopants, very few of the studies in Table 2 are oriented toward water photosplitting or OER [175, 185, 187]. Other than the desired optical response, non-metallic dopants also exert electronic effects on the host behavior as with the metal dopants (see above). Thus F-doping is observed to cause a reduction in the e^-h^+ recombination rate [188] while N-doping at high levels has the opposite effect and serves to suppress the photocatalytic activity of the TiO_2 host [181]. Conflicting views exist on non-metal doping, particularly with respect to the mechanistic aspects [181].

5.3 Recent work on TiO_2 on photosplitting of water or on the oxygen evolution reaction

Table 3 contains a compilation of studies that have appeared since 1985. Several points are worthy of note

Table 1 Representative examples of work prior to ~1985 on the use of TiO₂ for the photoelectrolysis of water

Entry number	Title of article	Comments	Reference(s)
1	Electrochemical Photolysis of Water at a Semiconductor Electrode	First demonstration of the feasibility of water splitting.	[30]
2	The Quantum Yield of Photolysis of Water on TiO ₂ Electrodes	Very low quantum yields ($\sim 10^{-3}$) were measured when no external bias was applied. The effect of photon flux also explored.	[90]
3	Photoelectrolysis of Water Using Semiconducting TiO ₂ Crystals	Study shows the necessity of a bias potential for rutile photoanodes.	[91]
4	Photoelectrolysis of Water in Cells with TiO ₂ Anodes	Both single crystal and polycrystalline TiO ₂ used and external quantum efficiency measured.	[92]
5	A Photo-Electrochemical Cell with Production of Hydrogen and Oxygen by a Cell Reaction	Cell configuration also employs an illuminated p-GaP photocathode (c.f. Ref. 53).	[93]
6	Photoassisted Electrolysis of Water by Irradiation of a Titanium Dioxide Electrode	The initial claim in Ref. 30 supported along with data on the wavelength response and the correlation of product yield and current.	[94]
7	Semiconductor Electrodes 1. The Chemical Vapor Deposition and Application of Polycrystalline n-Type Titanium Dioxide Electrodes to the Photosensitized Electrolysis of Water	Comparison of the behavior of CVD and single crystal n-TiO ₂ presented.	[95]
8	Formation of Hydrogen Gas with an Electrochemical Photo-cell	See text.	[31]
9	Hydrogen Production under Sunlight with an Electrochemical Photo-cell	See text.	[32]
10	Photoproduction of Hydrogen: Potential Dependence of the Quantum Efficiency as a Function of Wavelength	–	[96]
11	Photoelectrolysis of Water with TiO ₂ -Covered Solar-Cell Electrodes	A hybrid structure, involving a p-n junction Si cell coated with a TiO ₂ film by CVD, is studied.	[97]
12	Electrochemical Investigation of an Illuminated TiO ₂ Electrode	Two types of TiO ₂ films studied, namely, anodically formed layers on Ti sheets and those prepared by plasma jet spraying of TiO ₂ powder.	[98]
13	Intensity Effects in the Electrochemical Photolysis of Water at the TiO ₂ Anode	Quantum efficiency observed to approach unity at low light intensities.	[99]
14	Improved Solar Energy Conversion Efficiencies for the Photocatalytic Production of Hydrogen via TiO ₂ Semiconductor Electrodes	Heat treatment of Ti metal found to influence performance.	[100]
15	Near-UV Photon Efficiency in a TiO ₂ Electrode: Application to Hydrogen Production from Solar Energy	–	[101]
16	Novel Semiconducting Electrodes for the Photosensitized Electrolysis of Water	Appears to be the first study on doping TiO ₂ to extend its light response into the visible range of the electromagnetic spectrum.	[102]
17	Photoelectrolysis of Water in Sunlight with Sensitized Semiconductor Electrodes	Similar observations as in Ref. 102 for Al ³⁺ -doped TiO ₂ .	[103]
18	Photoelectrolysis	The behavior of single crystals of two different orientations (I and II to the C axis) and polycrystalline TiO ₂ reported.	[104]
19	The Quantum Yields of Photoelectric Decomposition of Water at TiO ₂ Anodes and p-Type GaP Cathodes	A more detailed study as in Ref. 103 by the same research group.	[105]
20	Anomalous Photoresponse of n-TiO ₂ Electrode in a Photo-electrochemical Cell	The behavior of surface states at the TiO ₂ -electrolyte interface is focus of this study.	[106]
21	An Effect of Heat Treatment on the Activity of Titanium Dioxide Film Electrodes for Photosensitized Oxidation of Water	Heat treatment in argon atmosphere found to improve performance of both anodic and pyrolytically prepared TiO ₂ films.	[107]
22	Preparation of Titanium Dioxide Films as Solar Photocatalysts	Low-cost polyimide plastic used as film substrate.	[108]

Table 1 continued

Entry number	Title of article	Comments	Reference(s)
23	Photoelectrochemical Behavior of TiO ₂ and Formation of Hydrogen Peroxide	Other than the OER, reduction of O ₂ to H ₂ O ₂ also observed.	[109]
24	Photodeposition of Water over Pt/TiO ₂ Catalysts	Powdered photocatalyst is employed.	[110]
25	Photocatalytic Decomposition of Gaseous Water over TiO ₂ and TiO ₂ -RuO ₂ Surfaces	As above but gaseous water used at room temperature.	[111]
26	Photoelectrolysis of Water with Natural Mineral TiO ₂ Rutile Electrodes	Natural samples compared with Fe-doped synthetic single crystal TiO ₂ .	[112]
27	Models for the Photoelectrolytic Decomposition of Water at Semiconducting Oxide Anodes	Although title is general, theoretical study focuses on the TiO ₂ -electrolyte interface and the effect of surface states.	[113]
28	Photosynthetic Production of H ₂ and H ₂ O ₂ on Semiconducting Oxide Grains in Aqueous Solutions	Hydrogen peroxide formation observed in TiO ₂ powder <i>suspensions</i> as in Ref. 109 for TiO ₂ <i>films</i> .	[114]
29	Influence of pH on the Potential Dependence of the Efficiency of Water Photo-oxidation at n-TiO ₂ Electrodes	Quantum efficiency for water photooxidation is shown to be pH-dependent.	[115]
30	Photocatalytic Water Decomposition and Water-Gas Shift Reactions over NaOH-Coated, Platinized TiO ₂	As in Entry 24 (Ref. 110) by the same research group.	[116]
31	Photosensitized Dissociation of Water using Dispersed Suspensions of n-Type Semiconductors	Focus of study on TiO ₂ and SrTiO ₃ using EDTA as an electron donor and Fe ³⁺ as acceptor for tests of water reduction and oxidation activity respectively (c.f. Figures 1b and 1c).	[117]
32	Photocatalytic Hydrogen Evolution from an Aqueous Hydrazine Solution	Pt-TiO ₂ photocatalyst used and both H ₂ and N ₂ evolution observed.	[118]
33	Conditions for Photochemical Water Cleavage. Aqueous Pt/TiO ₂ (Anatase) Dispersions under Ultraviolet Light	As in Entries 24 and 25 (Refs.110,111) photocatalyst dispersions studied.	[119]
34	Colloidal Semiconductors in Systems for the Sacrificial Photolysis of Water. 1. Preparation of a Pt/TiO ₂ Catalyst by Heterocoagulation and its Physical Characterization	–	[120]

here. The vast majority of the entries feature studies on TiO₂ powders rather than on electrodes in a photoelectrochemical cell configuration. In this light, the new studies can be regarded as offshoots inspired by the earlier (pre-1985) studies on co-functional photocatalysts and the cyclic cleavage of water [1, 12]. Second, many of the new studies address two key issues with the earlier systems: (a) non-stoichiometric evolution of H₂ and O₂ and (b) poor performance stemming from back reactions and electron-hole recombination processes. With reference to the first point, very little O₂ evolution was observed in many cases in studies on TiO₂ powder suspensions with reports [111, 191, 195] of stoichiometric H₂ and O₂ evolution (i.e., in the expected 2:1 ratio) being the exceptions rather than the rule. Initially, this discrepancy was attributed by the community to the photo-induced adsorption of the (evolved) O₂ on the TiO₂ surface.

The remarkable effect of a NaOH ‘‘dessicant’’ coating on the TiO₂ surface on the efficiency of water photosplitting appears to have radically changed this thinking (see [211] and references therein). The new results support the

deleterious role that Pt islands on the TiO₂ play in promoting the reverse reaction, 2H₂ + O₂ → 2H₂O. Interestingly, the irradiation geometry also appears to exert an effect on the extent of back reactions [212]. Adsorption of CO on Pt, for example, was also found to inhibit the reverse reaction [213]. Subsequent studies on the role of Na₂CO₃ addition ([214] and Entries 3 and 4 in Table 3) underline the importance of inhibiting back reactions on catalyst-modified TiO₂ samples. By the same token, unusual valence states (Ti⁵⁺) that have been proposed [199] to explain the non-stoichiometric gas evolution have been challenged by other authors [215].

Other factors influencing the yield of H₂ and O₂ in irradiated TiO₂ suspensions include the nature of the co-catalyst (see, for example, Entry 4 in Table 3), the crystal form of TiO₂, particle size of TiO₂, temperature and ambient pressure [211]. The reader is referred to [211] for further details. Other interesting mechanistic aspects of the water photosplitting process on the TiO₂ surface such as hydrogen atom spillover have also been discussed [216].

Table 2 Representative studies on doping of TiO₂ with non-metallic elements

Entry number	Title of article	Comments	Reference(s)
1	Visible-Light Photocatalysis in Nitrogen-Doped Titanium Oxides	Both films and powders considered. Substitutional doping with nitrogen shown to bring about band gap narrowing and also high photocatalytic activity with visible light. Experimental data supported with first-principles calculations.	[172]
2	Formation of TiO _{2-x} F _x Compounds in Fluorine-Implanted TiO ₂	Fluorine substituted for oxygen sites in the oxide by ion implantation.	[173]
3	Band Gap Narrowing of Titanium Dioxide by Sulfur Doping	Oxidative annealing of TiS ₂ used. Ab initio calculations also reveal mixing of S 3p states with the valence bond to bring about band gap narrowing.	[174]
4	Efficient Photochemical Water Splitting by a Chemically Modified n-TiO ₂	Combustion of Ti metal in a natural gas flame done to substitute carbon for some of the lattice oxygen sites. The photocatalysis performance data have been questioned (see Refs. 176–178).	[175]
5	Daylight Photocatalysis by Carbon-Modified Titanium Dioxide	Titanium tetrachloride precursor hydrolyzed with nitrogen bases to yield (surprisingly) C-doped (instead of N-doped) TiO ₂ . Study oriented toward environmental remediation applicability.	[179]
6	Carbon-Doped Anatase TiO ₂ Powders as a Visible-Light Sensitive Photocatalyst	Oxidative annealing of TiC used to afford yellow doped powders. Study focus as in Entry 5.	[180]
7	Nitrogen-Concentration Dependence on Photocatalytic Activity of Ti _{2-x} N _x Powders	Samples prepared by annealing anatase TiO ₂ under NH ₃ flow at 550–600 °C.	[181]
8	Visible Light-Induced Degradation of Methylene Blue on S-doped TiO ₂	As in Entry 3 (Ref. 174) by the same research group.	[182]
9	Visible-Light Induced Hydrophilicity on Nitrogen-Substituted Titanium Dioxide Films	Degree of hydrophilicity correlated with the extent of substitution of nitrogen at oxygen sites.	[183]
10	Spectral Photoresponses of Carbon-Doped TiO ₂ Film Electrodes	Raman spectra used to identify disordered carbon in the flame-formed samples in addition to lower nonstoichiometric titanium oxides identified by X-ray diffraction.	[184]
11	Photoelectrochemical Study of Nitrogen-Doped Titanium Dioxide for Water Oxidation	One of the few studies probing the influence of doping on OER.	[185]
12	Metal Ion and N Co-doped TiO ₂ as a Visible-Light Photocatalyst	Co-doped samples prepared by polymerized complex or sol-gel method. Doped N species found to reside at interstitial lattice positions in the host.	[186]
13	Novel Carbon-Doped TiO ₂ Nanotube Arrays with High Aspect Ratios for Efficient Solar Water Splitting	–	[187]

An interesting aspect of the new work on TiO₂, namely that of combining two photosystems (in a Z-scheme) mimicking plant photosynthesis (see Entries 6 and 10 in Table 3) also has its roots in early work in this field (see, for example, Entry 5 in Table 1). Further elaborations of this strategy are available [217, 218].

Finally, some of the studies considered in Table 3 (Entries 11 and 13) buck the trend mentioned earlier that few of the studies on transition-metal doped TiO₂ are oriented toward the water-photosplitting application. These new studies exploit the visible-light sensitization of the doped host material as well as the improved electronic characteristics observed in some cases (particularly the co-doped instance) to enhance the efficiency of the water photosplitting process.

In sum, TiO₂ continues to be a veritable workhorse of the photocatalysis and photoelectrolysis communities. Studies of the electrical properties and defect chemistry

continue to appear for this material in both single crystal [219–222] and nanostructured form [223]. Yet this material to date has not yielded systems for evolving H₂ and O₂ at the 10% benchmark efficiency level. Studies on TiO₂ oriented toward visible light sensitization and efficiency enhancement will undoubtedly continue, at an unabated rate, in the foreseeable future. This is because of the extensive and growing market that already exists for this commodity chemical in a variety of *other* application areas and because of its excellent chemical attributes such as inertness and stability.

6 Other binary oxides

Table 4 contains a compilation of studies on other binary oxides that have been examined for their applicability to

Table 3 Representative studies since 1985 on the photosplitting of water using TiO₂

Entry Number	Brief outline of study	Reference(s)
1	Ferroelectric substrates (poled LiNbO ₃) were used to support TiO ₂ films. After platinization of TiO ₂ , water splitting was examined in both liquid and gas phases under Xe arc lamp illumination.	[189]
2	Both reduced and Pt-modified powder samples were studied in distilled water and in aqueous solutions of HCl, H ₂ SO ₄ , HNO ₃ and NaOH. Water photodecomposition proceeds moderately in distilled water and in NaOH but is strongly suppressed in acidic aqueous media. The NaOH coating effect mimicks that found by other workers earlier (see Ref. 191 and text).	[190]
3	Sodium carbonate addition to a Pt/TiO ₂ suspension in water effective in promoting stoichiometric photodecomposition of water.	[192, 193]
4	Demonstration of solar H ₂ and O ₂ production on Ni _x /TiO ₂ co-catalyst with Na ₂ CO ₃ or NaOH addition.	[194, 195]
5	A photoelectrolyzer designed with a TiO ₂ photoanode and a membrane of sulfonated polytetrafluoroethylene as the electrolyte. A quantum efficiency of 0.8 was reported.	[196]
6	Photochemical splitting of water achieved by combining two photocatalytic reactions on suspended TiO ₂ particles; namely, the reduction of water to H ₂ using bromide ions and the oxidation of water using Fe(III) species. High efficiency also observed for the photoassisted OER on TiO ₂ in the presence of Fe(III) ions.	[197, 198]
7	Pt- and other catalyst supported TiO ₂ (P-25) particles studied. Only the HER was observed and stoichiometry H ₂ and O ₂ formation was not found. Mechanistic reasons proposed have been challenged by other authors (see text).	[199]
8	HER observed in semiconductor septum cells using TiO ₂ or TiO ₂ -In ₂ O ₃ composites.	[41, 42]
9	Pure rutile TiO ₂ phase isolated from commercial samples containing both rutile and anatase by dissolution in HF. The resultant samples studied for their efficacy in driving the photoassisted OER in the presence of Fe(III) species as electron acceptor (see Entry 6 above).	[200]
10	A Z-scheme system mimicking the plant photosynthesis model developed with Pt-loaded TiO ₂ for HER and rutile TiO ₂ for OER. An IO ₃ ⁻ /I ⁻ shuttle was used as redox mediator.	[201]
11	Co-doping of TiO ₂ with Sb and Cr found to evolve O ₂ from an aqueous AgNO ₃ solution under visible light irradiation.	[202]
12	HER observed from a mixed water-acetonitrile medium containing iodide electron donor and dye-sensitized Pt/TiO ₂ photocatalysts under visible light irradiation.	[203]
13	Back-reactions (i.e., O ₂ reduction and H ₂ oxidation) studied on both TiO ₂ or Cr and Sb co-doped TiO ₂ samples (see Entry 11 above).	[204]
14	TiO ₂ nanotube arrays prepared by anodization of Ti foil in a F ⁻ -containing electrolyte. Pd-modified photocatalyst samples show an efficiency of 4.8% based on photocurrent data for the OER.	[205–209]
15	TiO ₂ co-doped with Ni and Ta (or Nb) show visible light activity for the OER in aq. AgNO ₃ and HER in aqueous methanol solution.	[210]

drive the photoelectrolysis of water. As cited earlier, general reviews are available on many of the oxides listed in this table [4, 14, 84, 85]. Other than TiO₂, Fe₂O₃ and WO₃ are two of the most widely studied among the binary oxide semiconductors, and studies on these oxides have continued to appear right up to the time of the writing of this chapter.

Tungsten oxide shares many of the same attributes with TiO₂ in terms of chemical inertness and exceptional photoelectrochemical and chemical stability in aqueous media over a very wide pH range. However, its flat-band potential (V_{fb}) lies positive of that of TiO₂ (anatase) such that spontaneous generation of H₂ by the photo-generated electrons in WO₃ is not possible. This location of V_{fb} has been invoked [232] for the very high IPCE

values observed for the photoinduced OER in terms of the rather slow back electron transfer leading to O₂ reduction. A variety of dopants (e.g., F, Mg, Cu) have been tested for WO₃[226, 229, 235] and Pt-modified samples have been deployed in a Z-scheme configuration [234]. Electron acceptors such as Ag⁺ [228] and IO₃⁻[234] species have been used to study the O₂ evolution characteristics of the WO₃ photocatalyst under visible light irradiation. As pointed out very early in the history of study of this material [218, 269] the lower E_g value of WO₃ (relative to TiO₂) results in a more substantial utilization of the solar spectrum. This combined with the advances in nanostructured oxide materials will likely sustain interest in WO₃ from a photoelectrolysis perspective.

Table 4 Binary oxides (other than TiO₂) that have been considered for the photoelectrolysis of water

Entry number	Oxide semiconductor	Energy band gap, eV	Comments	Reference(s)
1	WO ₃	2.5–2.8	This material has been used as single crystals, thin films, powders and in mesoporous/nanostructured form. Both virgin and doped samples studied.	[224–235]
2	Fe ₂ O ₃	2.0–2.2	As in Entry 1 above.	[236–255]
3	ZnO	3.37	Unstable under irradiation and OER/HER conditions.	[114]
4	SnO ₂	3.5	Sb-doped single crystal samples used. Stable H ₂ and O ₂ evolution observed at Pt cathode and SnO ₂ photoanode respectively.	[256, 257]
5	NiO	3.47	A p-type semiconductor with indirect gap optical transition.	[258–260]
6	CdO	~2.3	A n-type semiconductor. Interestingly, RuO ₂ -modified samples reduced the yield of O ₂ under irradiation.	[261]
7	PdO	~0.8	A p-type semiconductor. Not stable under irradiation in the HER regime.	[262]
8	Cu ₂ O	2.0–2.2	Claims of water splitting in powder suspensions challenged by others (see text).	[263, 264]
9	CuO	1.7	Not photoelectrochemically stable.	[239, 265]
10	Bi ₂ O ₃	2.8	Both doped and catalytically modified samples studied.	[239, 266–268]

The combination of a rather low E_g value, good photoelectrochemical stability and chemical inertness coupled with the abundance of iron on our planet makes Fe₂O₃ an attractive candidate for the photoelectrolysis of water. Thus it is hardly surprising that this material continues to be intensively studied from this perspective. As with TiO₂ and WO₃, Fe₂O₃ (particularly the α -modification) has been examined in single crystal form, as thin films prepared by CVD [237, 239, 255, 270], pyrolytic conversion of iron [240], and spray pyrolysis [248, 250–253], or as sintered pellets from powders [241–246]. A variety of dopants have been deployed to modify the host [242–245, 247, 250–253] and remarkably, p-type semiconductor behavior has been reported [242, 244, 245, 251] in addition to the more commonly occurring n-type material. The main handicap with Fe₂O₃ is its rather poor electronic and charge transport characteristics regardless of the method of preparation of the material. Specifically, facile e^-h^+ recombination, trapping of electrons at defect sites and the poor mobility of holes conspire to result in very low efficiencies for water oxidation. Attempts to circumvent these problems by using unique photoanode configurations (e.g., nanorod arrays [249]) or compositional tuning (e.g., minimizing sub-stoichiometric phases such as Fe₃O₄ [246, 253]) are continuing and will undoubtedly contribute to further examinations of this promising material in the future.

By way of contrast, none of the other binary oxides listed in Table 4 appear to hold much promise. While ZnO has enjoyed extensive popularity in the photochemistry community (even comparable to TiO₂ in the early days prior to ~1980), it is rather unstable (at least in the forms synthesized up till now) under illumination and in the OER and HER regimes. This problem besets most of the other

candidates in Table 4 with the exception of SnO₂ (whose E_g is too high) and possibly Bi₂O₃. The report [263] of photocatalytic water splitting on Cu₂O powder suspensions (with stability in excess of ~1900 h!) has been greeted with scepticism by others [264] who have also pointed out that the Cu₂O band-edges are unlikely to bracket the H⁺/H₂ and O₂/H₂O redox levels as required (see Fig. 1a). Our own studies [271] on electrodeposited samples of this oxide have utilized a Ni/NiO protective layer, catalyst modification (with e.g., Pt) to drive the HER and the use of optimized electron donors in the anode compartment in a twin-compartment photoelectrochemical cell (Fig. 5)

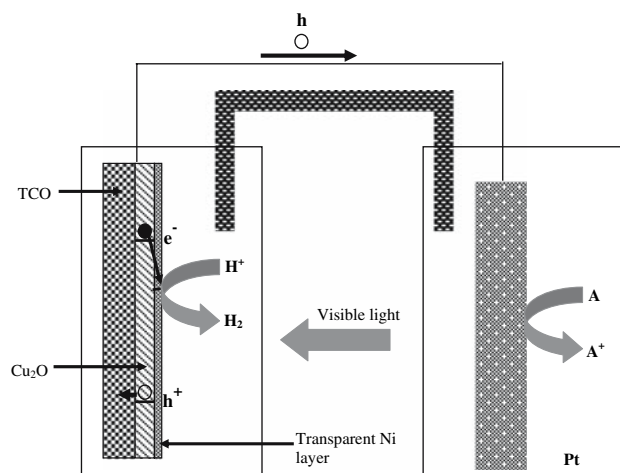


Fig. 5 Twin-compartment photoelectrochemical cell for the photocatalytic generation of H₂ from water using electrodeposited p-Cu₂O (from Ref. 253). TCO is a transparent conducting oxide substrate for the semiconductor film and A is an electron donor in the anode compartment

[271]. Under these conditions, spontaneous HER was observed under visible light irradiation of the p-Cu₂O photocathode. Photoinduced transfer of electrons from p-Cu₂O to an electron acceptor such as methyl viologen was also demonstrated via in situ spectroscopic monitoring of the blue cation radicals [271]. However, the photocurrents generated are only in the μ A level necessitating further improvements before assessments of practical viability of Cu₂O for solar H₂ photogeneration. A value added approach would be to combine photogenerated H₂ generation with destruction of an environmental pollutant (e.g., dye) in the other compartment of a divided electrochemical cell [271–273].

It is worth noting that some oxides have *too low* a band gap for optimal solar energy conversion. Palladium oxide in Table 4 exemplifies this trend as does PbO₂ [239]. On the other hand, PbO has an E_g value around 2.8 eV [239]. Other oxides such as CoO and Cr₂O₃ (both p-type semiconductors) have been very briefly examined early on in the evolution of this field [239].

In closing this section, comparative studies on binary oxide semiconductors are available [84, 85, 239, 274] including one study [274] where the electron affinities of several metal oxides (used as anodes in photoelectrolysis cells) were calculated from the atomic electronegativity values of the constituent elements. These electron affinity estimates were correlated with the V_{fb} values measured for the same oxides in aqueous media [274].

7 Perovskite titanates and related oxides

Perovskites have the general formula, ABX₃, with SrTiO₃ being a prototype. They contain a framework structure containing corner-sharing TiO₆ octahedra with the A cation in twelve-coordinate interstices [275, 276]. Several hundred oxides have this structure. Table 5 lists the studies that have appeared on SrTiO₃ with photoelectrolysis of water as a primary objective. As well as the cubic structure exemplified by SrTiO₃, a variety of distorted, non-cubic structures occurs in which the framework of TiO₆ octahedra may be twisted. Thus, BaTiO₃ is tetragonal at room temperature. Both SrTiO₃ and BaTiO₃ have energy band gaps around 3.2 eV. With Fe and F doping, the E_g of BaTiO₃ has been shrunk from 3.2 eV to \sim 2.8 eV [304]. Relative to SrTiO₃, studies on BaTiO₃ from a photoelectrolysis perspective are much sparser [304–306].

Titanates with tunnel structures have been examined for photoelectrolysis applications [307]. Thus, barium tetratitanate (BaTi₄O₉) has a twin-type tunnel structure in which the TiO₆ octahedra are not oriented parallel to one another creating a pentagonal prism space. Alkaline metal

hexatitanates (M₂Ti₆O₁₃; M = Na, K, Rb) are Wadsley–Andersson type structures in which TiO₆ octahedra share an edge at one level in linear groups of three, giving a tunnel structure with rectangular space. The reader should consult the literature for reviews of water photolysis studies using these types of oxides [170, 307]. These materials have been used in powder form in suspensions usually modified with a co-catalyst such as RuO₂ [308–318].

More complex perovskites exist containing two different cations which may occupy either the A or B sites and many of these also have a layered structure. Two main classes of such oxides showing interlamellar activity have been explored for water photolysis: (a) the Dion–Jacobson series of the general formula, AM_{n-1}B_nO_{3n+1} (e.g., KCa₂Ti₃O₁₀) and (b) the Ruddlesden–Popper series of general formula, A₂M_{n-1}B_nO_{3n+1} (e.g., K₂La₂Ti₃O₁₀) [319, 320]. Corresponding niobates also exist as discussed below. Noble metal co-catalysts (e.g., Pt) are loaded onto these photocatalysts by photocatalytic deposition from H₂PtCl₆ (see above). Since the oxide sheets have a net negative charge (that is balanced by the alkali cations), the PtCl₆²⁻ anions are not intercalated in the host lattice [319]. Instead, the Pt sites are formed on the external surfaces of the layered perovskite powder.

In many of these cases with layered oxides, the H⁺-exchanged photocatalysts show higher activity toward the HER—a trend rationalized by the easy accessibility of the interlayer space to electron donor species such as methanol [319, 321]. Other aspects such as Ni-loading and pillaring of the interlayer spaces have been discussed [319]. Another type of layered perovskites have been studied with the generic composition, A_nB_nO_{3n+2} ($n = 4, 5$; A = Ca, Sr, La; B = Nb, Ti) [322]. Unlike the (100)-oriented structures discussed above, the perovskite slabs in these oxides are oriented parallel to the (110) direction. Thus compounds such as La₂Ti₂O₇ and La₄CaTi₅O₁₇ were examined in terms of their efficacy toward water splitting under UV irradiation [322].

In closing this section, a variety of other ternary oxides (besides the SrTiO₃ prototype) have been examined over the years. Table 6 contains a representative listing of these compounds.

8 Tantalates and niobates

We have seen in the preceding section that oxides with MO₆ octahedra can form perovskite structures and this trend also applies to some tantatates and niobates. The perovskite, KTaO₃, as well as its Nb-incorporated cousin, KTa_{0.77}Nb_{0.23}O₃ were studied early on (1976) in the history of photoelectrolysis of water (see Entry 8 in

Table 5 Studies on the use of SrTiO₃ anodes or powders for the photoelectrolysis of water

Entry number	Title of paper	Comments	Reference(s)
1	Photoelectrochemical Reactions at SrTiO ₃ Single Crystal Electrodes	Cell found to work efficiently even without a pH gradient in the anode and cathode compartments.	[277]
2	Strontium Titanate Photoelectrodes. Efficient Photoassisted Electrolysis of Water at Zero Applied Potential	As above but the water photosplitting driven by light only with no external bias. Photoanode stability also confirmed as in the evolution of H ₂ and O ₂ in the correct 2:1 stoichiometric ratio.	[278]
3	Photoelectrolysis of Water in Cells with SrTiO ₃ Anodes	Maximum quantum efficiency at zero bias (10% at $h\nu = 3.8\text{eV}$) found to be ~an order of magnitude higher than TiO ₂ .	[279]
4	Photoeffects on Semiconductor Ceramic Electrodes	Photoresponse of SrTiO ₃ found to be better than that of BaTiO ₃ . Unlike the use of single crystals in the above studies (Entries 1–3), polycrystalline electrodes with large area were used.	[280]
5	Surface Photovoltage Experiments on SrTiO ₃ Electrodes	The role of surface states in mediating charge transfer between electrode and electrolyte elucidated.	[281]
6	Photocatalytic and Photoelectro-chemical Hydrogen Production on Strontium Titanate Single Crystals	Both metal-free and platinized samples studied in aqueous alkaline electrolytes or in the presence of NaOH-coated crystals.	[282]
7	Photocatalytic Decomposition of Water Vapor on a NiO–SrTiO ₃ Catalyst	A series of studies begun with this particular study which uses powdered photocatalyst. See Entries below.	[283]
8	Visible Light Induced Photo-currents in SrTiO ₃ –LaCrO ₃ Single-Crystalline Electrodes	Co-doping of La and Cr shifts photoresponse down to 560 nm and strong absorption in the visible range ascribed to Cr ³⁺ → Ti ⁴⁺ charge transfer.	[284]
9	The Sensitization of SrTiO ₃ Photo-anodes for Visible Light Irradiation	As in Entry 8 but using the perovskites LaVO ₃ , Sr ₂ CrNbO ₆ and SrNiNb ₂ O ₉ as dopants.	[285]
10	The Coloration of Titanates by Transition Metal Ions in View of Solar Energy Applications	–	[286]
11	Evidence of Photodissociation of Water Vapor on Reduced SrTiO ₃ (III) Surfaces in a High Vacuum Environment	First report of photodecomposition of water adsorbed from the gas phase in high vacuum conditions on metal-free, reduced single crystals.	[287]
12	Oxygen Evolution Improvement at a Cr-Doped SrTiO ₃ Photoanode by a Ru-Oxide Coating	–	[288]
13	Electrochemical Conversion and Storage of Solar Energy	A doped n-SrTiO ₃ single crystal was combined with a proton-conducting solid electrolyte and a metal hydride allowing for storage of the evolved H ₂ .	[289]
14	Water Photolysis by UV Irradiation of Rhodium Loaded Strontium Titanate Catalysts. Relation Between Catalytic Activity and Nature of the Deposit from Combined Photolysis and ESCA Studies	Powdered catalysts used and the water photolysis efficiency is found to have a strong pH dependence.	[290]
15	Photocatalytic Decomposition of Liquid Water on a NiO–SrTiO ₃ Catalyst	As in Entry 7 but for liquid water. Effect of NaOH film (see Entry 6) reproduced for NiO–SrTiO ₃ powder.	[291]
16	Study of the Photocatalytic Decomposition of Water Vapor over a NiO–SrTiO ₃ Catalyst	Mechanistic aspects probed by using a closed gas circulation system and IR spectroscopy (see also Entries 7 and 15).	[292]
17	Photoelectrolysis of Water under Visible Light with Doped SrTiO ₃ Electrodes	Sintered samples used with a variety of dopants (Ru, V, Cr, Ce, Co, Rh).	[293]
18	Mediation by Surface States of the Electroreduction of Photogenerated H ₂ O ₂ and O ₂ on n-SrTiO ₃ in a Photoelectrochemical Cell	Back reactions probed and the role of surface states elucidated.	[294]
19	Photocatalytic Decomposition of Water into H ₂ and O ₂ over NiO–SrTiO ₃ Powder. 1. Structure of the Catalyst	Nickel metal also found at the interface of NiO and SrTiO ₃ . See also Entries 7, 15 and 16.	[295]
20	Mechanism of Photocatalytic Decomposition of Water into H ₂ and O ₂ over NiO–SrTiO ₃	HER found to occur on the NiO co-catalyst surface while OER takes place on SrTiO ₃ . See also Entries 7, 15, 16 and 19.	[296]

Table 5 continued

Entry number	Title of paper	Comments	Reference(s)
21	Water Photolysis over Metallized SrTiO ₃ Catalysts	Promoting effect of NaOH not so pronounced as for TiO ₂ .	[297]
22	Luminescence Spectra from n-TiO ₂ and n-SrTiO ₃ Semiconductor Electrodes and Those Doped with Transition-Metal Oxides As Related with Intermediates of the Photooxidation Reaction of Water	Mechanistic aspects clarified using photo- and electroluminescence measurements.	[298]
23	Photoinduced Surface Reactions on TiO ₂ and SrTiO ₃ Films: Photo-catalytic Oxidation and Photo-induced Hydrophilicity	–	[146]
24	Stoichiometric Water Splitting into H ₂ and O ₂ using a Mixture of Two Different Photocatalysts and an IO ₃ /I ⁻ Shuttle Redox Mediator under Visible Light Irradiation	A Z-scheme used using a mixture of Pt-WO ₃ and Pt-SrTiO ₃ photocatalysts. The latter was co-doped with Cr and Ta.	[299]
25	Visible-Light-Response and Photo-catalytic Activities of TiO ₂ and SrTiO ₃ Photocatalysts Co-doped with Antimony and Chromium	The band gap of SrTiO ₃ shrunk to 2.4 eV by co-doping.	[300]
26	A New Photocatalytic Water Splitting System under Visible Light Irradiation Mimicking a Z-Scheme Mechanism in Photosynthesis	See Entry 23 above.	[234]
27	Construction of Z-Scheme Type Heterogeneous Photocatalysis Systems for Water Splitting into H ₂ and O ₂ under Visible Light Irradiation	A Pt-SrTiO ₃ doped with Rh is combined with a BiVO ₄ photocatalyst.	[301]
28	Electrochemical Approach to Evaluate the Mechanism of Photo-catalytic Water Splitting on Oxide Photocatalysts	Cr or Sb co-doped SrTiO ₃ samples studied amongst others.	[204]
29	H ₂ Evolution from a Aqueous Methanol Solution on SrTiO ₃ Photocatalysts Co-doped with Chromium and Tantalum Ions under Visible Light Irradiation	–	[302]
30	Photocatalytic Activities of Noble Metal Ion Doped SrTiO ₃ under Visible Light Irradiation	Mn-, Ru-, Rh- and Ir-doped powder samples studied.	[303]
31	Nickel and Either Tantalum or Niobium-Co-doped TiO ₂ and SrTiO ₃ Photocatalysts with Visible-Light Response for H ₂ or O ₂ Evolution from Aqueous Solutions	Co-doping found to afford higher activity for HER compared with Ni alone.	[210]

Table 6) [257, 326]. Niobium oxides were also considered in early studies aimed at shrinking the large band gaps to values responsive to the visible range of the solar spectrum [333]. Thus in compounds of the type ANb₂O₆ (with A = Ni or Co) we have a conduction band built from d levels of a highly charged, closed-shell transition metal ion (Nb⁵⁺) while the highest filled valence band is also cation-derived from the d levels of either Ni²⁺ or Co²⁺ [333]. Thus the main optical transition should be of Ni²⁺ (or Co²⁺) → Nb⁵⁺ charge-transfer type in the visible region. The ANb₂O₆ oxide has the columbite structure with a Fe²⁺ → Nb⁵⁺ transition featured by a 2.08 eV gap [334]. Families of Bi₂MNbO₇ (M = Al, Ga, In), A₂B₂O₇, InMO₄ (M = Nb, Ta) compounds all contain the same octahedral TaO₆ or NbO₆ structural units [335].

The parent oxide in these cases can be regarded generically as M₂O₅ (M = Nb or Ta). Table 7 contains a listing of the water photosplitting studies that have appeared on

M₂O₅, ATaO₃ and more complex tantalates and niobates. Layered perovskite type niobates have the generic formula A[B_{n-1}Nb_nO_{3n+1}] with A = K, Rb, Cs and B = Ca, Sr, Na, Pb, etc. For example, with values of n = 2 and 3, we can derive the structures A₂M₂O₇ and AB₂Nb₃O₁₀ in Table 7 respectively (Entries 3 and 9). Another series of perovskites has the generic formula: A_nM_nO_{3n+2} with A = Ca, Sr, La and M being either Nb, Ta or Ti. Of course, the simplest compound in this series has the AMO₃ composition as exemplified by SrTiO₃ or KTaO₃ (see above).

The layered oxides featured in this section and the preceding one have ion-exchange characteristics imparted by the net negative charge residing on the layered sheets. Thus they can assimilate positively charged ions (such as K⁺) in the interlamellar spaces. Interestingly, some of these materials (e.g., K₄Nb₆O₁₇) have *two* types of interlayer spaces (I and II) which appear alternately [365]. The space ‘I’ is easily hydrated even in air while ‘II’ is hydrated

Table 6 Other ternary oxides with the general formula, ABO_3 ,^a that have been examined from a water photoelectrolysis perspective

Entry number	Oxide	Energy band gap, eV	Comments	Reference(s)
1	$FeTiO_3^b$	2.16	Unstable with leaching of iron observed during photoelectrolysis.	[323]
2	$YFeO_3$	2.58	N-type semiconductor with an indirect optical transition.	[324]
3	$LuRhO_3$	~2.2	Distorted perovskite structure with p-type semiconductor behavior.	[325]
4	$BaSnO_3$	~3.0	Estimated to be stable toward photoanodic decomposition over a 0.4–14 pH range.	[85]
5	$CaTiO_3$	~3.6	–	[85]
6	$KNbO_3$	~3.1	See next section.	[85]
7	$Ba_{0.8}Ca_{0.2}TiO_3$	~3.25	–	[85]
8	$KTaO_3$	~3.5	Optical to chemical conversion efficiency of ~6% reported. See next section.	[326]
9	$CdSnO_3$	1.77	Band-edges not suitably aligned for HER or OER.	[327]
10	$LaRhO_3$	1.35	See above.	[327]
11	$NiTiO_3^c$	~1.6	N-type semiconductor crystallizing in the illmenite structure.	[328–330]
12	$LaMnO_3$	~1.1	A p-type semiconductor.	[331, 332]

^a Not all the oxides in this compilation have the perovskite structure

^b Other iron titanates: Fe_2TiO_4 ($E_g = 2.12$ eV) and Fe_2TiO_5 ($E_g = 2.18$ eV) also examined

^c “Band gap” estimated for the transition from the mid-gap $Ni^{2+}(3d^8)$ level to the CB. Compound can be regarded as NiO “doped” TiO_2

only in a highly humid environment. It is presumed that the NiO co-catalyst exists only in “I” such that the HER occurs mainly in this interlayer space. On the other hand, the OER is thought to occur in the interlayer space, II [365].

In general, oxides containing early transition metal cations with d^0 electronic configuration such as Ti^{4+} , Nb^{5+} or Ta^{5+} have wide band gaps (> 3.0 eV). In fact Ta_2O_5 has a very high E_g value of ~4.0 eV. Thus, these materials do not perform well under visible light irradiation, and in practical scenarios, would only absorb a small fraction of the solar spectrum. As with TiO_2 and the vast majority of the oxides considered earlier, the ternary (and multinary) oxides, namely the titanates, tantalates and niobates suffer from this same handicap. On the other hand, these materials with smaller E_g values have other problems related to stability, interfacial energetics, poor charge transfer characteristics, etc.

9 Miscellaneous multinary oxides

In this “catch-all” section, we mainly discuss the spinel structures with the generic formulas, AB_2O_4 and A_2MO_4 . The unit cell of the spinel structure is a large cube, eight times ($2 \times 2 \times 2$) the size of a typical face-centered cube [276]. The delafossite-type structure ABO_2 , in which the A cation is in linear coordination and the B cation is in octahedral coordination with oxygen, is also discussed. One way to visualize this structure is parallel arrangement of sheets with edge-shared BO_6 octahedral with the A ca-

tions occupying the interlayer regions of space. Finally, complex oxides containing V and W are also considered. Table 8 contains a listing of these oxides. It is interesting to note that some of the newer studies (e.g., Entry 4, Table 8) are rooted in early investigations dating back to 1981. Thus, Bi_2WO_6 (as well as $Bi_4Ti_3O_{12}$) were examined [334] within the context of shrinking E_g values of oxide semiconductors. Both these compounds have Bi_2O_2 layers, the former with WO_4 layers (comprised of corner-shared WO_6 octahedra) and the latter with double perovskite layers of composition $Bi_2Ti_3O_{10}$. These structures are distorted from pure tetragonal symmetry. Exfoliation of layered rutile and perovskite tungstates of the generic formula, $HMWO_6$ ($M = Nb, Ta$) and $H_2W_2O_7$, has been reported [382]. The layered perovskite, $La_2Ti_2O_7$ was sensitized to visible light by Cr or Fe doping and used for photocatalytic hydrogen production from water [383].

10 Semiconductor alloys and mixed semiconductor composites

The distinction between the two classes of materials considered in this section pertains to the presence or absence of mixing at the molecular level. Thus in alloys, solid solutions of two or more semiconductors are formed where the lattice sites are interspersed with the alloy components. Semiconductor alloys, unlike their metallic counterparts, have a much more recent history and their development driver has been mainly optoelectronic (e.g., solid-state la-

Table 7 Studies on tantalate and niobate photocatalysts for the splitting of water.^a

Entry number	Compound formula	A cation(s)	B cation(s)	Comments	Reference(s)
1	Ta ₂ O ₅	–	–	Both crystallized and mesoporous samples studied and in one case, (Ref. 337), NiO co-catalyst was used.	[336, 337]
2	ATaO ₃	Li, Na, K	–	Excess alkali cation enhances catalytic activity. Co-catalysts not found to be essential although NiO was also used in addition in some studies.	[338–342]
3	A(In _{1/3} B _{1/3} M _{1/3})O ₃	Ba	Pb, Sn	Visible light photocatalysts studied with a band gap engineering strategy based on electronegativity of the B metal component.	[343]
4	A ₂ M ₂ O ₇ ^b	Sr	–	Have layered perovskite structure. Samples with both Ta and Nb also studied. Strontium niobate compound is ferroelectric at room temperature. In contrast, the tantalum analog is paramagnetic.	[322, 344–346]
5	ANb ₂ O ₆	Ni, Co, Zn	–	See text.	[341, 347]
6	ATa ₂ O ₆	Mg, Ba, Sr	–	Orthorhombic structure used with NiO co-catalyst to enhance photocatalyst activity.	[338, 348]
7	A ₂ BNbO ₆ ^c	Sr	Fe	–	[349]
8	A ₃ BNb ₂ O ₉	Sr	Fe	–	[349]
9	A ₄ Nb ₆ O ₁₇	K, Rb	–	Perhaps the most studied of the niobates. NiO co-catalyst used in some cases as was aqueous methanol solution. Composites with CdS also studied.	[350–355]
10	AB ₂ Nb ₃ O ₁₀	K, Rb, Cs	Ca, Sr, Pb	Layered perovskite structure.	[356–359]
11	A ₂ B ₂ Ti _{3-x} Nb _x O ₁₀	K, Rb, Cs	La	Partial substitution of Ti with Nb leads to a decrease in the negative charge density of the perovskite sheets.	[360]
12	A ₃ Ta ₃ Si ₂ O ₁₃	K	–	Pillared structure with TaO ₆ pillars linked by Si ₂ O ₇ ditetrahedral units.	[361]
13	A ₂ BTa ₅ O ₁₅	K	Ln	Used with NiO co-catalyst. The Pr and Sm compounds show high activity.	[362]
14	ATaO ₄	In	–	Crystallizes in the monoclinic wolframite-type structure, like the FeNbO ₄ compound (see text).	[363]
15	A ₂ Nb ₄ O ₁₁	Cs	–	Structure consists of NbO ₆ and NbO ₄ octahedra.	[364]

^a Also see Refs. [66, 365–371]

^b Belongs to the series A_nMnO_{3n+2} with A = Ca, Sr, La and M = Nb or Ti. The Sr₂Nb₂O₇ structure (Entry 3), for example, is the reduced formula of Sr₄Nb₄O₁₄ with n = 4 above

^c The Sr_{1.9}Fe_{1.1}NbO₆ compound was also studied here

ser) applications. In mixed semiconductor composites, on the other hand, the semiconductor particles are in *electronic* contact but the composite components do not undergo mixing at the molecular level.

Solid-solutions involving oxide semiconductors that have been examined include TiO₂–MnO₂ [384], ZnO–CdO [384], TiO₂–MO₂ (M = Nb, Ta) [385], TiO₂–In₂O₃ [42], TiO₂–V₂O₅ [41], and Fe₂O₃–Nb₂O₅ [384]. Tungsten-based mixed-metal oxides, W_nO_mM_x (M = Ni, Co, Cu, Zn, Pt, Ru, Rh, Pd and Ag) have been prepared using electrosynthesis and high-throughput (combinatorial) screening [386] but it is not clear how many of these compounds are true alloys (rather than mixtures). An interesting oxide alloy with lamellar structure, In₂O₃(ZnO)_m, has been reported [387] with photocatalytic activity for HER in an aqueous methanol and OER in an aqueous AgNO₃ solution. This alloy consists of layers of wurtzite-type ZnO slabs inter-

persed with InO₃ lamella; the band gaps of In₂O₃(ZnO)₃ and In₂O₃(ZnO)₉ are 2.6 eV and 2.7 eV respectively [387].

The incentive for using mixed semiconductors derives from the possibility of securing interparticle electron transfer and thus mitigates carrier recombination. For example, the conduction band of WO₃ lies at a lower energy (relative to the vacuum reference level) than TiO₂ [388, 389]. Thus, in a TiO₂–WO₃ composite, the photogenerated electrons in TiO₂ are driven to WO₃ before they have an opportunity to recombine with the holes in the TiO₂ particle. Other examples illustrative of this approach were discussed earlier in this chapter and include CdS–TiO₂ [390] and CdS–K₄Nb₆O₁₇ [351]. Other examples of mixed semiconductors include TiO₂–LaCrO₃ [391] CdS–LaCrO₃ [332], Fe₂O₃–TiO₂ [392], and Cu₂O–TiO₂ [393]. However, not all these composites have been examined from a water photo-splitting perspective. Note that a *bilayer* configuration of the

Table 8 Miscellaneous multinary oxides for the photodecomposition of water

Entry number	Oxide semiconductor(s)	Energy band gap(s) ^a , eV	Comments	Reference(s)
1	Cd ₂ SnO ₄ , CdIn ₂ O ₄ and Cd ₂ GeO ₄	2.12 (indirect), 2.23 (forbidden) and 3.15 (indirect)	Found to be unsuitable as electrodes in photoelectrolysis cells.	[372]
2	ZnFe ₂ O ₄	?	HER observed by visible light irradiation of H ₂ S solution.	[373]
3	BiVO ₄	2.3	Ag ⁺ used as electron scavenger and photocatalytic OER observed.	[374]
4	Bi ₂ W ₂ O ₉ , Bi ₂ WO ₆ and Bi ₃ TiNbO ₉	3.0, 2.8 and 3.1	Structure consists of perovskite slabs interleaved with Bi ₂ O ₂ layers.	[375]
5	AgVO ₃ , Ag ₄ V ₂ O ₇ and Ag ₃ VO ₄	?	Only Ag ₃ VO ₄ evolves O ₂ in aqueous AgNO ₃ solution (with Ag ⁺ as electron acceptor) under visible light irradiation.	[376]
6	ACrO ₄ (A = Sr or Ba)	2.44 and 2.63	The Sr compound shows much lower activity than the Ba counterpart for HER in aqueous methanol.	[377]
7	CuMnO ₂	1.23	Photocatalytic HER observed in H ₂ S medium.	[378]
8	PbWO ₄	?	Has tetragonal structure. Used with RuO ₂ co-catalyst for water photosplitting with a Hg–Xe lamp as radiation source.	[379]
9	CuFeO ₂	?	Photocatalytic water splitting observed under visible light irradiation.	[366, 380, 381]
10	InVO ₄	1.8 eV	Photocatalytic water splitting with or without NiO in electronic contact observed under visible light irradiation.	[260]

^a Values for E_g are listed in the order of appearance of the corresponding oxide compound in column 2

two semiconductors is not fundamentally different (at least from an electron transfer perspective) than a suspension containing mixed semiconductor particles (composites) in electronic contact.

11 Photochemical diodes and twin-photosystem configurations for water splitting

Photochemical diodes [53, 394] can be either of the Schottky type, involving a metal and a semiconductor, or a p–n junction type, involving two semiconductors (which can be the same, i.e., a homojunction or different, a heterojunction). Only the latter type is considered in this section involving two irradiated semiconductor/electrolyte interfaces. Thus n-TiO₂ and p-GaP crystal wafers were bonded together (through the rear Ohmic contacts) with conductive Ag epoxy cement [394]. The resultant heterotype p–n photochemical diode was suspended in an acidic aqueous medium and irradiated with simulated sunlight. Evolution of H₂ and O₂ was noted, albeit at a very slow rate [394].

This type of device has been contrasted [394] with a series connection of a photovoltaic p–n junction solar cell and a water electrolyzer. Unlike the latter which is a majority carrier system (i.e., the n-side of the junction is the cathode and the p-side becomes the anode), in a photochemical diode, minority carriers (holes for the

n-type and electrons for the p-type) are injected into the electrolyte. This distinction translates to certain advantages in terms of the overall energetics of the solar energy conversion system; see [394] for more details.

Since this original work in 1977, another study has appeared combining p-GaP and n-Fe₂O₃ [63]. Co-catalysts (RuO₂ on the n-Fe₂O₃ surface and Pt on the p-GaP surface) served to enhance H₂ and O₂ evolution from seawater [63]. The p–n photoelectrolysis approach [53, 394] combines a n-type semiconductor photoanode and a p-type semiconductor photocathode in an electrolysis cell (Fig. 2c). The pros and cons of this twin-photosystem approach (which mimicks plant photosynthesis) were enumerated earlier in this article. Table 9 provides a compilation of the semiconductor photocathode and photoanode combinations that have been examined. Combinations involving n-WSe₂, n-MoSe₂, n-WS₂, n-TiO₂, p-InP, p-GaP and p-Si semiconductor electrodes have been described [74].

In another interesting variant drawn from early work [396], a semiconductor/redox electrolyte/semiconductor (SES) configuration was deployed as a photoanode. Thus this SES structure consisted of single crystal wafers of n-CdS and n-TiO₂ separated by a thin layer of NaOH, sodium sulfide and sulfur. The inside wall of TiO₂ was coated with Pd to mediate electron transfer between n-TiO₂ and the sulfide-polysulfide redox electrolyte. It was shown [396] that the SES photoanode operated in conjunction with a Pt counter-electrode and 1 M NaOH electrolyte could evolve H₂ and O₂

Table 9 Photoelectrolysis cells using n-type oxide semiconductor photoanodes and p-type semiconductor photocathodes

Entry number	Photoanode	Photocathode	Comments	Reference(s)
1	n-TiO ₂	p-GaP	Either 1 N H ₂ SO ₄ or 1 N NaOH was employed as electrolyte. The photo-voltage was 0.58 V for the acid and 0.40 V for the base. Deterioration of the cell performance noted.	[93]
3	n-TiO ₂	p-GaP	Water splitting noted without need for external bias. See also Entry 1 on the same system.	[53]
4	n-TiO ₂	p-CdTe	–	[395]
5	n-TiO ₂	p-GaP	–	[395]
6	n-SrTiO ₃	p-CdTe	–	[395]
7	n-SrTiO ₃	p-GaP	Best performance among the four combinations tested. (See Entries 4–6 above.)	[395]

without external bias. The OER occurs on the n-TiO₂ surface and HER occurs on the Pt counterelectrode surface.

12 Concluding remarks

The use of irradiated oxide semiconductor-liquid interfaces for hydrogen generation is now a mature field of research. Indeed, impressive results have been obtained at the laboratory scale over the past three decades and a myriad of new oxides are being continually discovered. On the other hand, much needs to be done to improve the H₂ generation efficiencies. The photoelectrolysis process must be engineered and scaled up for routine practical use. In this regard, oxide semiconductors appear to be particularly promising, especially from an environmental and process economics perspective. While interesting chemistry, physics, and materials science discoveries will continue to push this field forward, in the author's opinion two types of R&D will be crucial: the use of combinatorial, high throughput methods for photocatalyst development and innovations in reactor/process engineering once efficiencies at the laboratory scale have been optimized at a *routinely attainable* ~10% benchmark. Only then will the long sought after goal of efficiently making H₂ from sunlight and water using this approach be realised.

Acknowledgments Partial support from the U. S. Department of Energy (Basic Energy Sciences) for the author's research on photoelectrochemical solar energy conversion is gratefully acknowledged. Professors B. A. Parkinson, J. Augustynski, C. A. Grimes and M. Matsumura kindly provided reprints/preprints. Dr. C. R. Chenthamarakshan and Ms. Gloria Madden are thanked for assistance in literature research and manuscript preparation. Finally, three anonymous reviewers are thanked for constructive criticisms of an earlier manuscript version, and for alerting the author to Refs. [171, 187, 218, 223], [255, 260, 318, 343], and [383].

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