



## Electrochemical reactivity of ball-milled $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$ as anode materials for lithium-ion batteries

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### ABSTRACT

The electrochemical reactivity of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders was investigated in Li rechargeable cells. High-energy ball-milling converts highly-crystalline  $\text{MoO}_3$  bulk powders into partially reduced low-crystalline  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  materials with a reduced particle size. Both bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  exhibit a first discharge capacity beyond  $1100 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$  when tested in the 0–3 V (vs.  $\text{Li/Li}^+$ ) range, which is indicative of a complete conversion reaction. It is found that partial reduction caused by ball-milling results in a reduction in the conversion reaction. Additionally, incomplete re-oxidation during subsequent charge results in the formation of  $\text{MoO}_2$  instead of  $\text{MoO}_3$ , which in turn affects the reactivity in subsequent cycles. As compared to bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$ , ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  showed significantly enhanced cycle performance (bulk: 27.6% charge capacity retention at the 10th cycle vs. ball-milled for 8 h: 64.4% at the 35th cycle), which can be attributed to the nano-texture wherein nanometer-sized particles aggregate to form secondary ones.

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### 1. Introduction

As the environmental challenge of global warming resulting from fossil-fuel consumption is growing more severe, the importance of electrochemical energy conversion/storage devices cannot be overemphasized. Among them, rechargeable lithium-ion batteries (LIB) have been widely used in various portable electronic devices. Even further, thanks to their superior performance to the other competitors such as Ni-MH batteries, their development for hybrid electric vehicles (HEV), plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV), or all electric vehicles is a current focus.

For successful application, however, electrode materials that can meet the following requirements should be developed: high-energy density, longer cycle life, high power, and safety with low cost. Regarding high capacity, conversion-type transition metal oxides ( $\text{MO}$  with  $\text{M} = \text{Fe}, \text{Co}, \text{Ni}, \text{Cu}, \text{Ru}, \text{etc.}$ ,  $\text{MO} + \text{Li}^+ + \text{e}^- \leftrightarrow \text{Li}_2\text{O} + \text{M}$ ) may have a capacity as high as  $700 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$  (e.g.  $\text{CoO}$ :  $715 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$ ) which is much higher than that of already-commercialized graphite ( $372 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$ ) [1–6]. Furthermore, many transition metal oxides show outstanding cycling performance [1,6,7–9]. And for the purpose of more improved cycle retention, various synthetic strategies to develop nanostructure have been employed [7–9]. On the aspect of high power, the nanostructure can also significantly enhance

the rate capability by reason of shortened diffusion length [7,9,10]. Hence, the nanostructured transition metal oxides can be regarded as one of the most promising candidate materials.

$\text{MoO}_x$  which can be also categorized as one of the conversion-type transition metal oxides has additional advantageous features of low cost and environmental benignity as well as even higher capacity. To date, various preparation methods of nanostructured  $\text{MoO}_x$  and their corresponding electrochemical performance have been reported. Among them, one can quote the fissile  $\text{MoO}_2$  by hydrothermal reaction [11,12], the porous spherical  $\text{MoO}_2$  by rheological phase reaction [12], the  $\alpha$ - $\text{MoO}_3$  micro-rods by vapor-transportation method [13], the carbon/ $\text{MoO}_2$  composite using tri-block copolymer as a structure directing agent and carbon source [14],  $\text{MoO}_3$  nanobelts by hydrothermal reaction [15] and utilizing poly(ethylene glycol) [16],  $\text{MoO}_2$  by reduction of  $\text{MoO}_3$  with ethanol vapor [17],  $\text{MoO}_3$  nanoparticles by hot-wire chemical vapor deposition (HWCVD) [18,19], tremella-like  $\text{MoO}_2$  by hydrothermal reduction [20], etc. However, most research about  $\text{MoO}_x$  as an anode in the potential range down to 0 V (vs.  $\text{Li/Li}^+$ ) has focused on  $\text{MoO}_2$  rather than  $\text{MoO}_3$  even though  $\text{MoO}_3$  can theoretically accommodate more Li (six Li) than  $\text{MoO}_2$  (four Li) ( $\text{MoO}_3$ :  $1117 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$ ,  $\text{MoO}_2$ :  $838 \text{ mAh g}^{-1}$ ). Thus, the electrochemical reactivity of  $\text{MoO}_3$  utilizing a conversion reaction has not yet been fully investigated. Moreover, for the case of  $\text{MoO}_2$ , their reaction is known to be restricted to the addition-type one ( $\text{MO}_y + x\text{Li}^+ + \text{xe}^- \leftrightarrow \text{Li}_x\text{MO}_y$ , no breakage of M–O bond) at room temperature without using nanostructured electrodes [11,17,21,22].

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Here we report the electrochemical performance of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders. High-energy ball-milling is one of the easiest ways to construct nanostructures [23–25]. The composition, morphology, and structure of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  have been characterized and their effects on the electrochemical reactivity and extent of conversion reaction are discussed.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Preparation

Milling was performed using SPEX 8000 Mixer/Mill. The  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders (Alfa Aesar, 3 g) as well as steel balls (two balls of 1.3 cm in diameter and six balls of 0.6 cm in diameter) were put into a hardened steel vial ( $72 \text{ cm}^3$ ). The weight ratio between the steel ball and the  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders was 9:1. Three different ball-milled samples were prepared by ball-milling bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders for 4, 6, and 8 h.

### 2.2. Characterization of materials

A Phillips CM-30 TEM operating at 200 kV with a  $50 \mu\text{m}$  objective aperture for improved contrast was employed for an extensive TEM analyses. X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were recorded using Scintag PTS 4-circle goniometer (Bragg–Brentano geometry) using  $\text{Cu K}\alpha$  radiation ( $1.54056 \text{ \AA}$ ) generated at 45 kV and 36 mA and detected with a liquid-nitrogen-cooled solid-state germanium detector. Using inductively coupled plasma atom emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES, ARL 3410+), oxygen deficiency was determined by measuring Mo content. After the known amount of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders were completely dissolved in concentrated sulphuric acid at  $95^\circ\text{C}$  over 4 h, the concentration of Mo was measured.

### 2.3. Electrochemical characterization

A two-electrode 2032-type coin cell was employed to assess the electrochemical performance of samples. The composite electrodes were prepared by spreading a slurry mixture of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders, acetylene black (carbon additive for conductivity enhancement), and poly(vinylidene fluoride) (PVDF) (8:1:1, wt. ratio) on a piece of Cu foil and were dried. The dried electrodes were then heat-treated at  $250^\circ\text{C}$  under Ar atmosphere overnight to improve the electrochemical performance [26,27]. Li foil (Alfa Aesar) was used as the counter and reference electrode. 1.0 M  $\text{LiPF}_6$  dissolved in a mixture of propylene carbonate (PC) and dimethyl carbonate (DMC) (1:1, v/v) was used as the electrolyte. The galvanostatic discharge–charge cycling was made in the potential range of 0–3 V (vs.  $\text{Li/Li}^+$ ) at  $55 \mu\text{A cm}^{-2}$  (0.03C-rate, theoretically 1C-rate =  $1117 \text{ mA g}^{-1}$ ). As the separator, porous polypropylene (PP)/polyethylene (PE)/PP tri-layer film was used. Cells were assembled in an Ar-filled dry box and cycled at room temperature. In this report, lithiation was expressed as discharging and de-lithiation as charging because Li foil was used as the counter electrode in the half-cells.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Materials characterization

Fig. 1 shows the TEM images of bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders. Different from bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders (Fig. 1a), the ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders (Fig. 1b–d) exhibit roughened surface morphology as well as slightly reduced overall particle size (approx.  $1 \mu\text{m}$ ). The enlarged views (the inset in Fig. 1b and c) reveal that the overall particles of ball-milled samples consist of agglomerated nanometer-sized primary particles. Intense collisions between par-

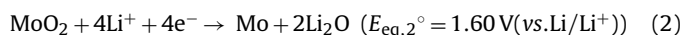
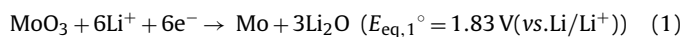
ticles and balls during the high-energy ball-milling can both cause the particles to fracture and also to become welded to each other [23–25]. The observed nano-crystalline-aggregation for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders results from this combined breaking/welding mechanism.

In order to identify crystalline structure and estimate the extent of crystallinity, XRD patterns of the bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-x}$  powders (Fig. 2) were obtained. The sharp characteristic peaks for both bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders correspond well with orthorhombic  $\alpha$ - $\text{MoO}_3$  (JCPDS no. 05-0508). The orthorhombic  $\alpha$ - $\text{MoO}_3$  is known to have a layered structure (parallel to (010)), where layers are bound to each other by van der Waals interactions [13,15]. Three strong peaks corresponding to (020), (040), and (060) planes for the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  powder, indicate the formation of the anisotropic layered structure [15]. As the  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders are ball-milled, two major changes are noticeable. First, the peak ratios match with that of standard orthorhombic  $\alpha$ - $\text{MoO}_3$ . This indicates that the intense breakage of particles during ball-milling removes the anisotropy [24]. Second, more importantly, the diffraction peaks are significantly broadened indicating appreciably reduced crystallite size and/or lowered crystallinity. This feature agrees well with the observation of the nano-crystalline-aggregations in the TEM analyses (insets of Fig. 1b and c).

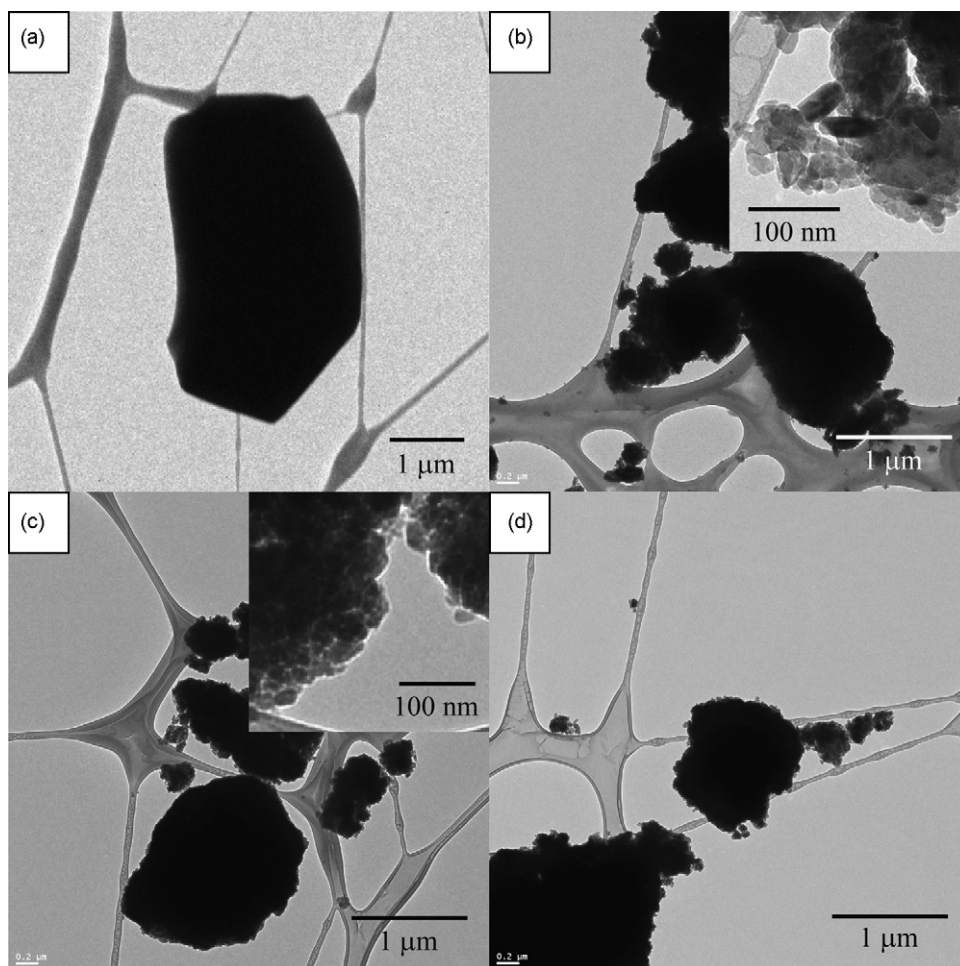
In addition to the morphological (Fig. 1) and crystalline structural (Fig. 2) changes, high-energy ball-milling also changes the chemical composition. Using ICP-AES analyses, the oxygen contents of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders were determined and are plotted in Fig. 3. The bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  powders were partially reduced to give  $\text{MoO}_{2.929}$ ,  $\text{MoO}_{2.903}$ , and  $\text{MoO}_{2.895}$  by ball-milling for 4, 6, and 8 h, respectively. Oxygen deficiency gradually increases as the ball-milling time increases.

### 3.2. Electrochemical reactivity of ball-milled $\text{MoO}_{3-x}$ powders

The first and second discharge–charge voltage profiles of bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-x}$  powders are shown in Fig. 4. The vertical lines indicate the theoretical limits for  $\text{MoO}_{3-x}$  electrodes that undergo a complete conversion reaction to produce Mo metal and lithia ( $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$ ). The slightly decreased theoretical Li-uptake limit (vertical lines) for ball-milled samples as compared to the bulk sample is due to the reduced oxygen contents in the partially reduced particles. For both bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$ , all of the first lithiation capacities exceed the theoretical limit, which confirms that the conversion reaction is complete. It is noticeable that bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  exhibits complete conversion reaction as opposed to  $\text{MoO}_2$  which is known to be restricted to the addition reaction [11,17,21,22]. This difference can be explained by thermodynamic and kinetic consideration. Thermodynamically, the Gibbs free energy of formation is a good indicator of how much  $\text{MoO}_x$  will undergo a favorable conversion-type lithiation reaction. The less negative value of  $\text{MoO}_3$  ( $-186.3 \text{ kJ (g atom)}^{-1}$ ) than that of  $\text{MoO}_2$  ( $-196.0 \text{ kJ (g atom)}^{-1}$ ) gives a higher lithiation equilibrium potential following reactions (1) and (2) [28]:



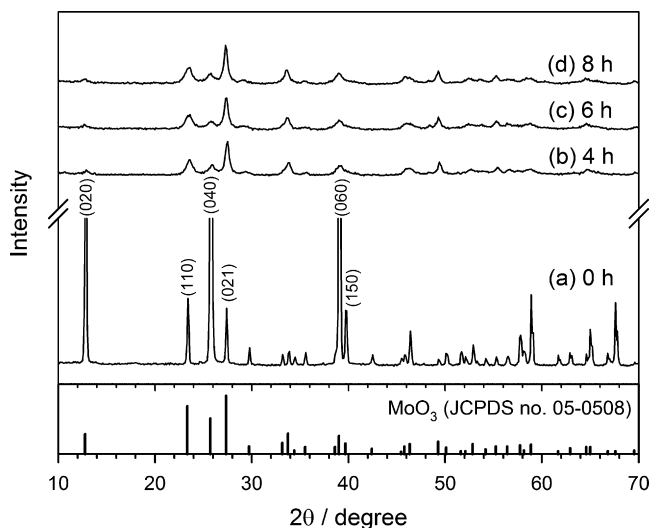
However, it should be noted that the conversion reactions are thermodynamically feasible for both  $\text{MoO}_2$  and  $\text{MoO}_3$ . From the reaction kinetics point of view, the conversion-type transition metal oxides are known to suffer from a large lithiation overpotential [7,10,27,29], which is believed to stem from the high activation energy for breaking M–O bonds upon lithiation [30–34]. Due to the lower equilibrium potential (smaller driving force) in addition to a large activation barrier, the lithiation reactivity of  $\text{MoO}_2$  is limited to the addition reaction.



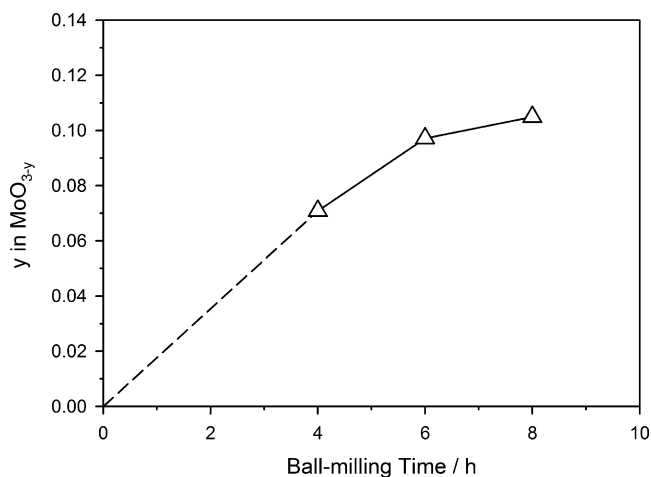
**Fig. 1.** TEM images of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders. (a) Bulk powders and powders ball-milled for (b) 4 h, (c) 6 h, and (d) 8 h. Enlarged views are given in the inset.

In the case of bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  in Fig. 4, the first lithiation reaction can be divided into two regions: Region I up to 1.5 V (vs.  $\text{Li}/\text{Li}^+$ ) and Region II below 0.5 V. In region I, approximately 1.2 Li is inserted with two discrete plateaus (at 2.7 and 2.3 V). This high-voltage reaction agrees well with previous reports in which it is claimed that slightly more than one Li can be accommodated in the interlayer

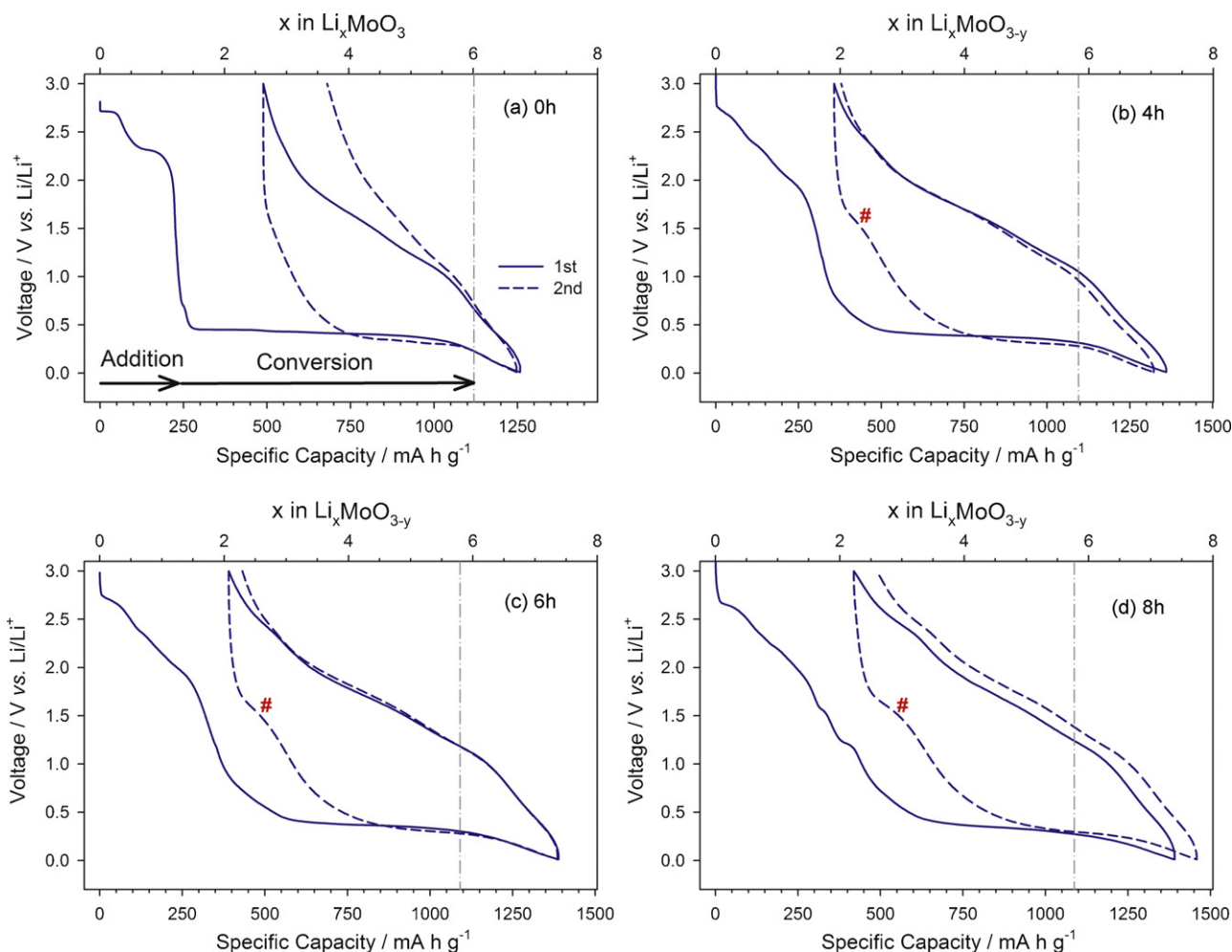
spacing between the Mo–O octahedron layers and Mo–O octahedron intralayers [13,15,16]. As the potential decreases to region II, a long plateau at 0.45 V followed by the sloping profile below 0.3 V develops, which is commonly encountered in most conversion-type transition metal oxides [1–10,27]. The former long plateau is consistent with the additional 4.8 Li uptake for the complete conversion reaction. There are two different possible mechanisms to explain the latter sloping profile, which is primarily attributed to the Li



**Fig. 2.** XRD patterns of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders. Ball-milling time is given in the inset.

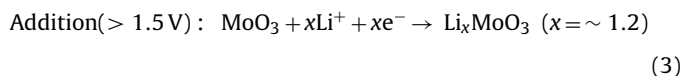


**Fig. 3.** Oxygen-deficiency of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders.

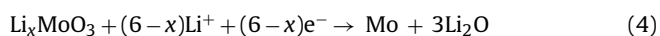


**Fig. 4.** First and second discharge–charge voltage profiles of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  electrodes. Ball-milling time is given in the inset. Vertical lines indicate the expected capacity for a full reduction of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  ( $\text{MoO}_{3-y} + 2(3-y)\text{Li}^+ + 2(3-y)\text{e}^- \rightarrow (3-y)\text{Li}_2\text{O} + \text{Mo}$ ).

capacity extending beyond the theoretical limit: (i) Tarascon and co-workers ascribed the sloping region mainly to the formation of a polymer-like organic layer catalyzed by in-situ formed nanoparticles [35,36]. Using X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), they show the evidence of growth of both an inorganic (mainly  $\text{Li}_2\text{CO}_3$  and alkyl carbonates) and an organic layer (poly(ethylene oxide) oligomers) during lithiation, which is not directly related to the conversion reaction ( $\text{MO}_x + x\text{Li}^+ + xe^- \rightarrow \text{M} + x\text{Li}_2\text{O}$ ). And the organic layer is found to be partially vanishing upon cycling, which implies this reaction could be attributed to additional reversible capacity. (ii) Maier and co-workers proposed an interfacial storage mechanism [37,38]. Except for the surface-related reaction (formation of polymer-like organic layer or interfacial storage in region II), the overall first lithiation reaction for bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  can be expressed as follows Eqs. (3) and (4):

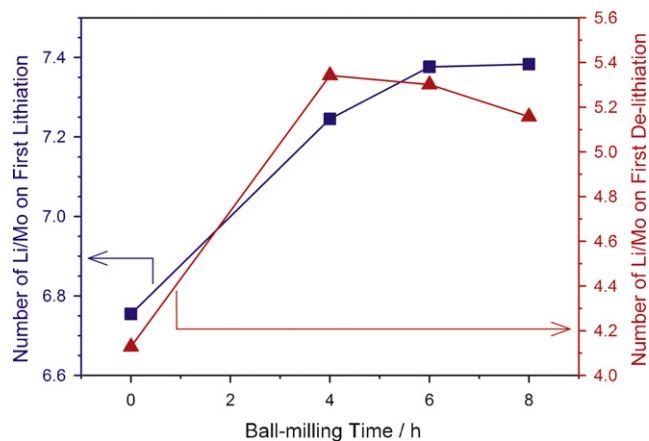


Conversion (< 0.5 V) :



From the comparison of the first discharge profiles of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  to that of the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$ , one can expect that the ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders also follow the above reaction pathway (Eqs. (3) and (4)) although their voltage profiles become

smoother than that of the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$ . The smoother voltage profile can be explained in terms of the surface energy described for many nanosystems [37,39–41], and unequivocally reveal the nanostructural nature of ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders. Regarding the first discharge capacity, the Li uptake increases as the ball-milling time increases as seen in Fig. 5 (squares). The discharge capacity is



**Fig. 5.** Number of inserted/de-inserted Li/Mo for  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  electrodes on the first lithiation and de-lithiation according to the ball-milling time.



determined from the amount of  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$  formation and the additional decomposition reaction of the electrolyte on the electrode surface. The higher discharge capacity for  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  powders ball-milled for longer time in spite of their lower oxygen contents indicates that surface-related decomposition reaction is a more dominant factor than oxygen deficiency.

After the full conversion reaction, the extracted Mo metal is re-oxidized by  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$  with a voltage slope during charge as displayed in Fig. 4. However, the remaining Li after the first full charge corresponds to  $\sim 2.5$  and  $\sim 2$  Li/Mo for the bulk and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_3$ , respectively. Moreover, the amount of extracted Li during the first charge (triangles in Fig. 5) does not reach six Li/Mo for any of the materials. These two observations imply that the Mo metal is not fully recovered but partially re-oxidized to produce mainly  $\text{MoO}_2$  with residual  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$ . The variation in the first charge capacity provides very interesting information. First, the charge capacity for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  is significantly enhanced as compared to the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$ , showing that the nano-texturing for ball-milled samples enhances the electrochemical reversibility. Second, for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$ , the amount of extracted Li decreases as ball-milling time increases. This is not a surprising behavior because  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  ball-milled for longer time gives less  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$  after conversion reaction and thus Mo with less  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$  will be oxidized less.

Once the conversion reaction proceeds completely, the re-oxidized transition metal oxide phases are known to have amorphous structure resulting in smoother lithiation voltage profiles in the subsequent cycles [1,6,9,10,35,42]. The smoother lithiation voltage profile in the second cycle for the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  (Fig. 4a) is consistent with the amorphization.

Fig. 6 displays the differential discharge capacity profiles for the first and second cycles. Again, two peaks at 2.7 and 2.3 V (vs.  $\text{Li}/\text{Li}^+$ ) are assigned to an addition reaction while the peaks ( $*$  and  $\wedge$ ) in the 0.3–0.5 V range are due to the conversion reaction. For the conversion reaction, there are several important features to be pointed out. First, as ball-milling time increases, the peaks broaden, which is indicative of a nano-size effect [37,39–41]. Second, the conversion reaction peaks in the first cycle for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  significantly shifts toward the negative direction. This shift can be explained in terms of chemical composition rather than crystallite size or crystallinity. As shown in Fig. 3, ball-milling induces partial reduction, and ball-milling for longer time results in more reduced  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$ . Considering that  $\text{MoO}_2$  can be regarded as the ultimate composition of partially reduced  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$ , it may be assumed that partially reduced  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  should have intermediate reactivity between  $\text{MoO}_3$  and  $\text{MoO}_2$  which has limited reactivity for the conversion reaction at room temperature. According to this assumption, lower reactivity or appearance of conversion peaks for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  at lower potential than bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$  can be explained by this oxygen-deficiency effect. Overall, it is prudent to say that the conversion reaction for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  depends more strongly on oxygen deficiency rather than the crystallite size or crystallinity. The similar reasoning can be applied to explain why the conversion peaks in the second cycle appear at even lower potential than those in the first cycle. In common cases for transition metal oxides, the second conversion reaction takes place at a higher potential than in the first cycle [1,4,6,9,10,27,36,42,43], which is explained by kinetically more favorable  $\text{Li}^+$  and  $\text{O}^{2-}$  diffusion in the amorphized structure [29] and/or increased lithiation equilibrium potential from a thermodynamic point of view [42]. Consistent with the lower reactivity of  $\text{MoO}_2$  than  $\text{MoO}_3$  toward conversion reaction, the conversion peaks ( $\wedge$ ) in the second cycle appear at even a lower potential than that ( $*$ ) of the first cycle strongly suggesting that re-oxidation is not completed but rather that the  $\text{MoO}_2$  phase is formed. This is also supported by a smooth plateau ( $\#$ ) around 1.5 V (vs.  $\text{Li}/\text{Li}^+$ ) in the second

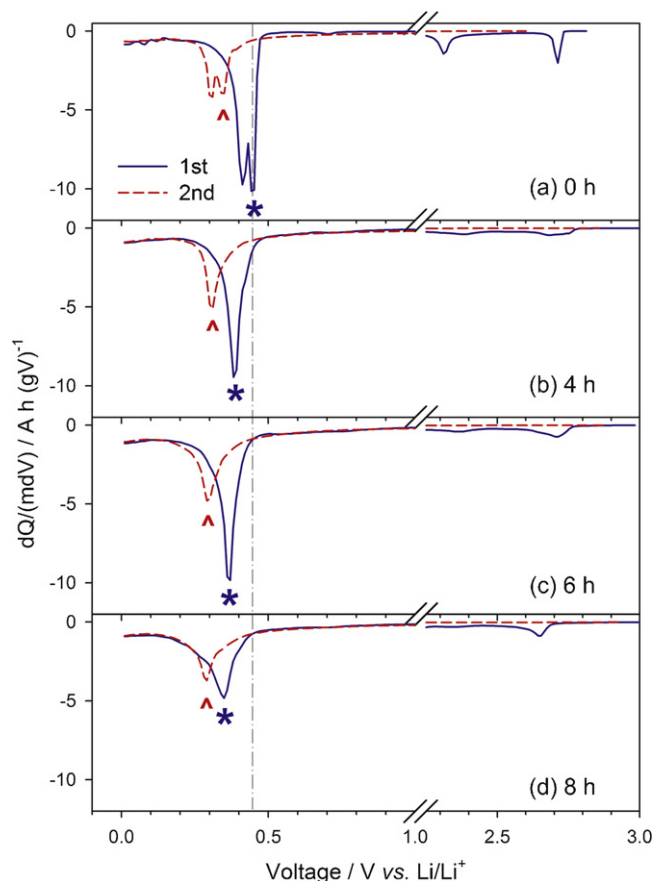


Fig. 6. Differential discharge capacity profiles for the first two cycles. Ball-milling time is given in the inset. Note that the first lithiation peaks ( $*$ ) for ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  electrodes are negatively shifted from that for bare  $\text{MoO}_3$  one and the second peaks ( $\wedge$ ) for all electrodes are even more negatively shifted.

lithiation voltage profiles observed in Fig. 4 because this reaction potential corresponds to that for the addition reaction of  $\text{MoO}_2$  [21,22].

Fig. 7 compares the cycle performance of bare and ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  electrodes. Compared to the bulk  $\text{MoO}_3$ , the ball-milled  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  exhibits significantly enhanced cycle retention. In order to explain this, the large volume change that occurs for many

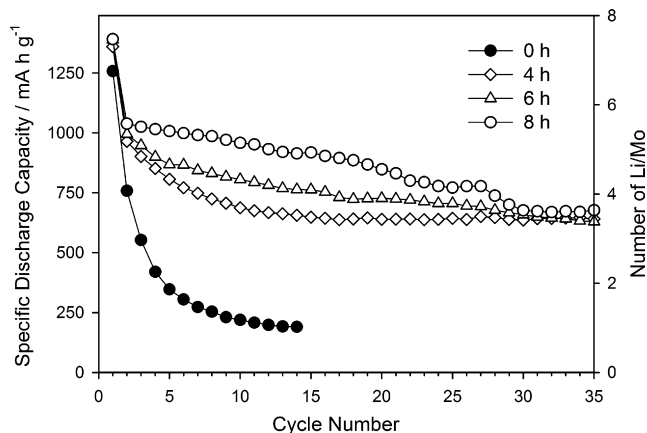


Fig. 7. Cycle performance of  $\text{MoO}_{3-y}$  electrodes. Ball-milling time is given in the inset. Number of inserted Li/Mo on the right axis is calculated based on the stoichiometric  $\text{MoO}_3$ .

conversion-type transition metal oxides during discharge–charge is considered  $((V_f - V_i)/V_i)$ , e.g. CoO: 73%, FeO: 106%, NiO: 121%).<sup>1</sup> The volume change has previously been considered only to a limited extent [27]. For MoO<sub>3</sub>, the volume change is calculated to be as much as 104%.<sup>2</sup> As Li-alloy materials such as Si suffer from even more extreme volume changes, failure mechanisms and strategies associated with Li-alloy materials can provide us with important information. For Li-alloy materials, as lithiation proceeds, electrode particles become swollen. On the contrary, upon de-lithiation, swollen lithiated particles shrink, and the electronic contacts between particles become loose. Then, some fraction of electrode particles that lose their electronic path remains in the lithiated state and act as ‘dead’ particles even if the electrode is fully charged [44–46]. This is the main failure mode for most Li-alloy materials. Using nano-sized particles and/or employing an amorphous phase rather than a crystalline phase are well known strategies to improve cycle retention. The failure modes and factors to affect cycle retention in Li-alloy materials could be applied to the case of MoO<sub>3</sub>. Based on this mechanism, the best cycle performance of the MoO<sub>3-y</sub> powder ball-milled for the longest time (8 h) can be attributed to the smallest crystallite size and/or the lowest crystalline nature. It is also interesting to note that the capacity of ball-milled MoO<sub>3-y</sub> converges close to ~4 Li/Mo around 30th cycle, which indicates that red/ox reaction be restricted to MoO<sub>2</sub>/Li<sub>2</sub>O. This phenomenon is consistent with the difficult oxidation from MoO<sub>2</sub> to MoO<sub>3</sub>: as the electrode degrades and loses electronic conductivity among particles and/or domains, further oxidation from MoO<sub>2</sub> to MoO<sub>3</sub> can be expected to be even worse. Within this context, uniform coating of nano-sized MoO<sub>3</sub> with electronic and ionic conductors such as carbon could improve the reversibility as well as cycle retention. Further, this approach could prevent dissolution which is also considered as origin of capacity fade for long-term cycles in the conversion-type transition metal oxides [36].

#### 4. Conclusion

Nanostructured MoO<sub>3-y</sub> powders have been prepared by ball-milling, and their electrochemical reactivity in the 0–3 V (vs. Li/Li<sup>+</sup>) range has been studied. Ball-milling of MoO<sub>3</sub> powders results in partially reduced MoO<sub>3-y</sub> powders that consist of nano-crystallite aggregates. Bulk and ball-milled MoO<sub>3-y</sub> can uptake more than six Li/Mo by an addition reaction followed by a conversion reaction, wherein the reactivity was found to strongly depend on the oxygen deficiency. The conversion reaction for highly-reduced MoO<sub>3-y</sub> takes place at lower potential. However, the re-oxidation reactions are not complete, which can be rationalized from the inability of MoO<sub>2</sub>/Li<sub>2</sub>O to form MoO<sub>3</sub>. This incomplete re-oxidation was found to affect the reversibility in the subsequent cycles. As compared to bulk MoO<sub>3</sub>, ball-milled MoO<sub>3-y</sub> shows significantly improved cycle retention, which can be attributed to the smaller crystallite size and/or low crystalline nature.

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<sup>1</sup>  $V_i$ : initial volume of metal oxide (MO).  $V_f$ : final volume after full conversion reaction (M/Li<sub>2</sub>O). Following specific densities ( $\text{g cm}^{-3}$ ) were used to calculate volume change: CoO: 5.305 (JCPDS no. 42-1300), FeO: 5.973 (JCPDS no. 06-0615), NiO: 6.808 (JCPDS no. 4-1159), Co: 8.798 (JCPDS no. 15-0806), Fe: 7.875 (JCPDS no. 06-0696), Ni: 8.911 (JCPDS no. 04-0850), Li<sub>2</sub>O: 2.204 (JCPDS no. 12-0254).

<sup>2</sup> Following specific density ( $\text{g cm}^{-3}$ ) were used to calculate volume change: MoO<sub>3</sub>: 4.710 (JCPDS no. 05-0508), Mo: 10.221 (JCPDS no. 42-1120).