Composite photocatalysts based on Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S and TiO$_2$ for hydrogen production under visible light: effect of platinum co-catalyst location†

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Ternary composite photocatalysts based on titanium and solid solutions of Cd$_x$Zn$_{1-x}$S were prepared and studied by a set of physicochemical methods including XRD, XPS, HRTEM, UV-vis spectroscopy, and electrochemical tests. Two synthetic techniques of platinization of Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ were compared. In the first case, platinum was deposited on the surface of synthesized Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S ($x = 0.2–0.3$)/TiO$_2$ P25; in the second one, Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S ($x = 0.2–0.3$) was deposited on the surface of Pt/TiO$_2$ P25. The photocatalytic properties of the obtained samples were compared in the hydrogen evolution from TEOA aqueous solution under visible light ($\lambda = 425$ nm). The Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S (10–50 wt%; $x = 0.2–0.3$)/Pt (1 wt%)/TiO$_2$ photocatalysts demonstrated much higher photocatalytic activity than the Pt (1 wt%)/Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S (10–50 wt%; $x = 0.2–0.3$)/TiO$_2$ ones. It turned out that the arrangement of platinum nanoparticles precisely on the titanium dioxide surface in a composite catalyst makes it possible to achieve efficient charge separation according to the type II heterojunctions and, accordingly, a high rate of hydrogen formation. The highest photocatalytic activity was demonstrated by 20% Cd$_{0.9}$Zn$_{0.1}$/S/1% Pt/TiO$_2$ in the amount of 26 mmol g$^{-1}$ h$^{-1}$ (apparent quantum efficiency was 7.7%) that exceeds recently published values for this class of photocatalysts.

1. Introduction

Currently, particular attention is focused on novel methods for renewable energy production. The finite nature of fossil resources (such as coal, crude oil, and natural gas) stimulates the search for and development of alternative energy technologies and fuel sources. Hydrogen is considered as the most prospective fuel. However, current hydrogen production capacities are obviously insufficient for making significant progress towards hydrogen energy. Photocatalytic hydrogen production attracts particular attention as it, first, uses renewable sources, such as water and solar light, and, second, integrates hydrogen evolution and water purification from organic impurities, and thus ensures environment-friendly energy generation.

Triethanolamine (TEOA) is one of the most popular sacrificial reagents. It has a wide range of application areas, for example, surfactant production, medicine, cosmetology, etc. Purification of water from TEOA is an important practical task. It is well-known that photocatalytic methods allow one to decompose various organic compounds, including amines, with hydrogen evolution. Photocatalytic hydrogen production from aqueous TEOA solutions is often carried out over g-C$_3$N$_4$-based or composite g-C$_3$N$_4$/TiO$_2$-based photocatalysts. Titanium dioxide is most often used as a semiconductor photocatalyst for various applications, because TiO$_2$ is a relatively cheap and non-toxic material. The main disadvantage of using pure TiO$_2$ for photocatalytic hydrogen production is its insensitivity to visible light owing to wide band gap of 3.2 eV and, consequently, low-efficient functioning under the influence of sunlight. An effective method for sensitizing titanium dioxide is the creation of composite systems with interfacial heterojunctions, in which TiO$_2$ contacts a semiconductor that absorbs visible light, for example, cadmium sulfide or Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S solid solution. However, photocatalytic hydrogen evolution from TEOA using photocatalysts based on TiO$_2$ and CdS–ZnS solid solutions has been studied insufficiently as yet. One of the most appropriate methods for enhancing the activity of a semiconductor photocatalyst consists in depositing co-catalysts on its surface, mainly noble metals, especially platinum. Also, heterostructure creation improves the activity of the semiconductor photocatalyst in the hydrogen production. Previously, platinum was deposited on the surface of synthesized composites CdS/TiO$_2$ or Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ by a set of physicochemical methods including XRD, XPS, HRTEM, UV-vis spectroscopy, and electrochemical tests. Two synthetic techniques of platinization of Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ were compared. In the first case, platinum was deposited on the surface of synthesized Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S ($x = 0.2–0.3$)/TiO$_2$ P25; in the second one, Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S ($x = 0.2–0.3$) was deposited on the surface of Pt/TiO$_2$ P25. The photocatalytic properties of the obtained samples were compared in the hydrogen evolution from TEOA aqueous solution under visible light ($\lambda = 425$ nm). The Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S (10–50 wt%; $x = 0.2–0.3$)/Pt (1 wt%)/TiO$_2$ photocatalysts demonstrated much higher photocatalytic activity than the Pt (1 wt%)/Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S (10–50 wt%; $x = 0.2–0.3$)/TiO$_2$ ones. It turned out that the arrangement of platinum nanoparticles precisely on the titanium dioxide surface in a composite photocatalyst makes it possible to achieve efficient charge separation according to the type II heterojunctions and, accordingly, a high rate of hydrogen formation. The highest photocatalytic activity was demonstrated by 20% Cd$_{0.9}$Zn$_{0.1}$/S/1% Pt/TiO$_2$ in the amount of 26 mmol g$^{-1}$ h$^{-1}$ (apparent quantum efficiency was 7.7%) that exceeds recently published values for this class of photocatalysts.
sulfide and titania, is more efficient. Usually, for CdS/TiO₂ and Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂ photocatalysts, the type II heterojunctions were considered; however, in recent works, the Z-scheme or S-scheme charge transfer mechanisms are assumed. It is interesting to define what location of platinum is preferable for hydrogen production from TEOA solutions, and therefore which type of heterojunctions is realized. Earlier, we have shown for the photocatalytic CO₂ reduction that the order in which the components are deposited affects the activity of the ternary Pt/Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂ photocatalysts.

Thus, in this research we compared two synthetic techniques of platinization of Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂. In the first case, platinum was deposited on the surface of synthesized Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS (x = 0.7–0.8)/TiO₂ P25; in the second one, Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS (x = 0.7–0.8) was deposited on the surface 1%Pt/TiO₂ P25. The photocatalytic properties of these samples were compared in hydrogen evolution from TEOA aqueous solution under visible light (λ = 425 nm). A comprehensive comparison of the photocatalytic properties of the two type photocatalysts, Pt/Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂ and Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/Pt/TiO₂, based on the detailed characterization of the samples, was carried out for the first time. We have defined the location and electron properties of platinum and built an electron transfer scheme for two types of photocatalysts.

2. Experimental

2.1. Photocatalyst preparation

The composite photocatalysts y% Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂ (x is a molar ratio [Zn]/([Zn]+[Cd]), x = 0.3 or 0.2; y is a weight content of Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS, y = 10, 20, 50) were synthesized by the following method. TiO₂ Evonik P25 was dispersed in water, after that the proper amount of 0.1 M CdCl₂ and 0.1 M Zn(NO₃)₂ was added. At the first stage, 0.1 M NaOH was added, and the reaction mixture was stirred during 15 min. After that the 2.5-fold excess of 0.1 M Na₂S was added. The obtained mixture was stirred for 60 min, and then the samples were washed with water and dried at 50 °C.

The ternary systems were prepared by two different ways. In the first case, 1wt% of Pt was deposited on the surface of y% Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂ samples. In general, platinization of the photocatalyst was carried out by the method described elsewhere.

The photocatalyst was impregnated by hexachloroplatinic acid solution (0.1 M); after that the 2.5-fold excess of sodium borohydride was added. The mixture was stirred during 20 min, then the precipitate was collected, washed out by distilled water and dried at 50 °C. The obtained samples were marked as Pt-yCd(1 – x)-P25, e.g. Pt-10Cd0.8-P25 (1% Pt/10% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂ Evonik P25).

In the second case, the corresponding values of Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS were precipitated on 1% Pt/TiO₂ surface. These samples were labeled as yCd(1 – x)-Pt-P25. The deposition of Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS was carried out by the method described above. The abbreviations of some samples are given in Table 1.

### 2.2. Sample characterization

The samples were characterized by various physicochemical techniques. The phase composition of the photocatalysts was examined using a D8 Advance diffractometer (Bruker) with Cu Kα radiation. The optical properties of the samples were studied by diffuse reflectance spectroscopy in the range of 250–800 nm. The spectra were recorded with a Shimadzu UV-2501 spectrophotometer with an ISR-240A diffuse reflectance unit. The specific surface areas (Sₚᵥₑᵗ), pore volumes, and average pore sizes of the photocatalysts were obtained from the low temperature N₂ adsorption–desorption (N₂ adsorption at 77 K) by using an ASAP 2400 apparatus.

The structure and microstructure of the photocatalysts were studied by HRTEM using a ThemisZ electron microscope (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA) operated at an accelerating voltage of 200 kV. The microscope was equipped with a corrector of spherical aberrations, which provided a maximum lattice resolution of 0.06 nm, and a SuperX spectrometer (TPS, USA). Images were recorded using a Ceta 16 CCD sensor (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA). For electron microscopy studies, the samples were deposited on perforated carbon substrates attached to aluminum grids using an ultrasonic dispersant.

The XPS measurements were performed with a photoelectron spectrometer SPECS using Al Kα irradiation (hv = 1486.6 eV; 200 W). Binding energy (BE) scale was preliminarily calibrated by the position of the peaks of Au 4f7/2 (BE = 84.0 eV) and Cu 2p3/2 (BE = 932.67 eV) core levels. The binding energy of peaks was calibrated by the position of the C 1s peak at 284.8 eV.

| Sample | Abbreviation | Sₚᵥₑᵗ, m² g⁻¹ | Vₚₑₓ, cm³ g⁻¹ | APDₜ, nm | Absorption edge, nm | Band gap, eV |
|--------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S | — | 125 | 0.24 | 8 | 512 | 2.42 |
| 10% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂ | 10Cd₀.₈-P25 | 52 | 0.47 | 36 | 471 | 2.63 |
| 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂ | 20Cd₀.₈-P25 | 66 | 0.48 | 29 | 482 | 2.57 |
| 50% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂ | 50Cd₀.₈-P25 | 68 | 0.37 | 22 | 479 | 2.59 |
| Cd₀.₇Zn₀.₃S | — | 112 | 0.19 | 7 | 500 | 2.48 |
| 10% Cd₀.₇Zn₀.₃S/TiO₂ | 10Cd₀.₇-P25 | 51 | 0.45 | 43 | 463 | 2.68 |
| 20% Cd₀.₇Zn₀.₃S/TiO₂ | 20Cd₀.₇-P25 | 68 | 0.39 | 23 | 464 | 2.67 |
| 50% Cd₀.₇Zn₀.₃S/TiO₂ | 50Cd₀.₇-P25 | 58 | 0.31 | 22 | 470 | 2.64 |
| TiO₂ P25 (anatase/rutile) | P25 | 55 | 0.49 | 11 | 400 | 3.10 |

* average pore diameter calculated from adsorption–desorption data.
(ref. 36) corresponding to the hydrocarbons presented on the samples surface. The spectra analysis and peak fitting were performed with XPS Peak 4.1 software. For the quantitative analysis, the integral intensities of the spectra were corrected by their respective atomic sensitivity factors.\textsuperscript{37}

### 2.3. Photocatalytic hydrogen production

The catalytic properties of the prepared photocatalysts were studied in the hydrogen evolution from alkaline solution of triethanolamine. A typical procedure was described earlier.\textsuperscript{35} The experimental set-up for the photocatalytic activity measurements is described in detail in ESI (Fig. S1\textsuperscript{4}). A mixture containing 10 mL of triethanolamine (TEOA), 90 mL of 0.11 M NaOH, and 50 mg of the tested photocatalyst was placed to a reactor. Then the reactor was purged with argon after that the system was illuminated with 425-LED (56 mW cm\(^{-2}\), Fig. S1b). The hydrogen concentration was measured by a gas chromatograph “Khromos GKh-1000” (Khromos, Russia). The apparent quantum efficiency (AQE) was calculated by the following formula:

\[
AQE = \frac{W}{N_{ph}} \times 100\% ,
\]

where \(W\) – reaction rate (\(\mu\)mol min\(^{-1}\)), \(N_{ph}\) – photon flux (\(\mu\)einstein min\(^{-1}\)). For all experiments \(N_{ph} = 285\) \(\mu\)einstein min\(^{-1}\).

### 2.4. Photoelectrochemical experiments

Photoelectrochemical experiments were conducted using a two-electrode cell (see Fig. S1c and d).\textsuperscript{4} The working electrode was FTO with the photocatalyst deposited by the drop-casting method described earlier.\textsuperscript{38} The counter electrode was Cu\(_2\)S/brass, the electrolyte was a solution consisting of 1 M Na\(_2\)S\(_n\) and 0.1 M NaCl. Photoelectrochemical characteristics were obtained with using a potentiostat–galvanostat P-45X (Russia). The current–time curves were registered at 0 V. The impedance data were recorded over a frequency range of 0.8 to 10\(^5\) Hz with amplitude of 10 mV at 0.2 V. The light source was 425-LED (56 mW cm\(^{-2}\), Fig. S1b).

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Photocatalyst characterization

##### 3.1.1. XRD analysis

Bulk properties of the synthesized samples were studied by XRD technique. Fig. 1 shows the XRD patterns of the \(y\%\) Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S/TiO\(_2\) photocatalysts \((x = 0.2–0.3, y = 10, 20, 50\) wt\%) and Evonik P25. One can see that commercial Evonik P25 consists of anatase (PDF # 21-1271) and rutile (PDF # 21-1276) phases. These phases are found in all composite samples. Deposition of solid solutions of CdS and ZnS does not lead to any changes in the position and intensity of titania peaks. The average crystalline sizes of rutile and anatase phases are the same for all studied samples and equal 30 and 19 nm, respectively. Peaks of the Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S phases are not identified for samples containing 10 wt\% of the corresponding solid solution. However, as seen in Fig. 1a and b, the increase in the amount of the solid solutions leads to the growth of the intensity of peak located at ~44°. This peak may be attributed to (220) reflex of the Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S \((x = 0.2\) and 0.3) solid solutions with a disordered structure.\textsuperscript{39} Other typical peaks of Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S are not observed in the XRD patterns, may be due to small particle size of Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S. The \(x\) parameter in Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S was determined using the Vegard rule; the reference points were ZnS (PDF # 05-0566, lattice constant \(a = 5.406\) Å) and CdS (PDF # 42-1411, lattice constant \(a = 5.818\) Å) with a cubic structure. It was shown that the sample 50\(\%\) Cd\(_{0.8}\)Zn\(_{0.2}\)S/TiO\(_2\) contains Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S solid solution with a lattice parameter equal to 5.75 Å \((x \sim 0.2)\); whereas the sample 50\(\%\) Cd\(_{0.2}\)Zn\(_{0.8}\)S/TiO\(_2\) contains Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S solid solution with a lattice parameter equal to 5.71 Å \((x \sim 0.3)\). The average crystalline size of Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S estimated with Scherer’s equation was less than 2 nm.

##### 3.1.2. Textural properties

The textural properties of the composites and pristine Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S and TiO\(_2\) are presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the surface areas of the composite materials 10\(\%\) Cd\(_{0.8}\)Zn\(_{0.2}\)S/TiO\(_2\) and 10\(\%\) Cd\(_{0.2}\)Zn\(_{0.8}\)S/TiO\(_2\) are close to \(S_{BET}\) of TiO\(_2\) P25. The increase in solid solution content to 20 wt\% leads to the growth of the surface area due to the increase in the content of Cd\(_{1-x}\)Zn\(_x\)S phase with a high surface area. However, the further increase of sulfide content in the samples to 50 wt\% does not lead to the increase in the surface area.
area. Earlier, it was demonstrated that if the content of Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S is much than 40 wt%, sulfide particles over titania surface form aggregates.\textsuperscript{46} Table 1 also shows that pore volume gradually falls with the increase of solid solution content for $y$% Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ samples likely due to the deposition of sulfides inside the pores of titania.

3.1.3. UV-vis spectroscopy. UV-visible diffuse reflectance spectra were recorded to study the optical properties of the $y$% Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ photocatalysts ($x = 0.2–0.3$, $y = 10, 20, 50$ wt%) and Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S solid solutions. Fig. 2a and b demonstrate that titanium dioxide absorbs predominantly UV-light\textsuperscript{41–43} while Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S are sensitive to visible light.\textsuperscript{44–46} One can see that the obtained spectra of the prepared composites are the superposition of the individual spectra of TiO$_2$ and Cd$_{0.8}$Zn$_{0.2}$S or Cd$_{0.7}$Zn$_{0.3}$S, respectively. The UV-vis spectroscopy proves the multiphase composition of the obtained photocatalysts. It is worth noting that the addition of Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S to TiO$_2$ expands its light absorption in the visible region and changes the absorption edges. Fig. 2c and d show the $F(R)$ value of the synthesized photocatalysts; further, the absorption edges of the composite samples and Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S were estimated using the Tauc function for direct semiconductors, $F(R) = (h
u)^2$ (Fig. 2e and f); the absorption edge of TiO$_2$ was determined using this function for indirect semiconductors, $F(R) = (h
u)^{1/2}$ (not shown). Band gap values of the prepared samples were calculated from absorption edges and summarized in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the absorption edges of Cd$_{0.8}$Zn$_{0.2}$S and Cd$_{0.7}$Zn$_{0.3}$S are equal to 512 and 500 nm, respectively; for TiO$_2$, the absorption edge is equal to ca. 400 nm, likely due to the presence of rutile phase in TiO$_2$ Evonik P25. The absorption edges of the prepared Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ photocatalysts are 460–470 nm and 470–480 nm for Cd$_{0.7}$Zn$_{0.3}$S/TiO$_2$ and Cd$_{0.8}$Zn$_{0.2}$S/TiO$_2$, respectively, as shown in Table 1. This blueshift may be attributed to the changes in the electronic structures of the samples and quantum-size effect.\textsuperscript{46}

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Fig. 2 UV-vis spectra (a and b), $F(R)$ function (c and d), and Tauc plots for direct semiconductor (e and f) of the $y$% Cd$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$S/TiO$_2$ samples with $x = 0.2$ (a, c and e) and $x = 0.3$ (b, d and f). Emission spectra of 425-LED are shown in (d).
Note that all composite samples absorb visible light with the wavelength of 425 nm, which is used in the light source in this study.

### Table 2  Surface properties of Pt-\(y\)Cd0.8-P25 and \(y\)Cd0.8-Pt-P25 (\(y = 20\) and 50 wt%) based on XPS data

| Sample                  | \([\text{Pt}^2+],\ \%\) | \([\text{Pt}^{2+}],\ \%\) | \([\text{S}^{2-}],\ \%\) | \([\text{SO}_4^{2-}],\ \%\) | \([\text{Cd}]/[\text{Cd} + \text{Zn}]\) | \([\text{Pt}]/[\text{Cd} + \text{Zn}]\) | \([\text{Pt}]/[\text{Ti}]\) | \([\text{Cd} + \text{Zn}]/[\text{Ti}]\) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pt-20Cd0.8-P25          | 36                      | 64                      | 84                      | 16                      | 0.74                    | 0.019                   | 0.013                   | 0.51                    |
| 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25          | 100                     | 0                       | 89                      | 11                      | 0.73                    | 0.033                   | 0.017                   | 0.57                    |
| Pt-50Cd0.8-P25          | 0.0                     | 1.0                     | 85                      | 15                      | 0.65                    | 0.028                   | 0.019                   | 0.70                    |
| 50Cd0.8-Pt-P25          | 100                     | 0                       | 80                      | 20                      | 0.66                    | 0.016                   | 0.011                   | 0.68                    |

#### 3.1.4. XPS analysis

The photocatalysts were investigated by the XPS method in detail (Table 2). Fig. S2† shows that all tested samples are composed of six elements – Cd, O, Pt, S, Ti,
and Zn. The XPS spectra of the samples Pt-20Cd0.8-P25, Pt-50Cd0.8-P25, and 50Cd0.8-Pt-P25 are shown in Fig. 3. The binding energies of Cd 3d (see Fig. 3a) and Zn 2p (see Fig. 3b) were equal to 405.4 eV and 1022.3 eV (ref. 47–49) for all samples, which may be attributed to the sulfides of the corresponding metals. Fig. 3c demonstrated that the S 2p spectrum consists of two main peaks located at 161.8 eV and 169 eV. These peaks correspond to S$^{2-}$ and SO$_3$$^{2-}$/SO$_4$$^{2-}$ forms, respectively. The Ti 2p spectrum (not shown) displays the characteristic peak at 458.8 eV, which is typical for Ti$^{4+}$ in the titanium dioxide. Additionally, the atomic ratios were calculated by XPS, and are also given in Table 2. According to the XPS data, $x_{Cd_{1-x}Zn_{x}S}$ is equal to 0.25–0.35 that is in a good agreement with a theoretical value ($x = 0.2$). One can see that the $[Cd + Zn]/[Ti]$ surface ratio is equal to 0.51–0.57 for samples Pt-20Cd0.8-P25 and 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 and reaches about 0.7 for samples Pt-50Cd0.8-P25 and 50Cd0.8-Pt-P25. Thus, a good coverage of the titania surface is achieved in both cases. Also, it is likely that in samples with a lower sulfide content more dispersed particles are formed. The main difference between the samples prepared by different methods is the state of platinum. Fig. 3d shows the Pt 4f XPS spectra of three samples – 50Cd0.8-Pt-P25, Pt-50Cd0.8-P25, and Pt-20Cd0.8-P25. One can see that in sample Pt-20Cd0.8-P25 platinum exists in two forms, namely, as metal with the binding energy of 71.2 eV and as oxidized Pt$^{2+}$ in PtO with the binding energy of 72.6 eV. Only metallic platinum is observed in photocatalyst 50Cd0.8-Pt-P25, whereas only oxidized Pt$^{2+}$ was detected in photocatalyst Pt-50-Cd0.8-P25.

Fig. 4 HRTEM images (a and b), HAADF-STEM (c) and elemental mapping of Ti/Zn/Cd/Pt (d), Ti (e), O (f), S (g), Pt (h) of photocatalyst Pt-20Cd0.8-P25.
Table 2 demonstrates that only metallic platinum is found in samples prepared by the Cd_{0.8}Zn_{0.2}S deposition on 1% Pt/TiO₂, 20Cd_{0.8}-Pt-P25 and 50Cd_{0.8}-Pt-P25. Thus, the preparation method, in which first platinum is deposited on titanium dioxide, and then a solid solution of cadmium and zinc sulfides is deposited, leads to the formation of metallic platinum, likely due to the “sealing” of the metal particles. Earlier it was shown that metallic platinum enhances the photocatalytic activity of the samples.³³

3.1.5. HRTEM and HAADF-STEM investigations. Samples Pt-20Cd_{0.8}-P25 and 20Cd_{0.8}-Pt-P25 were studied by the HRTEM and HAADF-STEM methods with EDX elemental mapping. Fig. 4a shows the HRTEM image of the Pt-20Cd_{0.8}-P25 photocatalyst. One can see that there are three different types of particles in the analyzed sample. The first one are cylinder and spherical particles with a size up to 50 nm (Fig. 4a and b). The second type particles comprizes the solid solutions of cadmium sulfide and zinc sulfide with the average size of about 10 nm; these particles form aggregates with a size of 20–30 nm (Fig. 4a and c). The third found type of the particles are nanoclusters of platinum whose size reaches 5–6 nm, being quite large for noble metal particles. Fig. 4a and b show that platinum clusters are located both on the surface of sulfide and titania. Fig. 4g and h also demonstrate that Pt is deposited both on the surface of TiO₂ and Cd_{1-x}Zn_xS solid solution. However, a careful examination of these figures reveals that there are islands of highly concentrated sulfur and platinum located at the same area (blue circles in Fig. 4g and h). Thus, platinum is predominantly

![HRTEM images](image-url)
load on the solid solutions of CdS and ZnS nanoparticles. In further mechanism considerations, we assume that platinum is completely located on sulfide particles. EDS data (Fig. S3 and S4†) confirms that the sample consists of TiO2 and Cd1−xZnxS, and Pt, at the same time, the distribution of particles of a solid solution of sulfides on the surface of titanium dioxide is not very uniform.

The TEM images and elemental mapping of the 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 sample are summarized in Fig. 5. Images in Fig. 5a and b show the presence of titania with a particle size of 30–50 nm and clusters of disordered Cd1−xZnxS. One can see the platinum particles with a size of 2–4 nm (Fig. 5a and b). Also, element mapping shows that platinum is located both on titania particles and Cd1−xZnxS domains. To elucidate the location of platinum nanoparticles, we obtained the dark-field HAADF-STEM images of sample 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 with a high resolution (Fig. 6a and b). One can see that platinum nanoparticles as to surround the titanium dioxide particles. Thus, according to the electron microscopy data, in sample 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 the platinum clusters are located over titania and between two semiconductors and have smaller sizes than in sample Pt-20Cd0.8-P25. Thus, the electron microscopy data confirm that the Pt-20Cd0.8-P25 and Cd0.8-Pt-P25 photocatalysts differ only by platinum location and particle size, and have the same morphology of titania and cadmium and zinc sulfide solid solutions, and phase composition.

To sum up, the photocatalyst characterization has shown that two synthetic techniques – deposition of platinum over Cd1−xZnxS (x = 0.2–0.3)/TiO2 P25 surface and deposition of Cd1−xZnxS (x = 0.2–0.3) over platinized Pt/TiO2 P25 – lead to the formation of photocatalysts with the same bulk structure; however, in the first case quite large platinum nanoparticles are located predominantly over Cd1−xZnxS surface, platinum exists in the oxidized Pt2+ state; in the latter case, small platinum nanoparticles are located over titania surface and all platinum is in metallic state.

3.2. Photocatalytic activity

The activity of the synthesized photocatalysts was studied in the hydrogen evolution in alkaline solution of TEOA under visible light with a wavelength of 425 nm. It has been previously shown, that for CdS-based photocatalyst the use of TEOA as a sacrificial agent lead to the highest efficiency as compared to all other substrates. The results showed that amine might be strongly bound to the CdS surface and therefore effectively consume the holes as compared to alcohol and sugars.4 To facilitate the proton abstraction during the chain process of TEOA oxidation and therefore to prevent charge recombination the reaction was carried out in an 0.11 M NaOH aqueous solution. N-bis (2-hydroxyethyl) hydroxylamine and acetaldehyde are recognized as the main TEOA oxidation by-products.5 First, the photocatalysts without platinum were tested; the results of these experiments are listed in Fig. 7a. The rate of hydrogen evolution over titanium dioxide under visible light was equal to zero; single-phase Cd0.7Zn0.3S and Cd0.8Zn0.2S possessed noticeable activity. Fig. 7a shows that the samples containing 10 wt% and 20 wt% of Cd1−xZnxS exhibited the same photocatalytic activities, which were similar to those of Cd0.7Zn0.3S and Cd0.8Zn0.2S. However, as the content of Cd1−xZnxS increases to 50 wt%, the hydrogen production accelerates rapidly. Note that the activity

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**Fig. 6** Dark field HAADF-STEM images of photocatalyst 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 with a scale 10 nm (a) and 20 nm (b).

**Fig. 7** Photocatalytic hydrogen production over Cd1−xZnxS/TiO2 P25 (a), Pt-yCd(1−x)-P25, and yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 (b). Conditions: C0(TEOA) = 10 vol%, C0(NaOH) = 0.1 M, V = 100 mL, Ccat = 0.5 g L−1, light source – 425-LED. Point 100% means the activity of 1%Pt/Cd0.7Zn0.3S and 1%Pt/Cd0.8Zn0.2S.
of composite 50% Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S/TiO_{2} P25 (x = 0.2–0.3) samples was 3.5-times higher than the activity of corresponding single phase solid solutions. Perhaps, this phenomenon may be caused by two reasons. Firstly, the enhancement of Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S content in the photocatalyst increases the light absorption in the range where the LED emits, from 400 to 480 nm, which leads to the growth of the amount of the photoinduced electrons and holes and the photocatalytic activity. Secondly, it is well-known that heterojunctions between the solid solutions of CdS and ZnS and titania are realized^{55,56} and formed at the phase separation boundaries. High content of small Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S particles provides a higher quantity of possible heterojunctions that enhances electron lifetime and favors the photocatalytic hydrogen production. One can see that the composite Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S/TiO_{2} P25 samples containing Cd_{0.7}Zn_{0.3}S are more active than the photocatalysts with Cd_{0.8}Zn_{0.2}S solid solution. This trend was observed earlier for single phase solid solutions Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S in hydrogen production from aqueous solutions of Na_{2}S/Na_{2}SO_{3}.^{57-59} This phenomenon may be assigned to a higher conduction band position of Cd_{0.7}Zn_{0.3}S, which reflects the reduction ability of the semiconductor and favors the target reaction.

To improve the photocatalytic properties of the composites, platinum was deposited by two methods. The first method includes Pt deposition on the surface of pre-synthesized y% Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S/TiO_{2} (samples Pt-yCd0.8-P25), while in the second method the Cd_{1−x}Zn_{x}S solid solutions were loaded on the 1% Pt/TiO_{2} samples yCd0.8-Pt-P25). Also, platinum (1 wt%) was deposited on the surface of Cd_{0.7}Zn_{0.3}S and Cd_{0.8}Zn_{0.2}S. The catalytic activities of the studied photocatalysts are depicted in Fig. 7b. Analysis of the data in Fig. 7 allows conclusion that the deposition of platinum significantly (in some cases, more than an order of magnitude), improves the photocatalytic activity of the samples. The lowest hydrogen productivities, 2.9 and 2.6 mmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹, were possessed by the 1%Pt/Cd_{0.7}Zn_{0.3}S and 1%Pt/Cd_{0.8}Zn_{0.2}S single-phase samples, respectively. Composited platinized photocatalysts produced from 5 to 26 mmol h⁻¹ g⁻¹ of hydrogen (OAE = 1.4–7.7% at 425 nm) that exceed the latest published data (see Table 3).

| Sample | Sacrificial agents | Light source | Activity, mmol (H₂) h⁻¹ g⁻¹ Ref. |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Au/TiO₂/g-C₃N₄ | 1 vol% TEOA | 150 W ceramic-metal-halide Hg lamp | 0.4 11 |
| 2 3% Pt/2% Na₂Fe₂TiO₅/γ-C₃N₄ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 0.4 60 |
| 3 1% Pt/WₓOᵧ/g-C₃N₄ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp, λ > 400 nm | 0.9 61 |
| 4 1% C-dots/50% g-C₃N₄/TiO₂ | 10 vol% TEOA | 350 W Xe arc lamp | 0.6 62 |
| 5 20% g-C₃N₄/TiO₂ | 10 vol% TEOA | 250 W visible light source | 1.1 63 |
| 6 C-quantum dots/TiO₂/Pt | 0.33 M TEOA, pH = 9 | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 1.5 64 |
| 7 Pt-g-C₃N₄-(Au/TiO₂) | 25 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with AM1.5 filter | 1.52 65 |
| 8 18%CdS/2%Pt/Na₂NaB₉O₁₅ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 1.8 66 |
| 9 40% CdS/4% PdAg/g-C₃N₄ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 3.1 67 |
| 10 Pd₀.₂₂Pₚ₀.₇₈-TiO₂/C | 5 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 2.9 68 |
| 11 N-TiO₂/g-C₃N₄@Ni₄P | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 350 nm cut-off filter | 5.4 69 |
| 12 0.25% Pt/Eosin Y-doped TiO₂ | 0.25 M TEOA, pH = 7 | AM 1.5 G with 420 nm cut-off filter | 3.6 70 |
| 13 1% Pt/SrTiO₃ | 10 vol% TEOA, pH = 7, 0.1 g L⁻¹ eosin Y | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 6.6 71 |
| 14 2.5% PtNiₓ/g-C₃N₄ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp | 8.5 72 |
| 15 0.33% Pt/TiO₂/P-doped g-C₃N₄ | 10 vol% TEOA | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 11.6 73 |
| 16 Cu/TiO₂ | 17 vol% TEOA, pH = 6 | Xe lamp with 420 nm cut-off filter | 5.9 74 |
| 17 1%Pt/20% CdₓZn₁₋ₓS/TiO₂ | 10 vol% TEOA, 0.1 M NaOH | 425-LED | 11.5 This work |
| 18 20% CdₓZn₁₋ₓS/1%Pt/TiO₂ | 10 vol% TEOA, 0.1 M NaOH | | 26.4 |

Comparison of the photocatalytic activity with the recently published data (see Table 3).
system. Besides, Fig. 2d clearly shows that titanium dioxide does not absorb irradiation from the LED source used in the experiments, whereas Z-scheme and S-scheme assume the light absorption by both semiconductors.

Fig. 8 shows probable scheme of hetero- junctions for Pt- yCd(1−x)-P25 and yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 photocatalysts. As described above, the photoinduced electrons can migrate to the CB of titanium dioxide, whereas photogenerated holes remain in the VB of the sulfide solid solution. Also, for Pt- yCd(1−x)-P25 [Fig. 8a], photogenerated electrons can move to platinum deposited on the surface of Cd1−xZnxS in this case both electrons and holes remain on the surface of Cd1−xZnxS. The activity of composite samples Pt-yCd(1−x)-P25 (y = 20–50%; x = 0.2–0.3) reaches the level of ~10 mmol h−1 g−1, and at least 3.5–4 times exceeds the activity of photocatalysts 1%Pt/Cd0.8Zn0.2S and 1%Pt/Cd0.8Zn0.2S. Thus, it turns out that the type II heterojunctions provide efficient spatial separation of charges and improve the catalyst activity in the hydrogen evolution. However, the CB position of TiO2 vs. NHE is not negative enough (ca. −0.1 V), with a low reducing ability of electrons; moreover, judging by the TEM data, platinum is deposited mainly on sulfide nanoparticles, and reduction proceeds over pristine titania. Therefore, the activity in the hydrogen production is not so high in comparison to the photocatalysts, synthesized according to the second method.

Fig. 8 shows probable scheme of heterojunctions realized in the case of the Pt-yCd(1−x)-P25 (a) and yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 (b) photocatalyst.

Fig. 7 shows that photocatalysts yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 (y = 10–20%; x = 0.2) possess the highest activity, 23–26 mmol h−1 g−1 of hydrogen, more than twice exceeding that of samples with the same bulk structure, Pt-yCd(1−x)-P25 (y = 10–20%; x = 0.2). In the yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 photocatalysts, platinum particles are located over titania nanoparticles. In this case, photogenerated electrons first migrate to CB of TiO2 and then to platinum particles, deposited over the surface of titania; photogenerated holes remain in the Cd1−xZnxS VB [Fig. 8b]. High activity of the yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 (y = 10–20%; x = 0.2) samples confirms that the transfer of electrons in this direction has a positive effect on the separation of photogenerated charges. Pt particles at the interface between sulfide and titanium dioxide can also be effective co-catalysts for the evolution of hydrogen, although their number is less than the number of Pt particles on the TiO2 surface. Another reason for the high activity of yCd(1−x)-Pt-P25 is that it contains Pt only in the metallic state, while in Pt-yCd(1−x)-P25 platinum occurs both as Pt0 and Pt2+. The metallic platinum accelerates the photocatalytic reaction to a greater extent than the oxidized one. Certainly, it is difficult to provide unambiguous arguments in favor of a particular heterojunction mechanism, but our experiments clearly show that the deposition of platinum on titanium dioxide, followed by deposition of Cd1−xZnxS, leads to the production of highly active photocatalysts. Indeed, the activity of the 20% Cd0.8Zn0.2S/1% Pt/TiO2 P25 photocatalyst in H2 evolution by an order of magnitude exceeds that of a platinized solid solution 1%Pt/Cd0.8Zn0.2S. At the same time, our preliminary studies of these systems in the reduction of CO2 showed that the deposition of platinum on the particles of sulfide solid solutions was preferable.

Stability is one of the most important characteristics of a photocatalyst. Thus, stability tests were carried out with samples Pt-20Cd0.8-P25 and 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 (Fig. 9). After four 1.5 h runs, the hydrogen production rate was 57 and 72% of the initial rate for photocatalysts Pt-20Cd0.8-P25 and 20Cd0.8-Pt-
P25, respectively. That is, the sample of the second type, 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25, possesses the higher activity and stability, most likely due to the improved charge separation. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to obtain highly stable composite sulfide photocatalysts, because photogenerated holes oxidize sulfide solid solutions.

3.3. Photoelectrochemical tests

The photoelectrochemical properties of 1% Pt/TiO₂, 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂, and 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 were studied. Fig. 10a demonstrates that composite photocatalyst 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 prepared by the second route provides a higher photocurrent generation than both platinized titania and 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂. The main reason of this fact is high photogenerated charge separation associated with the type II heterojunctions which is realized under visible light. It is seen also that photocurrent density obtained over 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 decreases during first two on–off cycles, and remains constant afterwards. In opposite, the photocurrent densities recorded over 1% Pt/TiO₂ and 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂ continuously decline due to photocorrosion processes, such as self-oxidation of the CdS and ZnS solid solutions. The ternary composite photocatalyst is photoelectrochemically active and stable. The samples were investigated by the impedance spectroscopy and electron lifetimes were calculated. The electron lifetimes of 1% Pt/TiO₂, 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂, 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25 were 2.7 ms, 5.8 ms, and 8.9 ms, respectively. One can conclude that the higher electron lifetime values favor both the photocatalytic hydrogen production and photocurrent generation.

Fig. 10b shows the Nyquist plots obtained over the tested photoelectrodes. The main trend observed is that low values of impedance semicircle radii led to enhanced photocurrent density. Additionally, the impedance data was approximated by the equivalent-circuit model suggested earlier. The model consists of the series resistance $R_D$, in parallel with two resistance–capacitance loops ($R_W$–$C_1$, $R_K$–$C_2$) (see Fig. 10c). The series resistance $R_D$ includes all the contact and material resistances, such as resistance of the FTO surface and electrolyte solution. $R_W$ and $C_1$ were attributed to the charge-transfer resistance and double-layer capacity for the processes at the photoelectrode/electrolyte interface, whereas $R_K$ and $C_2$ described the electrochemical processes at the counter electrode/electrolyte interface. It was shown that series resistance $R_D$ values did not exceed 10 Ohm that was typical of the electrolyte resistance. Parameters $R_W$ and $R_K$ decreased in the consequence 1% Pt/TiO₂/FTO > 20% Cd₀.₈Zn₀.₂S/TiO₂/FTO > 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25. It should be noted that photocurrent density and electron lifetime grew in the same consequence. The ternary composite photoelectrode demonstrated low resistivity and high electron lifetime. It means that the charge separation in the space was more efficient for the 20Cd0.8-Pt-P25/FTO sample as proved by the electrochemical methods.

4. Conclusions

Ternary composite samples consisting of Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS, titania P25 and platinum were synthesized using a different sequence of metal deposition. In the first case, platinum (1 wt%) was deposited on the surface of synthesized Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS ($x = 0.2–0.3$) / TiO₂ P25; in the second case Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS ($x = 0.7–0.8$) was deposited on the surface platinized titania. This approach made it possible to obtain photocatalysts with the same bulk structure while the properties of deposited platinum were rather different. According to the data of physicochemical studies, including HRTEM with mapping, in photocatalysts synthesized by the first method (1% Pt/Cd₁₋ₓZnₓS/TiO₂) relatively large
platinum particles are located predominantly on the Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S surface, Pt can exist both in metallic Pt\textsuperscript{0} and oxidized Pt\textsuperscript{2+} states; photocatalysts synthesized by the second method (Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S/1\% Pt/TiO\textsubscript{2}) contain small platinum particles which are located on the TiO\textsubscript{2} surface, the whole platinum is in metallic state.

The photocatalytic properties were tested in hydrogen production from alkaline aqueous solution of TEOA under visible light irradiation with a wavelength of 425 nm. It was found that the y\% Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S/1\% Pt/TiO\textsubscript{2} photocatalysts demonstrated much higher photocatalytic activity than y\% Pt/Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S/TiO\textsubscript{2} samples. Thus, the arrangement of platinum nanoparticles precisely on titanium dioxide surface in a composite photocatalyst makes it possible to achieve efficient charge separation according to type II heterojunctions and, accordingly, a high rate of hydrogen formation. Also, the deposition of a solid solution of sulfides on the surface of platinized titania makes it possible to “seal” the platinum particles and keep them in a metallic state, whereas deposition of platinum over Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S/TiO\textsubscript{2} composite leads to formation of mixed Pt/TiO\textsubscript{2} cocatalyst.

The highest photocatalytic activity was observed for 20\% Cd\textsubscript{0.8}Zn\textsubscript{0.2}S/1\% Pt/TiO\textsubscript{2} which provided hydrogen production of 26 mmol g\textsuperscript{-1} h\textsuperscript{-1} (apparent quantum efficiency was 7.7\%) that exceeds the latest published values. This photocatalyst possessed high photoelectrochemical stability. It should be noted that, despite the apparent simplicity, the determination of the preferred location of platinum particles in the TiO\textsubscript{2}–Cd\textsubscript{1-x}Zn\textsubscript{x}S systems was carried out for the first time.

**Authors contributions**

A. V. Zhurenok: conceptualization, validation, visualization, writing—original draft preparation; D. V. Markovskaya: investigation, data curation, visualization, writing—original draft preparation; E. Yu. Gerasimov: investigation, visualization; S. V. Cherepanova: data curation, formal analysis; A. V. Bukhtiyarova: data curation, formal analysis; E. A. Kozlova: writing—original draft preparation, supervision, project administration, funding acquisition. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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