Modelling Zinc Batteries with Ionic Liquid Electrolyte

Max Schammer¹,²,³, Birger Horstmann¹,², and Arnulf Latz¹,²,³
¹Helmholtz Institute Ulm, Helmholtzstraße 11, 89081 Ulm
²German Aerospace Center, Pfaffenwaldring 38, 70569 Stuttgart
³University of Ulm, Albert-Einstein-Allee 47, 89081 Ulm
*Presenting author, email: max.schammer@dlr.de, Tel.: +49 73150 34319

Rechargeable zinc ion batteries are potential candidates for low-cost and efficient energy storage devices [1]. Zinc is an abundant element which is non-toxic, cheap and environmentally benign. Primary zinc batteries have a long history and are established commercially [2]. However, technical problems associated with zinc ion batteries are yet to be resolved [1]. The key component is the electrolyte because it must be stable over a wide electrochemical window and allow reversible metal deposition.

Ionic liquids are promising candidates for stable battery electrolytes [3]. Their advantages comprise a large electrochemical window (up to 6V), chemical and thermal stability, non-flammability (as safety asset) and low vapor pressure [4]. In particular, ionic liquids minimize dendrite growth during electrodeposition and have high ionic conductivity [4]. Zinc-air batteries with ionic liquids are potentially stable towards moisture as well as carbon dioxide and can support a reversible oxygen electrochemistry.

In this talk, we present a thermodynamically consistent transport theory of zinc batteries based on room temperature ionic liquids. Upon this framework we model a zinc ion secondary battery with a mixture of ionic liquid and water as electrolyte. This setup is described experimentally in Ref. [1]. The battery comprises a zinc anode and a Prussian blue analogue cathode in combination with a choline-acetate-water mixture, [Ch]OAc+30%wt water. [Ch]OAc, is a biodegradable, biocompatible, and inexpensive ionic liquid.

Our focus lies on the systematic derivation of a set of fully coupled transport equations for the ions, charge and heat based on the development of modeling methodologies for lithium-ion batteries [5]. The battery is simulated along one dimension and good agreement with the experimental observations described in Ref. [1] is found.

For the understanding of microscopic structures, we incorporate the hardcore particle nature of the medium into our transport theory. In the vicinity of an electrified interphase, we find a quasi-crystalline structure with crowding and overscreening [6].

This work was supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) via the project “Zinc/Air Battery with Advanced Materials for Storage of Renewable Energies and Grid Balancing” (LUZI).

[1] Zhen Liu, Giridhar Pulletikurthi, Frank Endres, ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces 2016 8 (19), 12158-12164