



Titanium-promoted Au–Ti bimetallic nanoparticle catalysts for CO oxidation: A theoretical approach



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ABSTRACT

To solve the problems of deactivation of Au nanoparticle (NP) catalysts, we studied the catalytic activity of 10-atom Au–Ti bimetallic NPs on TiO_2 (1 1 0) supports for CO oxidation by means of density function theory (DFT) calculation with DFT + U method. The calculations showed that Au–Ti NPs were more strongly adsorbed on TiO_2 than Au monometallic NPs. The adsorption energy of O_2 was higher on Au–Ti NPs than on Au NPs, leading to low CO poisoning. The reaction barrier for CO oxidation reaction at interfacial site was lower in the Au–Ti NP system. These results suggest that Au–Ti NPs are a promising catalyst for CO oxidation.

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1. Introduction

Unlike inert property of bulk gold, gold nanoparticles (NPs) with size of a few nanometers supported on metal oxide (MO_x) supports show high catalytic activity for the oxidation of small molecules such as CO, even at temperatures below room temperature [1,2]. Since the discovery of the high catalytic activity of gold NPs, numerous studies have been performed to explain this high catalytic activity of gold NPs [3–8]. Although it has not yet fully understood, the interaction between NPs and MO_x is thought to be one of the key factors in the catalytic activity of gold NPs [7,9].

However, the gold NP/ MO_x catalyst system has several critical problems that prevent its use as catalysts in CO oxidation. One of these problems is deactivation. The active sites of the system are easily poisoned by CO because of the relatively high adsorption energy of CO than of O_2 [10]. Furthermore, the weak interaction between NP and MO_x supports leads to the agglomeration or detachment of NPs [11]. Both phenomena decrease the activity of the catalyst. In addition, the cost for Au NP catalyst is quite high; Au is as expensive as other noble metals such as Pt, Pd, and Ag.

One way to solve the above mentioned problems is to use bimetallic catalysts [12–15]. Here, we propose the use of Au–Ti bimetallic NPs on a TiO_2 support. We chose Ti as the bimetallic component for the following reasons. First, bimetallic Ti–Pt NP

catalysts showed low CO adsorption energy [16,17], which is the main factor in CO poisoning. In addition Ti is more abundant and cheaper than Au. Thus, Au–Ti bimetallic catalysts would be less costly than Au monometallic catalysts.

In this report, we studied the catalytic activity of Au–Ti NP on TiO_2 support system for CO oxidation using density functional theory (DFT) calculations to establish whether the Au–Ti NPs are an applicable catalysts for CO oxidation catalysts. In Section 3.1, we performed DFT calculations on various structures of the NP/ TiO_2 system and obtained the most stable structure. Using the final structure, we evaluated the adsorption properties of CO and O_2 molecules for CO oxidation in Section 3.2. Finally, we calculated the energy barrier of the reaction in Section 3.3. As a result, we evaluated the stability and catalytic activity of the Au–Ti bimetallic NP on TiO_2 support.

2. Computational details

Spin-polarized DFT calculations with plane-wave basis sets were carried out using the Vienna Ab initio Simulation package [18–20]. We used the generalized gradient approximation with the PW91 functional to describe the exchange-correlation energy of electrons [21]. Ionic cores were treated by the projector-augmented wave method [21,22]. The plane-wave cut-off was set to 400 eV and the convergence criteria for electronic structure and atomic geometry were 1.0×10^{-4} eV and 0.03 eV/Å, respectively.

To treat the highly localized Ti 3d orbitals, DFT + U method of Dudarev et al. [23] was applied. Using the scheme of Lutfalla's [24],

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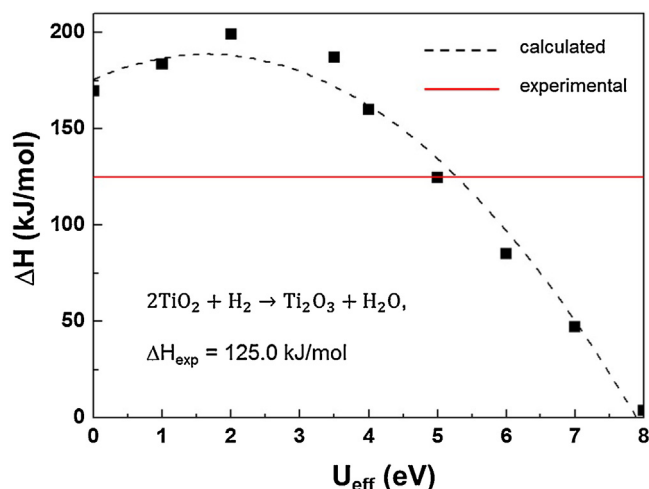


Fig. 1. The effect of U_{eff} on reduction energy of TiO_2 to Ti_2O_3 . Black dot is calculated energy, and red line is experimental energy. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

the effective U value (U_{eff}) for titanium was calibrated by fitting the energy for the following reduction reaction of rutile TiO_2 :



The rectangular unit cell of bulk rutile TiO_2 is composed of two Ti atoms and four O atoms, and the hexagonal unit cell of Ti_2O_3 is composed of 12 titanium atoms and 18 oxygen atoms. We did geometry optimization and calculated energy for bulk TiO_2 and bulk Ti_2O_3 with a $(4 \times 4 \times 4)$ Monkhorst-Pack grid and a $(2 \times 2 \times 2)$ Γ -centered grid, respectively. The experimental reduction energy, 125 kJ/mol [24], is mostly matched for $U_{\text{eff}} = 5.0$ eV, as shown in Fig. 1. This value was used as the optimal U_{eff} value in later calculations.

To study catalytic properties, a rutile TiO_2 (110) support was modeled by a (4×2) surface unit cell with three tri-layers (O–Ti–O) and 20 Å of vacuum layers as shown in Fig. 2(a and b). The upper two tri-layers were fully relaxed by geometry optimization. Metal NP was prepared on the TiO_2 surface using 10 atoms of Au and Ti: Au_{10} , Au_9Ti_1 , Au_8Ti_2 , and Au_7Ti_3 . A $(2 \times 2 \times 1)$ Monkhorst-Pack

grid k -point sampling was used to calculate the total energies of the systems.

The adsorption energy (E_{ads}) of adsorbate A on adsorbent B was calculated by following equation:

$$E_{\text{ads}} = E_{\text{A-B}} - E_{\text{A}} - E_{\text{B}} \quad (2)$$

where $E_{\text{A-B}}$ is the total energy of the system where A is adsorbed on B, and E_{A} and E_{B} are the total energies of A and B each. The transition states (TS) of a CO oxidation reaction were determined with the climbing image nudged elastic band method [25,26].

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Structural stability and electric properties of Au–Ti NPs on TiO_2 support

To identify the stable structures of Au and Au–Ti NPs, we first attached various Au_{10} NP structures on TiO_2 support and relaxed using geometry optimization. We have tested pyramid-like, hemisphere-like, and cage-like initial structures, and the most stable structure was found to be the cage-like structure (Figs. 2 and 3(a)). From the stable Au_{10} structure, we substituted one of the Au atoms with Ti and again relaxed the structure to obtain the stable Au_9Ti_1 NP structure. The structures of Au_8Ti_2 and Au_7Ti_3 NPs were obtained in a similar fashion. The resulting structures were also cage-like structure, similar to that of the Au_{10} NP (Fig. 3(c and d)). For Au_9Ti_1 NPs, the substitution of Au with Ti in the second and third layers was more unstable than the substitution in the first layer by 1.57 eV and 3.14 eV, respectively. It implies that Ti tends to be close to TiO_2 and interacts strongly with it.

The tendency of interaction can be also seen from the adsorption energy of NPs on the TiO_2 support, as plotted in Fig. 3(b). As the number of Ti atoms in the NP increased, the adsorption energy of the NP became stronger due to the large interaction between Ti and TiO_2 . These strong adsorption energies of Au–Ti bimetallic NPs would reduce the degrees of sintering or detachment of NPs from the support [27,28]; thus, Au–Ti NPs would have higher stability than Au monometallic NPs.

We performed Bader charge analysis [28,29] for metal NPs and TiO_2 support (Table 1). The upper two layers of bare TiO_2 support

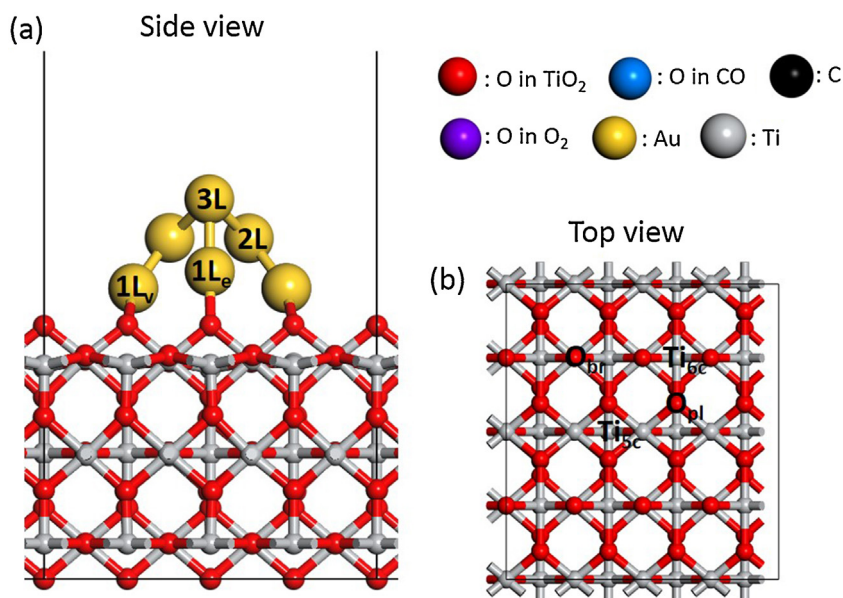


Fig. 2. (a) Side view of our cage-like NP/ TiO_2 model and (b) top view of TiO_2 (110) support. $1L_v$, $1L_e$, $2L$, and $3L$ denote Au atom of 1st layer vertex, 1st layer edge site, 2nd layer, and 3rd layer in metal NP, respectively. Ti_{5c} , Ti_{6c} , O_{br} , and O_{pl} denote fivefold coordinated Ti, sixfold coordinated Ti, bridging O, and in-plane O, respectively.

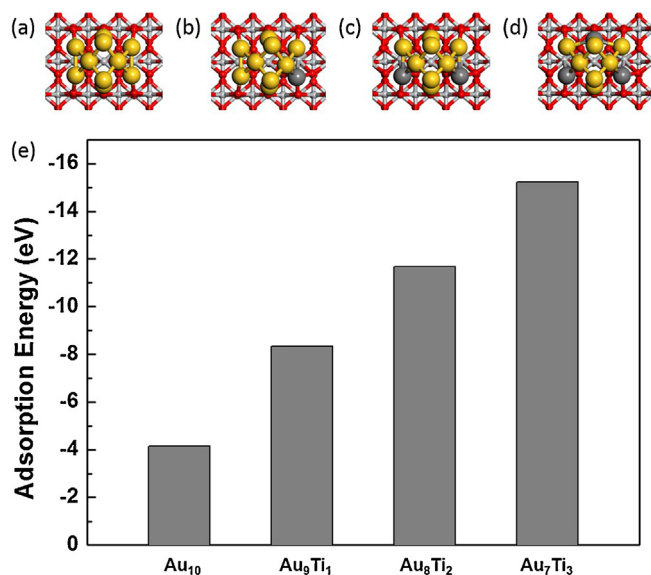


Fig. 3. Stable structure of (a) Au₁₀, and (b) Au₉Ti₁, (c) Au₈Ti₂, (d) Au₇Ti₃. (e) The adsorption energy of each NP on TiO₂ support.

Table 1

Average Bader charges of Au atoms in each layer of metal NP and upper two layers in TiO₂ support. The unit is elementary charge (e⁻).

	Au 1L	Au 2L	Au 3L	TiO ₂
Au ₁₀	0.153	0.053	-0.050	-0.004
Au ₉ Ti ₁	0.120	-0.101	-0.069	-0.017
Au ₈ Ti ₂	0.046	-0.223	-0.082	-0.021
Au ₇ Ti ₃	-0.067	-0.321	-0.210	-0.028

is partially oxidized (+0.005e⁻ on average) before the adsorption of metal NPs. When we attached Au and Au–Ti NPs to the support, the electrons were partially transferred from the metal NPs to upper two layers of TiO₂ support, because of the reducibility of

TiO₂. As the metal NPs changed from Au monometallic to Au–Ti bimetallic NPs, the TiO₂ support and the Au atoms became more negatively charged owing to the charge-transfer from Ti atoms in metal NPs. This large charge transfer would result from the large electronegativity difference between Ti (1.54) and Au (2.54) [30].

3.2. Adsorption properties of CO and O₂ on the Au–Ti/TiO₂ system

The adsorptions of CO and O₂ are a necessary step for CO the oxidation reaction to occur. However, overly strong adsorption of CO leads to the poisoning of catalysts. Therefore, we calculated the adsorption properties of CO and O₂ on the Au and Au–Ti NPs on TiO₂ support for various adsorption sites on the NPs and support. The stable adsorption sites are shown in Fig. 4. CO and O₂ were strongly adsorbed on Au atoms on the third layer (Fig. 4(a, b and d)), Au atoms on the edge of first layer (Fig. 4(b)), and five-coordinated Ti atoms on TiO₂ support (Fig. 4(c and f)). These atoms have low coordination number compared to other atoms; thus, small molecules would be adsorbed more strongly on these low-coordinated atoms [31].

CO is usually strongly adsorbed on metal NPs via backbonding between CO and the metal atom [32]. In the present system, the adsorption energies of CO on metal NPs (see Fig. 4(d and e)) were also very high: -1.03, -1.07, -1.10, and -1.14 eV for Au₁₀, Au₉Ti₁, Au₈Ti₂, and Au₇Ti₃ NPs, respectively, as shown by black and red dots in Fig. 5(a). However, the adsorption on support (see Fig. 4(f)) is quite weaker than the adsorption on NPs. In addition, as metal NPs were attached and changed from Au NP to Au–Ti NPs, the adsorption energies were reduced from -0.49 eV for bare TiO₂ to -0.37, -0.30, -0.31, and -0.30 eV for Au₁₀, Au₉Ti₁, Au₈Ti₂, and Au₇Ti₃ NPs, respectively, as shown by blue dots in Fig. 5(a). The effect is explained by the charge of the support. As shown in Table 1, the upper two layers of the TiO₂ support became negatively charged when metal NPs were attached and the number of Ti atoms in the metal NP increased. Because CO is a strong reducing agent, it prefers to bind to more positive surfaces.

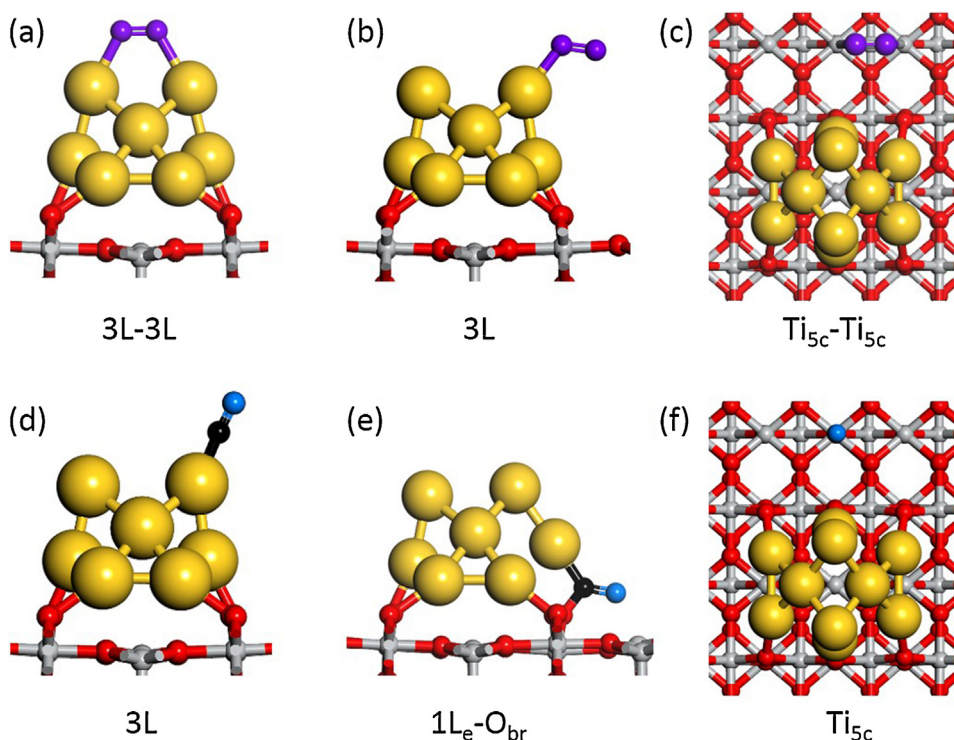


Fig. 4. The stable adsorption site of (a–c) O₂ and (d–f) CO on NP/TiO₂ model. (a–b), (d–e) site is adsorption on NP and (d), (f) site is adsorption on TiO₂ support.

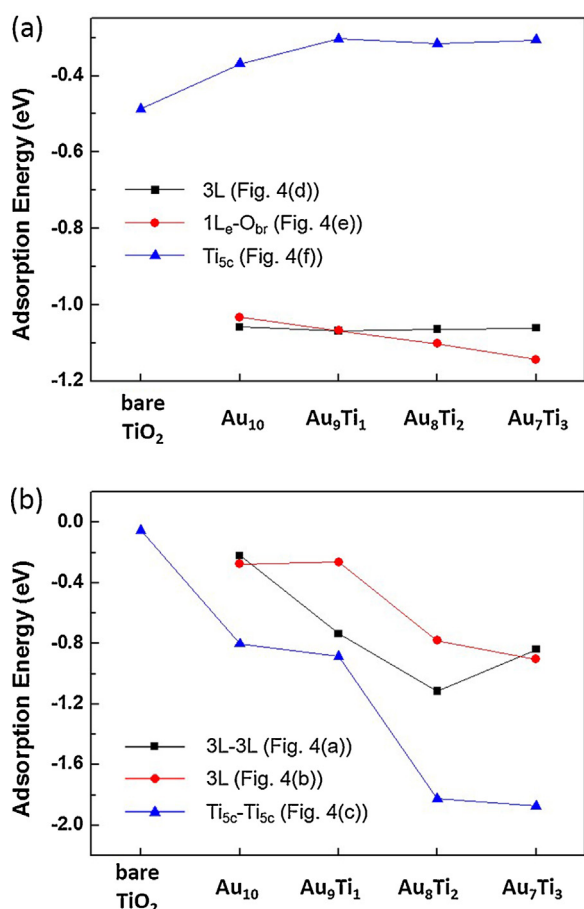


Fig. 5. The adsorption energy of (a) CO and (b) O₂ on NP/TiO₂ model. Black and red dots denote the adsorption on NP, and blue dots denote the adsorption on TiO₂ support. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

The adsorption energy of O₂ on metal NPs (see Fig. 4(a and b)) is shown by black and red dots in Fig. 5(b). The adsorption energy of O₂ on Au₁₀ monometallic NP is quite low (−0.22 and −0.28 eV), as reported in other studies [4,12]; it is approximately 0.75 eV lower than the adsorption energy of CO. This difference in adsorption energy between O₂ and CO would hinder the adsorption of O₂ and lead to CO poisoning on metal NPs, reducing the activities of metal NP catalysts. However, the adsorption energies of O₂ on metal NPs were much higher for the Au–Ti bimetallic NP systems. The adsorption energies were −0.73, −1.12, and −0.90 eV for Au₉Ti₁, Au₈Ti₂, and Au₇Ti₃ NPs, respectively. Compared to the adsorption energies of CO on Au–Ti NPs, the differences in adsorption energy were 0.33, −0.01, and 0.23 eV for Au₉Ti₁, Au₈Ti₂, and Au₇Ti₃ NPs, respectively. These differences were much lower than the adsorption energy gap for Au₁₀ monometallic NP, and they even became negative for Au₈Ti₂ NPs. This lower adsorption energy gap would allow the O₂ to compete to adsorb on the metal NPs and reduce CO poisoning.

If no metal NPs are present on the support, the adsorption energy of O₂ on the TiO₂ support is very low (−0.05 eV). However, with the Au and Au–Ti NPs are attached (see Fig. 4(c)), the adsorption energies increased considerably to −0.80, −0.88, −1.83, and −1.87 eV for Au₁₀, Au₉Ti₁, Au₈Ti₂, and Au₇Ti₃ NPs, respectively, as shown by blue dots in Fig. 5(b). These energies are even larger than the adsorption energies of CO on the TiO₂ support, unlike the adsorption energies on metal NPs. These adsorption energy differences would suppress CO adsorption and CO support on the TiO₂ support. In addition, the high adsorption energies of O₂ on the TiO₂ support for Au–Ti bimetallic NP systems would allow the support

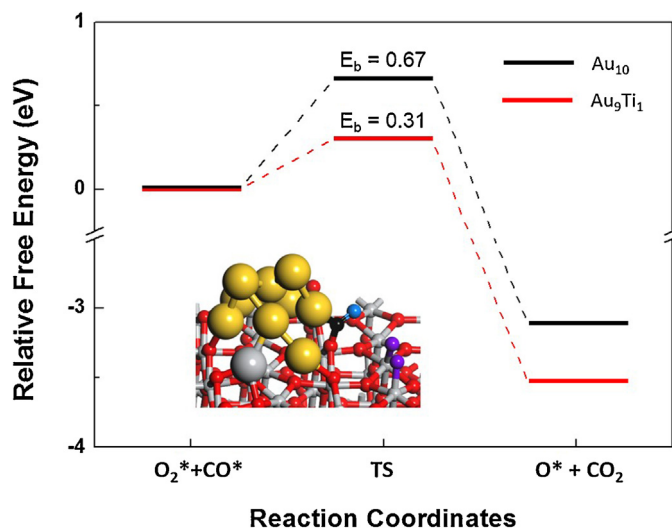


Fig. 6. Energy profile diagram of CO oxidation reaction at the interfacial site of Au₁₀ and Au₉Ti₁ on TiO₂ support. Asterisk (*) means adsorbed molecules. The inset refers to the optimized transition state structure of CO oxidation reaction of Au₉Ti₁ NP systems.

to supply O₂ to NP catalysts for the CO oxidation; thus, we could expect high CO oxidation rates at the interfacial sites between NP and the TiO₂ support [4].

3.3. CO oxidation at interfacial site between Au–Ti NPs and TiO₂ support

The CO oxidation reaction has been reported to occur predominantly at the interfacial site between Au NPs and the TiO₂ support [4,7,9]. In our Au and Au–Ti NP systems, CO strongly adsorbs on metal NPs and O₂ strongly adsorbs on the TiO₂ support as shown in Section 3.2; thus, we expect that the interfacial site to be the most probable reaction site for CO oxidation reaction, where CO is provided by NPs and O₂ by the support. Also the reaction barrier at the interfacial site of Au₁₀ NP is about 0.40 eV lower than the reaction on the top of Au₁₀ NPs. Therefore, we further studied the CO oxidation reaction at this interfacial site and compared two NPs: Au₁₀ and Au₉Ti₁.

We set the initial state as CO adsorbed on edge site (Fig. 4(e)) and O₂ on Ti_{5c}–Ti_{5c} bridging site (Fig. 4(c)) because this coadsorption geometry has the highest adsorption energy. The energy profile diagrams of CO oxidation reaction from this initial state for Au₁₀ and Au₉Ti₁ NP systems are shown in Fig. 6. The calculated reaction barrier for the Au₁₀ NP system was 0.67 eV. In contrast, the reaction barrier for the Au₉Ti₁ NP system was lowered to 0.31 eV. This low reaction barrier for the Au₉Ti₁ NP system related to the high adsorption energy of O₂ on the TiO₂ support. The inset of Fig. 6 shows that the transition state is related to the dissociation of O₂ adsorbed on the TiO₂ support. When the adsorption energy of O₂ becomes higher, adsorbed O₂ is more easily dissociated [33,34], lowering the reaction barrier for the CO oxidation reaction. This low reaction barrier indicates that the Au₉Ti₁ NPs system would have a higher CO oxidation rate than the Au monometallic NPs.

4. Conclusion

Herein, we have investigated the catalytic activity of Au–Ti NPs for CO oxidation using DFT calculations. The U_{eff} value of the DFT + U method was calibrated using the experimental reduction energy of TiO₂ and was found to be 5.0 eV for the PW91 functional. The stable structures of Au monometallic and Au–Ti bimetallic NPs on TiO₂

support were both cage-like structures. The electrons of Ti atoms in the Au–Ti NPs were transferred to the Au atoms and the TiO₂ support surface. As the NP and support became more negatively charged than the Au monometallic NP system, the adsorption energies of O₂ increased on both the NPs and the support. This implies that the CO oxidation at interfacial site between the support and the NPs, where CO is provided by NP and O₂ by support, would be more active in the Au–Ti bimetallic NP system. The calculated reaction barrier was lower for the Au–Ti bimetallic NP system. The result of this work suggest that Au–Ti NP is more effective catalyst than Au-only NPs.

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