Supporting Information for:

A ppm level Rh based composites as ecofriendly catalyst for transfer hydrogenation of Nitriles: Triple guarantee of selectivity for primary amine

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Contents

1. Experimental section	2	
2. Figure S1. The regular pore structure of the catalyst in HRTEM image	3	
 Figure S2. The EDX characterization of the catalyst	4 5 6 9	
		25

Experimental section

Preparation of Fe₃O₄@nSiO₂-NH₂. Firstly, Fe₃O₄ nanosphere purchased from Aladdin Reagent Co., Ltd., China. (0.2 g) was activated with 0.1 mol/L HCl solution (60 mL) in ultrasonic vibrator for 30 minutes. After washing the magnetite three times with deionized water, it was redispersed in the mixed solution that contained deionized H₂O (40 mL), ethanol (160 mL), and 25% NH₃·H₂O (4 mL). When one milliliter of TEOS was added dropwise, the mixture was stirred vigorously for 6 hours under ambient temperature accompanied by multiple ultrasounds. After magnetic separation from the suspension the solid were functionalized with $-NH_2$ through reaction with APTES (0.5 mL) in isopropanol (200 mL) at 80 °C for 3 h. Then the Fe₃O₄@nSiO₂-NH₂ nanocomposite was successfully fabricated after isolation by an external magnet and washing with ethanol.

Preparation of Fe₃O₄@nSiO₂-NH₂-RhCu@mSiO₂. The obtained Fe₃O₄@nSiO₂-NH₂ was stirred vigorously in the homogeneous solution that contains RhCl₃ •3H₂O (1 mg), Cu(NO₃)₂ 6H₂O (1 mmol), H₂O (100 mL), ethanol (90 mL) for 1 hour. Subsequently, 10 mL methanol solution of 0.2 g NaBH₄ was quickly added under Ar atmosphere. After continuous stirring for 1 h, the resulting solid was redispersed in 80 mL H₂O. Meanwhile, 2.5 mL NH₃·H₂O were injected to the transparent solution of CTAB (0.32 g) and 60 mL ethanol. This solution was then added into the above suspension and the mixture were stirred for 30 min. When 1.5 mL TEOS were dropped in, the system was vigorously stirred for 6 h under ambient temperature. Then the collected solid via magnetic separation were stirred vigorously in 150 mL boiling ethanol for 3 h and three times in succession to remove CTAB. The ultimate material was obtained through washing with ethanol and drying.

Typical procedure for the synthesis of benzylamine: FS-NH₂-RhCu@mSiO₂(10 mg), benzonitrile (1 mmol) and HCOOH-NEt₃ (20:1, 2 mL) were successively added to a tube (15 mL) and the reactor was immediately sealed and heated at 40 °C for 3 hour. After the tube was cooled with ice water to quench the reaction, the conversion and selectivity were acquired by GC with toluene as the internal standard. The reaction liquid was firstly extracted with H₂O (30 mL) and CH₂Cl₂ (10 mL). The aqueous phase was adjusted to alkaline by adding sodium hydroxide and subsequently extracted with H₂O (10 mL) and CH₂Cl₂ (30 mL). The organic phase was concentrated in vacuum after desiccation with anhydrous Na₂SO₄. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel (SiO₂, petroleum ether/EtOAc, 2:1) to afford the benzylamine.



Figure S1. The regular pore structure of the catalyst in HRTEM image.

We can easily distinguish the pore structure of the material, which is significant to the mass transfer process.



Figure S2. The EDX characterization of the catalyst.

We characterized the metal particle we struggled to find with EDX system. The results showed only the presence of copper element. The possible reasons are as follows: the level of rhodium belows the detection limit of this system (the existence of rhodium is verified according to SAED and ICP-MS characterization), and most of the active sites may exist as ultra-small particles because it's hard to find another metal particle in HRTEM. And the thickness of the silicon shell is also a factor.



Figure S3. The N₂-adsorption-desorption isotherm of the analogous catalyst fabricated by etching.

The N₂-adsorption-desorption isotherm of the analogous catalyst belongs to a type IV classification coupling with a H3 hysteresis loop, indicating mesoporous structure with an average pore diameter of 10.7 nm calculated by the Barrett- Joyner-Halenda model. Under the same reaction conditions, the selectivity was reduced by 9 percent, indicating that the pore structure affected the reaction selectivity.

Characterization data of products

Benzylamine (1a)1

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.30 – 7.25 (m, 5H), 3.83 (s, 2H), 2.03 (s, active H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 129.0, 128.8, 128.63, 127.79, 45.40.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 51(11), 79(49), 106(100), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₇H₉N: [M+H]⁺ 108.0808, found 108.0803

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 880, 1460, 1520, 2851, 2930, 3040, 3300, 3380.

p-tolylmethanamine (2a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.20 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 7.14 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 3.82 (s, 2H), 2.34 (s, 3H), 1.74 (s, active H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 140.03, 136.46, 129.23, 127.09, 46.16, 21.06.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(30), 77(45), 104(100), 120(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_{11}N$: [M+H]⁺ 122.0964, found 122.0960

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 870, 1450, 1515, 2850, 2930, 3030, 3310, 3390.

m-tolylmethanamine (3a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.23 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 7.14 – 7.09 (m, 2H), 7.07 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 3.83 (s, 2H), 2.35 (s, 3H), 1.98 (s, 2H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 138.24, 131.57, 128.50, 127.98, 127.66, 124.20, 46.31, 21.39.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(30), 77(45), 104(100), 120(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_{11}N$: $[M+H]^+$ 122.0964, found 122..0969

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 850, 1450, 1495, 2861, 2920, 3030, 3310, 3390.

o-tolylmethanamine (4a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.31 (d, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 7.22 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.19 (s, 1H), 7.17 (d, *J* = 2.1 Hz, 1H), 3.87 (s, 2H), 2.34 (s, 3H), 1.89 (s, 2H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 140.50, 135.55, 130.32, 127.15, 126.96, 126.22, 43.91, 18.83.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(30), 77(45), 104(100), 120(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_{11}N$: [M+H]⁺ 122.0964, found 122.0959

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 860, 1456, 1505, 2850, 2930, 3030, 3310, 3390.

(3,5-dimethylphenyl)methanamine (5a)

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 6.90 (s, 2H), 6.87 (s, 1H), 3.75 (s, 2H), 2.30 (s, 6H), 1.97 (s, 2H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 143.04, 138.08, 128.43, 124.93, 46.31, 21.25.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(20), 77(35), 91(65), 118(100), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_9H_{13}N$: $[M+H]^+$ 136.1121, found 136.1117

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 860, 1453, 1513, 2860, 2940, 3033, 3311, 3385.

(4-methoxyphenyl)methanamine (6a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.21 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 6.86 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 2H), 1.83 (s, 2H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 158.52, 135.37, 128.29, 113.92, 55.27, 45.81.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(30), 77(55), 106(70), 136(100), 137(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₈H₁₁NO: [M+H]⁺ 138.0913, found 138.0916

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 820, 1450, 1520, 2851, 2933, 3050, 3308, 3391.

(3-methoxyphenyl)methanamine (7a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.23 (t, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 6.90 – 6.84 (m, 2H), 6.77 (d, *J* = 10.3 Hz, 1H), 3.81 (s, 2H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 1.76 (s, 2H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 159.83, 144.89, 129.53, 119.32, 112.60, 112.22, 55.16, 46.40.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(30), 77(55), 106(70), 136(100), 137(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₈H₁₁NO: [M+H]⁺ 138.0913, found 138.0909

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 850, 1460, 1600, 2839, 2950, 3010, 3290, 3390.

(3,5-dimethoxyphenyl)methanamine (8a)

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 6.45 (s, 2H), 6.32 (s, 1H), 3.76 (s, 2H), 3.75 (s, 6H), 1.94 (s, 2H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 161.01, 145.73, 104.94, 98.76, 55.26, 46.53.

HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_9H_{13}NO_2$: [M+H]⁺ 168.1019, found 168.1015

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 860, 1455, 1590, 2841, 2951, 3013, 3294, 3391.

(4-chlorophenyl)methanamine (9a)³

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.30 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 2H), 7.25 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 3.84 (s, 2H), 1.73 (s, active H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 141.56, 132.59, 128.70, 128.56, 45.82.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 51(25), 77(45), 106(100), 125(10), 140(35), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₇H₈ClN: [M+H]⁺ 142.0418, found 142.0414

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 800, 1490, 1600, 2850, 2900, 3030, 3290, 3370.

(2-chlorophenyl)methanamine (10a)¹

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.38 (d, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.35 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.24 (d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 7.20 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 3.94 (s, 2H), 2.29 (s, 2H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 139.86, 133.40, 129.58, 129.15, 128.39, 127.13, 44.33.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 51(25), 77(45), 106(100), 125(10), 140(35), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₇H₈ClN: [M+H]⁺ 142.0418, found 142.0420

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 750, 1490, 1610, 2860, 2900, 3050, 3300, 3390.

(3,4-difluorophenyl)methanamine (11a)

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.14 (d, *J* = 9.4 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (d, *J* = 10.2 Hz, 1H), 7.03 (s, 1H), 3.84 (s, 2H), 1.71 (s, active H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 150.37 (dd, J=250 Hz, 12 Hz), 149.27 (dd, J=249 Hz, 12 Hz), 140.10 (dd, J = 6 Hz, 4 Hz), 122.83 (dd, J=7 Hz, 4Hz), 117.33 (d, J= 18 Hz), 116.19 (d, J=17 Hz), 45.44. GC-MS: m/z(%) 63(40), 75(20), 95(15), 123(100), 142(65), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for C₇H₇F₂N: [M+H]⁺ 144.0619, found 144.0615

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 790, 1460, 1610, 2850, 2930, 3010, 3310, 3380.

(4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)methanamine (12a)¹

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.59 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.44 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 3.94 (s, 2H), 1.76 (s, 2H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 146.93 (s), 128.35 (q, J=37.9 Hz), 127.36 (s), 125.48 (q, J = 2.6Hz), 124.02 (q, J = 165.7Hz), 45.96 (s).

GC-MS: m/z(%) 51(30), 77(30), 106(100), 127(65), 156(20), 174(90), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_8F_3N$: $[M+H]^+$ 176.0682, found 176.0688

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 810, 1440, 1610, 2870, 2950, 3000, 3300, 3391.

4-(aminomethyl)aniline (13a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.41 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 6.65 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 4.17 (s, 2H), 3.81 (s, 2H), 1.62 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 151.22 (s), 133.81 (s), 120.74 (s), 114.51 (s), 99.10 (s).

GC-MS: m/z(%) 66(35), 78(10), 93(100), 122(95), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_7H_{10}N_2$: [M+2H]²⁺ 124.0990, found 124.0985

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 890, 1512, 1539, 2860, 2940, 3050, 3328, 3423.

3-(aminomethyl)aniline (14a)²

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.09 (t, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 6.73 – 6.67 (m, 2H), 6.57 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 3.71 (s, 2H), 3.57 (s, 2H), 1.25 (s, 1H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 146.63 (s), 140.31 (s), 129.35 (s), 118.59 (s), 114.99 (s), 114.00 (s), 52.68 (s).

GC-MS: m/z(%) 66(35), 78(10), 93(100), 122(95), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_7H_{10}N_2$: [M+2H]²⁺ 124.0990, found 124.0993

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 900, 1510, 1540, 2870, 2940, 3050, 3340, 3450.

(4-(aminomethyl)phenyl)methanol (15a)

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.30 (s, 4H), 4.64 (s, 2H), 3.77 (s, 2H), 2.11 (s, 2H), 2.04 (s, 1H).

 ^{13}C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 139.84 (s), 139.08 (s), 128.45 (s), 127.17 (s), 65.04 (s), 52.66 (s).

HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_{11}NO$: [M+H]⁺ 138.0913, found 138.0909.

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 870, 1450, 1520, 2850, 2930, 3030, 3310, 3390, 3650.

Phenethylamine (16a)¹

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 7.31 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.26 (s, 2H), 7.20 (s, 1H), 3.52 (dd, *J* = 13.0, 6.8 Hz, 2H), 2.82 (d, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 2.28 (s, 2H).

¹³C NMR (151 MHz, CHLOROFORM-D) δ 138.87, 128.71 (d, *J* = 13.0 Hz), 126.54, 40.64, 35.63.

GC-MS: m/z(%) 65(70), 77(20), 91(100), 121(20), HRMS Calcd. (ESI) m/z for $C_8H_{11}N$: $[M+H]^+$ 122.0964, found 122.0966

IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 850, 1440, 1500, 2850, 2920, 3040, 3290, 3400.

Copies of 1H and 13C NMR spectrums



180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 f1 (ppm)

























150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 f1 (ppm)



210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 fl (ppm)







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