

# **Electrochemical and Electrocatalytic Properties of Carbon Nanotubes Integrated with Selected Metal and Metal Oxide Nanoparticles**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation which is hereby submitted to the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Pretoria, is my work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at any other University, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first to the glory of the Almighty Allah for giving me the strength to see the end of the programme despite all odds. And my parents, Engineer Alabi Saubana Adekunle, Mr Tajudeen Ayinla Adekunle and Mrs Agbeke Temilola Adekunle for their unquantified support.

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## ABSTRACT

This work describes metal (M) and metal oxides (MO) films (where M = Ni, Co and Fe) obtained by electrosynthesis and chemical synthesis, and modified with carbon nanotubes (CNTs) on edged plane pyrolytic graphite electrode (EPPGE). The MO nanoparticles investigated are nickel oxide (NiO), cobalt oxide (Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>) and iron oxide (Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>). Successful modification of the electrodes with the M or MO/CNT nanocomposite was confirmed by field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM), high resolution scanning electron microscopy (HRSEM), high resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM), atomic force microscopy (AFM), x-ray diffraction spectroscopy (XRD), x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), electron dispersive x-ray spectroscopy (EDX), fourier transformed infra-red spectroscopy (FTIR) and ultraviolet-visible (UV-vis) spectroscopy. Electron transport (ET) properties of the modified electrodes was explored using cyclic voltammetry (CV) and electrochemical impedance spectroscopic techniques (EIS) with ferricyanide/ferrocyanide ( $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-/4-}$ ) as the redox probe. The electron transfer constant ( $k^0$ ) differs in terms of materials, method of synthesis and electrical equivalent circuits used in the fitting or modelling process. Generally, the  $k^0$  values are in the  $10^{-3} - 10^{-2}$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  with Ni nanoparticles having the highest  $k^0$  or fastest electron transport. The presence of CNTs also enhances the ET compared

with electrodes without CNTs. The electrocatalytic properties of the modified electrodes were explored using the following analytical probes: diethylaminoethanethiol (DEAET), hydrazine, nitrite and dopamine. The study showed that the electrocatalytic oxidation of DEAET and hydrazine was favoured on electrode modified with Ni nanoparticles; nitrite and dopamine were best catalysed by the Co and Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles, respectively. Electroanalysis results (using chronoamperometry, square wave voltammetry and linear sweep voltammetry) indicated some level of adsorption of DEAET, hydrazine and nitrite on the modified electrode, while dopamine electrocatalytic oxidation and detection followed a simple diffusion-controlled process. The adsorption process was found to be physically induced and could be eliminated by repetitive cycling of the electrode in the aqueous electrolyte solution. Electrodes modified with chemically-synthesised material (particularly nickel) were less adsorptive towards DEAET and hydrazine detection, and gave sensitivity and limit of detection values that compared with data obtained using electrochemical deposition / synthesis. The chemical stability and reproducibility of the modified electrodes were determined and discussed. Finally, electrochemical properties were studied to help screen these electrode materials in supercapacitors. CNT-NiO nanocomposites exhibit remarkable supercapacitive behaviour in neutral and acidic media compared to the other CNT-MO nanocomposites investigated. Interestingly, the

capacitive behaviour of the CNT-NiO was more enhanced in  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution than in  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , possibly due to the high conductivity of the former. The CNT-NiO electrode maintained good stability with only about 5% loss of its specific capacitance after 1000 cycle life.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTs .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	xvi
LIST OF SYMBOLS .....	xviii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xx
LIST OF SCHEMES.....	xxxiv
LIST OF TABLES.....	xxxv

## SECTION A

### CHAPTER ONE

#### Introduction

<b>1.1</b> General Overview of Thesis: Problem Statement .....	2
<i>1.1.1 Carbon nanotube-metal and metal oxide nanocomposite in electrochemistry .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1.1.1.1 Carbon nanotubes as electrical conducting nanowires.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1.1.1.2 Metal (M) and metal oxide (MO) nanoparticles as electrocatalyst .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>1.1.1.3 Carbon nanotube-metal and metal oxide modified electrode as sensor for the hydrazine, diethylaminoethanethiol, dopamine and nitrite. ....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.1.1.4 Electron transport behaviour of CNT-M/MO modified electrodes. ....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.1.2 Aim of thesis. ....</i>	<i>8</i>



<b>1.2</b>	Overview of Electrochemistry .....	9
1.2.1	<i>Basics of electrochemistry</i> .....	9
1.2.1.1	<i>Electrochemical equilibrium: Introduction</i> .....	9
1.2.1.2	<i>Electrochemical equilibrium: Electron transfer at the electrode-solution interface</i> .....	11
1.2.1.3	<i>Classification of electrochemical techniques</i> .....	12
1.2.1.4	<i>Faradaic and non-Faradaic processes</i> .....	13
1.2.1.5	<i>The electrochemical cell</i> .....	13
1.2.1.6	<i>Mass transport processes</i> .....	14
<b>1.3</b>	Voltammetric Techniques .....	18
1.3.1	<i>Types of voltammetry</i> .....	19
1.3.1.1	<i>Cyclic voltammetry</i> .....	19
1.3.1.2	<i>Square wave voltammetry</i> .....	24
1.3.1.3	<i>Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV)</i> .....	25
1.3.1.4	<i>Rotating disk electrode</i> .....	26
1.3.1.5	<i>Chronoamperometry</i> .....	26
1.3.1.6	<i>Galvanostatic charge discharge technique</i> .....	28
1.3.1.7	<i>Electrocatalysis using voltammetry</i> .....	29
<b>1.4</b>	Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy (EIS) .....	31
1.4.1	<i>Basics of impedance spectroscopy</i> .....	31
1.4.2	<i>Application and data presentation</i> .....	33
<b>1.5</b>	Chemically Modified Electrodes.....	38
1.5.1	<i>Carbon Electrodes</i> .....	39
1.5.2	<i>Carbon nanotubes modified electrodes</i> .....	41
1.5.3	<i>Metal and metal oxides nanoparticles (NPS)</i> .....	43
1.5.4	<i>Electrocatalytic behaviour of carbon nanotubes-metal nanocomposite modified electrodes</i> .....	43
1.5.4.1	<i>Nickel and nickel oxide carbon nanotubes modified electrodes</i> .....	45
1.5.4.2	<i>Iron and iron oxide carbon nanotubes modified electrodes</i> .....	50

1.5.4.3 Cobalt and cobalt oxide carbon nanotubes modified electrodes.....	54
1.5.5 Supercapacitive behaviour of carbon nanotubes metal oxides .....	57
1.5.6 Electrode modification techniques.....	62
1.5.6.1 Electrodeposition .....	62
1.5.6.2 Electropolymerisation .....	63
1.5.6.3 Dip-dry .....	64
1.5.6.4 Drop-dry.....	64
1.5.6.5 Spin-coating .....	64
1.5.6.6 Composite technique:.....	64
1.5.6.7 Sol-gel method.....	65
1.5.6.8 Self-assmbled-monolayers .....	65
1.5.6.9 Langmuir- Blodgett technique.....	65
1.5.6.10 Chemical vapour deposition .....	66
<b>1.6</b> Nanoscience in Electrochemistry .....	67
<b>1.7</b> Langmuir Isotherm Adsorption Theory. ....	69
<b>1.8</b> Microscopy and Spectroscopy Techniques .....	73
1.8.1 Microscopy .....	73
1.8.1.1 Scanning electron microscope (SEM).....	73
1.8.1.2 Transmission electron microscope (TEM) .....	74
1.8.1.3 Atomic force microscope .....	75
1.8.2 Spectroscopy.....	76
1.8.2.1 Energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS).....	76
1.8.2.2 X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy .....	77
1.8.2.3 X-ray diffraction spectroscopy .....	78
1.8.2.4 Infrared spectroscopy.....	79
1.8.2.5 Ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy .....	80
<b>1.9</b> Overview of Analytes Used As Analytical Probe.....	81
1.9.1 Hydrazine .....	81
1.9.2 Diethylaminoethanethiol .....	82
1.9.3 Nitrite .....	84

1.9.4 Dopamine .....	85
REFERENCES .....	87

## CHAPTER TWO

### Experimental

<b>2.1</b> Materials and Reagents .....	112
2.1.1 <i>Synthesis of functionalised CNTs</i> .....	113
2.1.2 <i>Synthesis of nickel and nickel oxide nanoparticles</i> .....	114
2.1.3 <i>Synthesis of cobalt and cobalt oxide nanoparticles</i> .....	115
2.1.4 <i>Synthesis of iron and iron oxide nanoparticles</i> .....	115
<b>2.2</b> Equipment and Procedure .....	117
2.2.1 <i>Assay of dopamine hydrochloride injection</i> .....	119
<b>2.3</b> Electrode Modification and Pretreatments .....	120
2.3.1 <i>Electrode cleaning</i> .....	120
2.3.2 <i>Electrode modification</i> .....	120
2.3.2.1 <i>Drop-dry / electrodeposition techniques</i> .....	120
2.3.1.2 <i>Modification with Prussian blue (PB) nanoparticles</i> .....	122
2.3.1.3 <i>Electrode modification with synthesised M and MO nanoparticles</i> . .....	123
<b>2.4</b> Electron Transport Experimental Procedure.....	124
<b>2.5</b> Electrocatalytic and Electroanalysis Experiment Procedure...	125
2.5.1 <i>Electrocatalytic procedure</i> .....	125
2.5.2 <i>Electroanalysis procedure</i> .....	127
<b>2.6</b> Electrochemical supercapacitive procedure .....	128
REFERENCES .....	131

## **SECTION B**

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **CHAPTER THREE**

##### **Insights Into the Electro-oxidation of Hydrazine at Single-Walled Carbon Nanotube – Modified Edge-Plane Pyrolytic Graphite Electrode Electrodecorated with Metal and Metal Oxide Films**

<b>3.1</b> Comparative FESEM images and Electron-Dispersive X-rays. .....	135
<b>3.2</b> Comparative Redox Chemistry of modified EPPGEs in Aqueous Solution .....	137
<b>3.3</b> Comparative electrocatalytic oxidation of hydrazine .....	139
<b>3.4</b> Electrochemical impedimetric studies .....	142
<b>3.5</b> Effect of varying scan rates.....	150
<b>3.6</b> Chronoamperometric investigations .....	152
REFERENCES .....	157

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

##### **Electron Transfer Behaviour of Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes Electro-Decorated with Nickel and Nickel Oxide Layers and Its Electrocatalysis Towards Diethylaminoethanethiol (DEAET): An Adsorption-Controlled Electrode Process**

<b>4.1</b> FTIR, SEM images and EDX characterisation .....	161
<b>4.2</b> Comparative redox chemistry in aqueous solution .....	165
<b>4.3</b> Comparative Electron Transport Properties .....	171
<b>4.4</b> Electrochemical response of the Ni-modified electrodes .....	179
towards DEAET oxidation. ....	179
<b>4.5</b> Comparative electrochemical response to DEAET at different Ni deposition time .....	181
<b>4.6</b> Electroanalysis of DEAET .....	182
4.6.1 <i>Scan rate study</i> .....	182
REFERENCES .....	190

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Electron Transport and Electrocatalytic Properties of MWCNT/Nickel Nanocomposite: Hydrazine and Diethylaminoethanethiol as Analytical Probes**

<b>5.1</b> Comparative TEM, XRD and EDX spectra .....	193
<b>5.2</b> Comparative Electrochemical characterization.....	196
<b>5.3</b> Comparative electrocatalytic properties: DEAET and Hydrazine as analytical probe. ....	200
<b>5.4</b> Effect of varying scan rates.....	206
<b>5.6</b> Electroanalysis of DEAET and Hydrazine .....	209
REFERENCES .....	217

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Probing the Electrochemical Behaviour of SWCNT- Cobalt Nanoparticles and Their Electrocatalytic**

## **Activities Towards the Detection of Nitrite in Acidic and Physiological pH Conditions**

<b>6.1</b>	Comparative FESEM, AFM images EDX spectra .....	220
<b>6.2</b>	Comparative Electrochemical characterization .....	223
<b>6.3</b>	Comparative electron transport properties .....	224
<b>6.4</b>	Electrocatalytic oxidation of Nitrite in neutral and acidic pH.	229
<b>6.5</b>	Electrochemical impedance studies .....	231
<b>6.6</b>	Effect of varying scan rate .....	234
<b>6.7</b>	Electroanalysis of nitrite at neutral and acidic pH .....	236
	REFERENCES .....	253

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Electrocatalytic Detection of Dopamine at Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes-Iron (iii) Oxide Nanoparticles Platform**

<b>7.1</b>	Characterisation with FESEM, AFM, EDX and XPS .....	257
<b>7.2</b>	Electrocatalytic detection of dopamine: Voltammetric and Impedimetric properties.....	262
<b>7.3</b>	Effect of varying potential scan rates.....	268
<b>7.4</b>	Analytical Application.....	270
<b>7.5</b>	Interference study.....	274
<b>7.6</b>	Real sample analysis: Dopamine drug.....	276
	REFERENCES .....	295

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Electrocatalytic Properties of Prussian Blue Nanoparticles Supported on Poly(m-Aminobenzenesulfonic Acid) – Functionalized Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes Toward the Detection of Dopamine**

<b>8.1</b>	Comparative TEM and AFM images and UV-vis spectra .....	299
<i>8.1.1.</i>	<i>UV-vis-absorption spectroscopy characterization of the SWCNT-PABS, PB and the SWCNT-PB nanoparticles. ....</i>	<i>300</i>
<b>8.2</b>	Cyclic voltammetric characterisation of the electrodes.....	302
<b>8.3</b>	Electrocatalytic oxidation of dopamine.....	305
<b>8.4</b>	Effect of varying scan rate .....	310
<b>8.5</b>	Electroanalysis using square wave voltammetry (SWV), chronoamperometric (CA) and Linear Sweep Voltammetry (LSV) .....	313
<b>8.6</b>	Detection of DA in the presence of AA (Interference study).	317
<b>8.7</b>	Real sample analysis: Dopamine drug .....	318
	REFERENCES .....	320

## CHAPTER NINE

### **Electrocatalytic Oxidation of Diethylaminoethanethiol, Hydrazine and Nitrite at Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes Modified with Prussian Blue Nanoparticles**

<b>9.1</b>	Microscopic and spectroscopic characterisation .....	323
<b>9.2</b>	Electrochemical characterization .....	327

<b>9.3</b>	Electrocatalytic oxidation properties.....	329
<b>9.4</b>	Concentration studies and proposed mechanism.....	338
	REFERENCES .....	341

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **Supercapacitive Behaviour of Single-Walled/Multi-Walled Carbon Nanotubes-Metal (Ni, Fe, Co) Oxide Nanocomposites in Acidic and Neutral pH Conditions**

<b>10.1</b>	Comparative EDX, XPS and FESEM .....	344
<b>10.2</b>	Comparative cyclic voltammetric experiments .....	348
<b>10.3</b>	Comparative galvanostatic charge / discharge experiments	349
<b>10.4</b>	Electrochemical impedance studies .....	355
	References .....	371

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....374**

### **CONCLUSIONS.....375**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS.....380**

### **APPENDIX A** List of publications in peer-reviewed journals from this thesis ..... 381 |

### **APPENDIX B** List of conference presentation from this thesis 383 |



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Electrode surface area (cm <sup>-2</sup> )
AFM	Atomic force microscopy
Ag	Silver wire pseudo-reference electrode
Ag/AgCl	Silver/silver chloride reference electrode
BPPGE	Basal plane pyrolytic graphite electrode
CA	Chronoamperometric
CME	Chemically modified electrode
CNT	Carbon nanotubes
CV	Cyclic voltammetry
CV	Cyclic voltammogram
DMF	Dimethylformamide
EIS	Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy
EPPGE	Edge plane pyrolytic graphite electrode
EPPGE-SWCNT	Edge plane pyrolytic graphite electrode decorated single-walled carbon nanotubes
Fe <sub>4</sub> (III)[Fe(II)(CN) <sub>6</sub> ] <sup>3-</sup>	Divalent iron (II)/(III) cyanide complex
FTIR	Fourier transform infrared
GCE	Glassy carbon electrode
LCR	Linear concentration range
LoD	Limit of detection
LSV	Linear sweep voltammetry
MMPs	Magnetic nanoparticles
MWCNT	Multi-walled carbon nanotubes
NPs	Nanoparticles
OSWV	Osteryoung square wave voltammogram
PBS	Phosphate buffer solution
R.E.	Reference electrode
R <sub>ad</sub>	Resistance due to adsorption
SAM	Self-assembled monolayer
SCE	Standard calomel electrode

SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulphate
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
SWCNT	Single-walled carbon nanotubes.
SWCNT-PABS	Poly(m-aminobenzenesulphonated) single-walled carbon nanotubes
SWV	Square wave voltammetry
W.E.	Working electrode
XPS	X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy

## LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	Rate of electron transfer
$\Gamma$	Surface coverage or concentration
$\pi$	Pi bonding
$\lambda$	Wavelength
A	Absorbance
C	Molar concentration of analyte
C	Capacitance
$C_{dl}$	Double-layer capacitance
CPE	Constant phase electrode
$C_{Ox}$	Concentration of the oxidized form of an analyte
$C_{Red}$	Concentration of the reduced form of an analyte
$C_s$	Specific interfacial capacitance
d	Diameter
D	Diffusion coefficient
$E_f$	Final potential
$E_i$	Starting potential
$E_{pa}$	Anodic peak potential
$E_{pc}$	Cathodic peak potential
E	Potential
$E^\circ$	Standard potential
$E_{1/2}$	Half-wave potential
$\Delta E_p$	Anodic-to-cathodic peak potential separation
f	Frequency
F	Faraday constant

$h$	Plank's constant
Hz	Hertz
$I_{abs}$	Absorbed light
$i_{pa}$	Anodic peak current
$i_{pc}$	Cathodic peak current
$k$	Heterogeneous electron transfer coefficient
$K$	Equilibrium constant
$K_a$	Dissociation constant
$K$	Kelvin
$N$	Number of electron
$N_A$	Avogadro's constant
$q$	Electrical charge
$Q$	Electrical charge (C)
$R$	Universal gas constant
$R_{ct}$	Charge transfer resistance
$R_s$	Resistance of electrolyte
$v$	Scan rate
$V$	Volts
$Z_{im}$	Imaginary impedance
$Z_{re}$	Real impedance
$Z_w$	Warburg impedance

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: A platinum wire immersed into an aqueous solution containing both ferrocyanide and ferricyanide .....	10
Figure 1.2: The energy of electrons in the ions in solution and in the metal wire .....	12
Figure 1.3: (a) Galvanic and (b) electrolytic cells .....	14
Figure 1.4: The three modes of mass transport process: (a) Diffusion, (b) Migration and (c) Convection .....	16
Figure 1.5: Three electrode set-up: (1) working electrode (2) auxillary electrode (3) reference electrode .....	19
Figure 1.6: Typical cyclic voltammogram for a reversible process.	21
Figure 1.7: Typical Cyclic voltammogram for an irreversible process. ....	23
Figure 1.8: Waveform and measurement scheme for square wave voltammetry. Shown in bold is the actual potential waveform applied to the working electrode. The light intervening lines indicate the underlying staircase onto which the square wave can be regarded as having been superimposed. In each cycle, a forward current sample is taken at the time indicated by the solid dot, and a reverse current sample is taken at the time marked by the shaded dot .....	25
Figure 1.9: Linear potential sweep.....	25
Figure 1.10: Typical waveform for a double potential step chronoamperometry.....	27
Figure 1.11: Typical galvanostatic charge-discharge curve.....	29
Figure 1.12: (a) Applied sinusoidal voltage and resulting sinusoidal current response. (b) Vector representation of real $Z'$ and imaginary $Z''$ of impedance $Z$ .....	32
Figure 1.13: (a) Typical Randles equivalent circuit for an ideal electrochemical system. (b) Modified Randles equivalent circuit for real, practical situation.....	34

Figure 1.14: Typical Nyquist plot for (a) bare and (b) modified electrode. (c) is the corresponding Bode plots. ....	36
Figure 1.15: Pyrolytic graphite plate showing the basal and the edge plane sites . ....	40
Figure 1.16: Structure of (a) SWCNT and (b) MWCNT. ....	41
Figure 1.17: Cyclic voltammogram showing electrocatalytic process of an analyte on the bare and modified electrode.....	44
Figure 1.18: Principle of single-cell double-layer capacitor showing charge separation and storage at current collectors. ..	58
Figure 1.19: Repetitive cyclic voltammograms of an electrode modified with metal oxides film. ....	63
Figure 1.20: Typical SAM modified electrode showing formation of monolayer. ....	65
Figure 1.21: A Typical SEM Image showing formation of metal oxide nanoparticles film on modified electrode. ....	74
Figure 1.22: A Typical TEM Image of CNT decorated with metal nanoparticles. ....	74
Figure 1.23: (a) Atomic force microscope block diagram. (b) AFM three dimensional (3D) image of a nanomaterial growth on a modified electrode. ....	76
Figure 1.24: EDX profile of a material showing the possible elemental composition.....	77
Figure 1.25: Wide scan XPS spectrum showing the present elements. ....	78
Figure 1.26: (a) X-ray diffraction pattern formed when X-rays are focused on a crystalline material (b) XRD spectrum of synthesised metal nanoparticles showing identified peaks of the metal at different $2\theta$ position . ....	79
Figure 1.27: IR spectroscopy apparatus . ....	80
Figure 3.1: Typical FESEM images of the (a) bare EPPGE, (b) EPPGE- SWCNT, (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni, (d) EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe, (e) EPPGE-SWCNT-NiO and (f) EPPGE-SWCNT-FeO. ....	135

- Figure 3.2: Typical EDX plots of the (a) bare EPPGE, (b) EPPGE-SWCNT, (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni, and (d) EPPGE-SWCNT-NiO. ....136
- Figure 3.3: Examples of voltammetric evolutions of the bare-EPPGE and modified EPPGEs in 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS. Scan rate = 50 mV/s. The voltammograms of the modified EPPGEs were obtained after 20 continuous scans. Other scans have been omitted for clarity. ....138
- Figure 3.4: (a) Examples of cyclic voltammograms recorded at the various electrodes in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution containing 1 mM hydrazine, and (b) comparative cyclic voltammograms recorded at the EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> with and without hydrazine. Inset of (b) is the background subtracted hydrazine response of the EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni. Scan rate = 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>.....140
- Figure 3.5a: Examples of typical Nyquist plots of modified EPPGEs obtained in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> containing 1 mM hydrazine, between 10 kHz and 0.1 Hz. Inset are similar plots obtained 100 kHz and 0.1 Hz. The data points are experimental while the solid lines represent fitted (theoretical) spectra obtained from the proposed equivalent circuit model shown in figure 5b.....142
- Figure 3.5b: Equivalent circuit model used in fitting the spectra obtained in Figure 3.5a.....142
- Figure 3.6: Examples of typical Bode plots of modified EPPGEs obtained in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> containing 1 mM hydrazine, between 10 kHz and 0.1 Hz. ....146
- Figure 3.7: Typical comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the electrodes (EPPGE-SWCNT and EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni) in 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup> / [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (PBS pH 7.0). Scan rate = CVs (50mV/s).....147
- Figure 3.8a: Typical Nyquist plots of the of the electrodes obtained in 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup> / [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (PBS pH 7.0) at fixed potential of 0.30 V and 0.45 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. ....149
- Figure 3.8b: Equivalent circuit model used in fitting the spectra obtained in Figure 3.8a.....149
- Figure 3.9: (a) Examples of cyclic voltammetric evolutions of EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni obtained in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> containing

1 mM hydrazine at scan rates 10, 25 and 50 mVs<sup>-1</sup> (inner to outer). Inset compares voltammograms obtained at 50 and 140 mVs<sup>-1</sup> (inner to outer). (b) Current function plot,  $I_p/v^{1/2}$  vs  $v$ . ..... 151

Figure 3.10: Chronoamperometric evolutions of the EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution containing different concentrations of hydrazines (0.0, 33.3, 47.4, 50.5 and 54.5 μM (from (i) to (v)) at fixed potential of 0.6V. Inset is plot of slope vs square root of the concentration of hydrazine. .... 154

Figure 4.1: Comparative FTIR of pristine SWCNTs (a) and acid-treated SWCNTs (b). .... 161

Figure 4.2: FESEM images of bare EPPGE (a), EPPGE-SWCNT (b), EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni (c) and EPPGE-SWCNT-NiO (d). The size bars are 50 μm for (a) and 5 μm for (b)-(d). .... 163

Figure 4.3: EDX spectra of (a) EPPGE-SWCNT, (b) EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni, and (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-NiO. .... 164

Figure 4.4: Comparative current response of the bare-EPPGE, EPPGE-SWCNT, EPPGE-NiO and EPPGE-SWCNT-NiO in pH 7.0 PBS. Scan rate = 50mVs<sup>-1</sup>. .... 166

Figure 4.5: (a) Repetitive cyclic voltammetric evolution (20 scans) of EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in 0.1M NaOH solution. (b) Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolution (1st scan) of the EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in 0.1M NaOH at different nickel deposition time (5–40 min). Scan rate = 100mVs<sup>-1</sup>. 167

Figure 4.6: Voltammetric evolutions of EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in 0.1MNaOHsolution at varying scan rates of 25, 50, 75, 100, 150, 200, 250 and 300mVs<sup>-1</sup> (inner to outer). The electrode was obtained at 5 min deposition and used for the study after 2nd scan. .... 170

Figure 4.7: Typical examples of cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the electrodes in 5mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup>/[Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (PBS pH 7.0). Scan rate = 50mVs<sup>-1</sup>. .... 171

Figure 4.8: Typical Nyquist plots of the of the electrodes obtained in 5mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup>/[Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (PBS pH 7.0) at fixed potential of 0.30V vs. Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. .... 173

Figure 4.9: Equivalent circuit diagrams used for fitting the impedance data obtained in this work. Circuit (a) was



used to fit the bare EPPGE, EPPGE-SWCNT and nickel disk hydroxide electrodes; (b) was used to fit the EPPGE-Ni, EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni, EPPGESWCNT-NiO and EPPGE-NiO; (c) was used for EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni(OH)<sub>2</sub>.  
..... 175

Figure 4.10: Bode plots obtained for the electrodes obtained at 0.30V vs. Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. .... 178

Figure 4.11: (a) Examples of comparative cyclic voltammograms recorded at the various electrodes in 0.1 M PBS (pH 9.4) containing 0.1 mM DEAET. (b) Plot of charge transfer resistance ( $R_{ct}$ ) against deposition time of nickel (biased at 0.6 V vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl) obtained at EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni. (c) Circuit diagram used in the fitting of impedance data in (b). .... 180

Figure 4.12: (a) Typical examples of linear sweep voltammetric evolutions of EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in phosphate buffer solution (pH 9.4) containing different concentrations of DEAET (0.0, 28.6, 33.3, 37.5, 41.2 and 44.5  $\mu$ M (i to vi)). Inset is plot of log current response (background-subtracted) vs log DEAET concentrations. (b) Typical examples of chronoamperometric evolutions of EPPGE-SWCNT-Ni in phosphate buffer solution (pH 9.4) containing different concentrations of DEAET (0.0, 20, 40, 60, 80 100 nM (i to vi)) at fixed potential 0.6V vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl. Inset is plot of log current response (background-subtracted) vs log DEAET concentrations.  
..... 184

Figure 5.1: TEM images of (a) Pristine MWCNT (b) MWCNT-COOH (c) MWCNT-Ni and (d) MWCNT-NiO..... 193

Figure 5.2: (a) XRD spectrum of NiO. Inset in (a) is the XRD spectrum of Ni. (b) and (c) represent the EDX spectra of MWCNT-Ni and MWCNT-NiO, respectively..... 195

Figure 5.3: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the electrodes in (a) 0.1 M PBS (pH 7.0), scan rate = 100 mVs<sup>-1</sup>. (b) 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup> / [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (in PBS pH 7.0). Scan rate = 50 mVs<sup>-1</sup>. .... 197

Figure 5.4: Typical Nyquist plots obtained for the electrodes in 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup> / [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution (PBS pH 7.0) at a fixed potential of 0.2 V (vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl). Inset represents the circuit used in the fitting of the EIS data.  
..... 199

- Figure 5.5: Comparative current response (after background current subtraction) of the electrodes in (a) 0.1 mM DEAET solution in pH 9.4 PBS and (b) 1.0 mM hydrazine solution in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, scan rate = 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>.....202
- Figure 5.6: Comparative current response (after background current subtraction) for different Ni loading at the EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni electrode in (a) 0.1 mM DEAET solution in pH 9.4 PBS and (b) 1.0 mM hydrazine solution in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, scan rate = 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>.....203
- Figure 5.7: (a) Typical Nyquist plots obtained for EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni in 0.1 mM DEAET solution in PBS 9.4 and 1.0 mM hydrazine in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution respectively (at fixed potential 0.6 V vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl). Inset represents the circuit used in fitting the EIS data. (b) represents the Bode plots obtained for the EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni, showing the plots of -phase angle / deg. vs log (f / Hz)) and the plot of log |Z/Ω| vs log (f/Hz ) for both DEAET and hydrazine.....205
- Figure 5.8: Cyclic voltammetric evolutions at the EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni for (a) 0.1 mM DEAET in 0.1 M pH 9.4 PBS (at 25, 75, 400, 600, 950, 1200 and 1400 mVs<sup>-1</sup>, inner to outer), and (b) 1.0 mM Hydrazine in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution after background subtraction (at 25, 75, 150 and 200 mVs<sup>-1</sup>, inner to outer) .....207
- Figure 5.9: (a) Typical chronoamperograms obtained for the EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution containing different concentrations of hydrazine (0.0, 91, 167, 231, 286, and 333 μM, (i to vi)). Inset represents the plot of current response vs hydrazine concentration. (b) Typical linear sweep voltammograms obtained for the EPPGE-MWCNT-Ni in 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution containing different concentrations of hydrazine (0.0, 91, 130, 167, 231, 286, 333, 355, and 375 μM (i to ix)). .....211
- Figure 6.1: FESEM of (a) EPPGE, (b) EPPGE-SWCNT, (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-Co, (d) EPPGE-SWCNT-CoO. (e) and (f) are the AFM topography images for the EPPGE-SWCNT-Co and the EPPGE-SWCNT-CoO while (g) and (h) are their respective cross-sections. ....221
- Figure 6.2: EDX spectra of (a) EPPGE (b) EPPGE-SWCNT, and (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-CoO. ....222

- Figure 6.3: Typical examples of some cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the electrodes in 5 mM  $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-} / [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$  solution (PBS pH 7.0). Scan rate = 50 mV/s. ....225
- Figure 6.4: (a) Typical Nyquist plots of some of the electrodes obtained in 5 mM  $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-} / [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$  solution (PBS pH 7.0) at fixed potential of 0.30 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. (b) Represents the circuit used in the fitting of the EIS data. (c) and (d) are the Bode plots obtained for the electrodes, showing the plots of (-phase angle deg. vs log (f/Hz)) and log  $|Z / \Omega|$  vs log (f/Hz) . ....226
- Figure 6.5: Comparative current response (after background current subtraction) of the EPPGE, EPPGE-SWCNT, EPPGE-SWCNT-Co and EPPGE-SWCNT-CoO in (a) 1 mM nitrite solution in pH 7.4 PBS and (b) 1 mM nitrite solution in pH 3.0 PBS, scan rate = 25 mV/s. ....230
- Figure 6.6: (a) Typical Nyquist plots of some electrodes in 1 mM nitrite solution (PBS pH 7.4) at fixed potential of 0.80 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. Inset is the enlarged portion of the high frequency region (b) Represents the circuit used in the fitting of the EIS data in 6a (c) Bode plot obtained for EPPGE-SWCNT-Co showing the plot of - phase angle (deg.) vs log (f/Hz). ....232
- Figure 6.7: Plot of peak current ( $I_p$ ) versus square root of scan rate ( $v^{1/2}$ ) for EPPGE-SWCNT-Co in 0.1M pH 7.4 PBS containing  $10^{-3}$  M nitrite. ....235
- Figure 6.8: Typical examples of chronoamperogram obtained for EPPGE-SWCNT-Co in phosphate buffer solution (pH 7.4) containing different concentrations of nitrite (0.0, 32.3, 62.5, 118.0, 143.0, and 189.0  $\mu\text{M}$  (i to vi)). Inset is typical plot of current response vs nitrite concentration. ....237
- Figure 6.9: TEM images of (a) Co and (b)  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles. c and d are the FESEM micrographs of Co and  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles, respectively. ....241
- Figure 6.10: XRD spectra of Co (a) and  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  (b) nanoparticles. 242
- Figure 6.11: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the EPPGE, EPPGE-Co and EPPGE- $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  electrodes in (a) 0.1 M PBS (scan rate = 100  $\text{mVs}^{-1}$ ), and (b) 5 mM

$[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$  solution in pH 7.0 PBS (scan rate =  $50 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$ ). .....243

Figure 6.12: Typical Nyquist plots obtained for the electrodes in 5 mM  $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-} / [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$  solution at a fixed potential of 0.2 V (vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl). Inset in Figure 6.12 is the circuit used in the fitting of the EIS data. ....245

Figure 6.13: Comparative current response of (a) EPPGE, EPPGE-Co and EPPGE- $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  (after background current subtraction) in pH 7.4 PBS containing 1.0 mM  $\text{NO}_2^-$  solution (scan rate =  $25 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$ ). EPPGE-Co-b represents 7.5 mg/mL Co loading in pH 7.4 PBS containing 1.0 mM  $\text{NO}_2^-$  solution. ....247

Figure 6.14: Typical Nyquist plots obtained for EPPGE, EPPGE-Co and EPPGE- $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  in 1.0 mM  $\text{NO}_2^-$  solution at a fixed potential of 0.8 V (vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl).....248

Figure 6.15: Typical chronoamperogram of EPPGE-Co in (a) 0.1 M PBS pH 7.4 containing different concentration of  $\text{NO}_2^-$  (0.0, 11.1, 20.0, 27.3, 31.0 and 33.3  $\mu\text{M}$  (i to vi)). Inset is the plot of peak current ( $I_p$ ) versus  $\text{NO}_2^-$  concentrations.....251

Figure 7.1: Typical AFM images of (a) bare glassy carbon (GC) plate, (b) GC-SWCNT, (c) SWCNT-SWCNT-Fe and (d) GCE-SWCNT- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ . ....259

Figure 7.2: Typical EDX profile of the (a) bare EPPGE, (b) EPPGE-SWCNT, (c) EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe and (d) EPPGE-SWCNT- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ . ....260

Figure 7.3: Typical XPS of EPPGE-SWCNT- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  modified electrode. Inset shows the enlarged portion showing the peak corresponding to the Fe  $2p_{3/2}$  and Fe  $2p_{1/2}$  bands. ....261

Figure 7.4: Typical cyclic voltammograms, original (a) and background- subtracted (b) of bare EPPGE (i), EPPGE-SWCNT (ii), EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe (iii), and EPPGE-SWCNT- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  (iv) in 0.1 M PBS (pH 7.0) containing  $2 \times 10^{-4}$  M DA (Scan rate =  $25 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ). ....263

Figure 7.5: (a) Typical Nyquist plot of the bare EPPGE (i), EPPGE-SWCNT (ii), EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe (iii), and EPPGE-SWCNT- $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  (iv) obtained in 0.1 M PBS containing  $2 \times 10^{-4}$  M DA (biased at 0.2 V), between 10 KHz and 0.1 Hz, and

- (b) Equivalent circuit model used in fitting the spectra obtained in Figure 7.5 (a). .....264
- Figure 7.6: (a) Cyclic voltammetric evolutions of EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> obtained in 0.1 M PBS containing 2 x 10<sup>-4</sup> M DA at scan rates 25 to 1000 mV s<sup>-1</sup> (inner to outer). (b) Plot of I<sub>p</sub> vs. v<sup>1/2</sup> for both anodic and cathodic process. ...269
- Figure 7.7: Square wave voltammetric evolutions of the EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in 0.1 M PBS solution containing different concentrations of DA (i–viii represent 0.00, 3.23, 6.25, 9.09, 11.76, 14.30, 18.92, and 31.82 μM, respectively). Inset is the plot of current vs. concentration of DA...270
- Figure 7.8: Typical square wave voltammograms responses of EPPGE-SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in (i) 1 mM AA alone, and mixture of (ii) 33.3 μM DA / 0.83 mM AA, (iii) 46.2 μM DA / 0.77 mM AA, and (iv) 88.9 μM DA / 0.56 mM AA in PBS pH 7.0. ....275
- Figure 7.9: TEM images of (a) MWCNT-Fe (b) MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. (c) and (d) HRSEM picture of MWCNT-Fe and MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> respectively.....277
- Figure 7.10: XRD spectrum of Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles. Inset is the XRD spectrum of Fe nanoparticles.....278
- Figure 7.11: EDX profiles of MWCNT-Fe and MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> respectively. ....279
- Figure 7.12: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the bare and Fe/Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> modified electrodes in (a) 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup>/[Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> in pH 7.0 PBS and (b) 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS (scan rate = 50 mVs<sup>-1</sup>).....281
- Figure 7.13: (a) Typical Nyquist plots obtained for some of the MWCNT modified electrodes in 5 mM [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>4-</sup> / [Fe(CN)<sub>6</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> solution at a fixed potential of 0.2 V (vs Ag|AgCl, sat'd KCl). (b) is the circuit used in the fitting of the EIS data in (a). ....282
- Figure 7.14: Comparative current response (after background current subtraction) of the electrodes: (i) EPPGE, (ii) EPPGE-MWCNT, (iii) EPPGE-Fe, (iv) EPPGE-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, (v) EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe, and (vi) EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in 2x10<sup>-4</sup> M DA solution in pH 7.0 PBS (scan rate = 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>).....285

- Figure 7.15: Cyclic voltammetric evolutions of EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> obtained in 0.1 M PBS containing 2 x 10<sup>-4</sup> M DA (scan rate range 25 – 1000 mVs<sup>-1</sup>; inner to outer). .....286
- Figure 7.16: Typical Nyquist plots obtained for some of the MWCNT modified electrodes in 2 x 10<sup>-4</sup> M DA solution at a fixed potential of 0.2 V. Inset is the Randles circuit model used in fitting the data. ....287
- Figure 7.17: Square wave voltammetric evolutions of the EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in 0.1 M PBS pH 7.0 containing different concentration of DA (6.25, 11.8, 14.7, 21.1, 23.1 and 27.0 μM). .....290
- Figure 7.18: Typical square wave voltammograms responses of EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in (i) 1 mM AA alone, and mixture of (ii) 4.76 μM DA and 0.95 mM AA, (iii) 9.09 μM DA and 0.91 mM AA, (iv) 13.04 μM DA and 0.87 mM AA, (v) 20.0 μM DA and 0.8 mM AA, (vi) 25.93 μM DA and 0.74 mM AA, and (vii) 28.57 μM DA and 0.71 mM AA in PBS pH 7.0. ....292
- Figure 8.1: Typical TEM images of (a) PB and (b) SWCNT-PB nanoparticles. (c) and (d) are the AFM topography image and the cross section of the SWCNT-PB showing the particle size distribution in nano dimensions. ....300
- Figure 8.2: UV/VIS spectra of Prussian blue (PB), SWCNT-PABS and SWCNT-PB. ....301
- Figure 8.3: Typical cyclic voltammograms of (a) EPPGE (i), EPPGE-SWCNT-PABS (ii) and EPPGE-SWCNT-PB (iii) in 0.1 M KCl electrolyte (scan rate: 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>). (b) is the cyclic voltammogram showing the electrochemical stability of EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB modified electrode (50 cycles) in pH 7.0 PBS containing 0.1 M KCl electrolytes (scan rate: 100 mVs<sup>-1</sup>). ....304
- Figure 8.4: Cyclic voltammograms showing the current responses (background subtracted) of (a) (i) bare EPPGE, (ii) EPPGE-SWCNT-PABS, (iii) EPPGE-PB and (iv) EPPGE-SWCNT-PB in 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS containing 2 x10<sup>-4</sup> M DA (scan rate: 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>). (b) (i) EPPGE-SWCNT-PB, (ii) EPPGE-SWCNT-2PB and (iii) EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS containing 2 x10<sup>-4</sup> M DA (scan rate: 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup>). ....306



- Figure 8.5: (a) Typical Nyquist plots obtained for (i) EPPGE-SWCNT-PB, (ii) EPPGE-SWCNT-2PB and (iii) EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS containing  $2 \times 10^{-4}$  M DA. (b) is the Bodes plot of  $-\text{phase angle}$  versus  $\log f$ , and  $\log |Z/\Omega|$  versus  $\log f$  for the electrodes in (a) above. .... 309
- Figure 8.6: (a) Cyclic voltammogram showing the current response of EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB electrodes in 0.1 M PBS solution containing  $2 \times 10^{-4}$  M DA (scan rate: 25 to 1000  $\text{mVs}^{-1}$ ). (b) plot of  $I_p$  vs  $v^{1/2}$  (c) a RDE voltammograms obtained for the EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in 0.1 M PBS solution containing  $2 \times 10^{-4}$  M DA (rotating disc speed: 100 to 2900 rpm) (d) is the plot of  $I_p^{-1}$  vs.  $\omega^{-1/2}$ . Inset in (d) is the plot of  $E/V$  versus  $\log [i \times i_L/i_L - i]$ ..... 311
- Figure 8.7: (a) Square wave voltammograms evolution of the EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in 0.1 M PBS solution containing different concentrations of DA (0.0, 6.5, 12.5, 18.2, 23.5, 28.6, 33.3, 42.1 and 50.0  $\mu\text{M}$  (inner to outer; i – ix). (b) Linear sweep voltammogram responses of the EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in 0.1 M PBS solution containing different concentrations of DA (0.00, 18.2, 28.6, 37.8, 50, 60.5, 66.7, 72.3  $\mu\text{M}$  (inner to outer; i – viii). ..... 315
- Figure 8.8: Typical square wave voltammograms responses of EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB in (i) 0.1 M pH 7.0 PBS, (ii) 10 mM AA alone, and mixture of (iii) 9.1  $\mu\text{M}$  DA / 9.1 mM AA, (iv) 16.7  $\mu\text{M}$  DA / 8.3 mM AA, (v) 23.1  $\mu\text{M}$  DA / 7.7 mM AA, (vi) 28.6  $\mu\text{M}$  DA/7.1 mM AA, (vii) 33.3  $\mu\text{M}$  DA/6.7 mM AA and (viii) 41.2  $\mu\text{M}$  DA/5.9 mM AA in PBS pH 7.0. .... 318
- Figure 9.1: TEM of (a) Prussian blue (PB) nanoparticles (b) SWCNT-PB nanocomposite..... 323
- Figure 9.2: FTIR spectra of (i) SWCNT-PABS and (ii) SWCNT-PB nanocomposite. .... 324
- Figure 9.3: XPS spectrum of SWCNT-PB showing the presence of  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ions the PB nanoparticles. Inset is the XPS spectrum indicating clearly the Fe peaks and the dominance of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  peak over  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$  peak. .... 325
- Figure 9.4: EDX spectra of (a) SWCNT-PABS and (b) SWCNT-PB nanocomposites. .... 326
- Figure 9.5: (a) Cyclic voltammograms showing the current responses of the electrodes modified with and without

$10^{-4}$  M PB Prussian blue in 0.1 M KCl within the potential range of -0.4 to 1.2 V. Scan rate:  $25 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$ . (b) Current response of the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB electrode (30 scans) in (a) 0.1 M KCl electrolyte. ....328

Figure 9.6: Comparative current response (after background current subtraction) of the modified electrodes in (a)  $10^{-4}$  M DEAET in pH 9.4 PBS and (b) 0.1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution containing  $10^{-3}$  M hydrazine, (c)  $10^{-3}$  M  $\text{NO}_2^-$  at pH 7.4 and (d)  $10^{-3}$  M NO at pH 3.0 PBS (Scan rate:  $25 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$ ).....330

Figure 9.7: (a) Nyquist plots for the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB electrode in (i) 0.1 M pH 9.4 PBS containing  $10^{-4}$  M DEAET, (ii) 0.1 M pH 3.0 PBS containing  $10^{-3}$  M NO, (iii) 0.1 M pH 7.4 PBS containing  $10^{-3}$  M  $\text{NO}_2^-$ , (iv) 0.1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution containing  $10^{-3}$  M hydrazine. (b) is the circuit diagram used in the fitting of the impedance data in (a). .....332

Figure 9.8: Current response of the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB electrode in (a) 0.1 M pH 9.4 PBS containing  $10^{-4}$  M DEAET (scan rates between 25 and  $1200 \text{ mVs}^{-1}$ , from inner to outer). (b) Plots of  $E_p$  vs  $\log v$  for (I) DEAET and (II) Hydrazine. (c) Current function plots ( $I_p/v$  vs  $v$ ).....335

Figure 9.9: Typical chronoamperogram of EPPGE-SWCNT-PB in (a) 0.1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution containing different concentrations of hydrazine (0.0, 47.6, 90.9, 130.0, 167.0, 231.0, and 286.0  $\mu\text{M}$  (i to vii)). Inset represents the plots of  $I_{\text{cat}} / I_{\text{buff}}$  vs  $t^{1/2}$  obtained from the chronoamperometric evolutions (i-vi correspond to 47.6, 90.9, 130.0, 167.0, 231.0 and 286.0  $\mu\text{M}$ , respectively). (b) pH 9.4 PBS containing different concentrations of DEAET (0.0, 16.7, 23.1, 28.6, 31.0 and 33.3  $\mu\text{M}$  (i to vi)). Inset represents the plots of  $I_{\text{cat}} / I_{\text{buff}}$  vs  $t^{1/2}$  obtained from the chronoamperometric evolutions (i-v correspond to 16.7, 23.1, 28.6, 31.0 and 33.3  $\mu\text{M}$  respectively).....337

Figure 9.10: Typical linear sweep voltammograms of EPPGE-SWCNT-PB in (a) 0.1 M pH 9.4 PBS containing different concentrations of DEAET (0.0, 20.0, 28.6, 31.0, 33.3, 35.5, 37.5 and 41.2  $\mu\text{M}$  (i) – (viii)). Inset in (a) represents the plot of peak current vs DEAET concentrations. (b) 0.1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution containing different concentrations of hydrazine (0.0, 47.6, 90.9, 130.0, 167.0, 200 and 231 mM (i to vii)). Inset in (b) is



- the plot of peak current vs hydrazine concentrations.  
..... 339
- Figure 10.1: EDX spectra of (a) SWCNT-NiO, (b) SWCNT-Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and (c) SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> ..... 344
- Figure 10.2: XPS spectra of (a) SWCNT-NiO, (b) SWCNT-Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and (c) SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>..... 346
- Figure 10.3: FESEM images of (a) SWCNT-NiO (b) SWCNT-Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and (c) SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>..... 347
- Figure 10.4: Comparative CVs showing the capacitive behaviour of: BPPGE, BPPGE-SWCNT, BPPGE-SWCNT-NiO, BPPGE-SWCNT-Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and BPPGE-SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in (a) 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and (b) 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes. Scan rate = 25 mVs<sup>-1</sup> ..... 349
- Figure 10.5: Typical examples of comparative galvanostatic charge discharge plot of the metal oxide SWCNTs/nanocomposite modified electrodes at an applied current density of 0.1 mAcm<sup>-2</sup> in (a) 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and (b) 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolyte..... 352
- Figure 10.6: shows the effect of cycle number (1000) or cycle life on stability of BPPGE-SWCNT-NiO electrode in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes. Inset is the typical examples of some of the charge-discharge curve (1000 cycles) for the BPPGE-SWCNT-NiO electrode in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes..... 355
- Figure 10.7: Typical Nyquist plots of (i) BPPGE-SWCNT-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, (ii) BPPGE-SWCNT-NiO and (iii) BPPGE-SWCNT-Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> electrodes in (a) 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and (b) 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous solutions at a fixed potential of 0.30 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl..... 356
- Figure 10.8: Cyclic voltammograms obtained for symmetry (a) and (b); and asymmetry (c) and (d) MWCNT-NiO based supercapacitor (two-electrode cell) in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolyte respectively at scan rate 5, 25, 50, 100, 200, 300, 400 and 500 mVs<sup>-1</sup> (a-h, inner to outer); mass of each electrode, 1.4 mg. .... 361
- Figure 10.9: Typical Nyquist plots obtained for symmetry: (i) MWCNT-NiO|H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>|MWCNT-NiO, (ii) MWCNT-NiO|Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>|MWCNT-NiO; and the asymmetry: (iii) MWCNT-NiO|H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>|MWCNT,(iv) MWCNT-

NiO|Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>|MWCNT supercapacitors at a fixed potential of 0.55 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. Figure 10.9b-d is the circuit used for fitting the impedance data in (a). Circuit 10.9b fitted impedance data obtained for the symmetry assembly in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, while circuit 10.9c fitted the impedance data for the asymmetry assembly in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Circuit 10.9d fitted impedance data for asymmetry assembly in 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> ..... 365

Figure 10.10: Typical examples of galvanostatic charge discharge profile of the symmetry MWCNT-NiO based supercapacitor (two-electrode cell) in (a) 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and (b) 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes, at an applied current density of 0.25 mAcm<sup>-2</sup>. ..... 368

Figure 10.11: Typical examples of galvanostatic charge discharge profile of the asymmetry MWCNT-NiO bases supercapacitor (two-electrode cell) in (a) 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and (b) 1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes, at an applied current density of 0.25 mAcm<sup>-2</sup>. ..... 369

Figure 10.12: Cyclic life (1000 cycles) of the symmetry MWCNT-NiO|H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>|MWCNT supercapacitor showing the stability in 1 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> aqueous electrolytes. Inset is the section of the charge-discharge curves obtained for the cell at applied current density of 2.5 mAcm<sup>2</sup>. ..... 370

## LIST OF SCHEMES

Scheme 1.1: Schematic diagram showing electrocatalytic process at modified electrode. ....	30
Scheme 2.1: Procedures for the synthesis of NiO nanoparticles..	115
Scheme 2.2: Procedure for the metal and metal oxide nanoparticles modified electrodes.....	121
Scheme 2.3: Procedures for electrode modification with Prussian blue (PB) nanoparticles. ....	123
Scheme 2.4: Procedure for electrode modification with synthesized metal (M) and metal oxides (MO) nanoparticles....	124
Scheme 7.1: Schematic of electrode modification process. ....	257

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Electrocatalytic oxidation of some analytes on nickel and nickel oxide modified electrode.....	48
Table 1.2: Electrocatalytic oxidation of some analytes on iron and iron oxide modified electrode. ....	52
Table 1.3: Electrocatalytic oxidation of some analytes on cobalt and cobalt oxide modified electrode. ....	56
Table 3.1: Impedance data ( $E_{1/2} = 0.6V$ ) for the electrocatalytic oxidation of $10^{-3}$ M Hydrazine (between 10 kHz and 0.1 Hz) on the modified and unmodified EPPGE-electrodes. All values were obtained from the fitted impedance spectra after several iterations using the circuits. Note that the values in parentheses are errors of data fitting. ....	144
Table 3.2: Comparative analytical data for the detection of hydrazine at chemically modified electrodes.....	155
Table 4.1: Impedance data obtained for the modified electrodes in 5mM $[Fe(CN)_6]^{4-}/[Fe(CN)_6]^{3-}$ solution (PBS pH 7.0) at 0.30V vs. Ag AgCl sat'd KCl. All values were obtained from the fitted impedance spectra after several iterations using the circuits. Note that the values in parentheses are errors of data fitting. ....	177
Table 4.2: Comparative analytical data for the detection of DEAET at chemically modified electrodes .....	186
Table 5.1: Impedance data obtained for the bare EPPGE and the modified electrodes in 5 mM $Fe(CN)_6]^{4-}/[Fe(CN)_6]^{3-}$ solution at 0.2 V (vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). ....	200
Table 5.2: Comparative analytical data for the detection of DEAET and hydrazine at chemically modified electrodes.....	214
Table 6.1: Impedance data obtained for the EPPGE modified electrodes in 5 mM $[Fe(CN)_6]^{4-} / [Fe(CN)_6]^{3-}$ solution (PBS pH 7.0) at 0.30 V vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl. ....	228
Table 6.2: Impedance data obtained for the modified EPPGE-SWCNT-Co electrodes in $10^{-3}$ M $NO_2^-$ (in PBS pH 7.4 and 3.0) at 0.80 V vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl.....	233

Table 6.3: Impedance data obtained for EPPGE, EPPGE-Co and EPPGE-Co <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> electrodes in 5 mM Fe(CN) <sub>6</sub> <sup>4-</sup> /[Fe(CN) <sub>6</sub> ] <sup>3-</sup> solution at 0.2 V (vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	246
Table 6.4: Impedance data obtained for some of the electrodes in 1.0 mM NO <sub>2</sub> <sup>-</sup> (in PBS pH 7.4 at 0.80 V vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	249
Table 7.1: Impedance data obtained for the electrodes in 2 x 10 <sup>-4</sup> M DA solution in pH 7.0 PBS (at 0.2 V vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	265
Table 7.2: Voltammetric response for dopamine using various modified electrodes.....	272
Table 7.3: Determination of dopamine content in dopamine hydrochloride injections (40 mg mL <sup>-1</sup> ), n =5 (at 95% confidence limit).....	276
Table 7.4: Impedance data obtained for the bare and the MWCNT modified EPPGE electrodes in 5 mM Fe(CN) <sub>6</sub> <sup>4-</sup> /[Fe(CN) <sub>6</sub> ] <sup>3-</sup> solution at 0.2 V (vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	283
Table 7.5: Impedance data obtained for the bare and the modified EPPGE electrodes in 2 x 10 <sup>-4</sup> M DA in pH 7.0 PBS at 0.2 V (vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	288
Table 7.6: Determination of dopamine content in dopamine hydrochloride injections (40 mg mL <sup>-1</sup> ), n =5 (at 95% confidence limit) using EPPGE-MWCNT-Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> electrode. ....	293
Table 8.1: Impedance data obtained for the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB modified electrodes (at different deposition cycles) in 0.1M pH 7.0 PBS containing 2 x 10 <sup>-4</sup> M DA (E <sub>1/2</sub> = 0.2 V vs Ag AgCl sat'd KCl). .....	308
Table 8.2: Voltammetric response for dopamine using various modified electrodes.....	316
Table 8.3: Determination of dopamine content in dopamine hydrochloride injections (40 mg mL <sup>-1</sup> ), n =5 (at 95% confidence limit) using EPPGE-SWCNT-3PB modified electrode. ....	319

Table 9.1: Electrocatalytic and electroanalytical parameters of the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB towards the detection of DEAET, hydrazine and nitrite. The values in parentheses are values obtained from the linear sweep voltammetry. 331

Table 9.2: Impedance data obtained for the EPPGE-SWCNT-PB modified electrodes in  $10^{-4}$  M DEAET (in PBS 9.4, at 0.60 V) and  $10^{-3}$  M hydrazine in 0.1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution at 0.68 V. ....334

Table 10.1: Supercapacitive properties of the MO nanoparticles integrated with SWCNTs determined using cyclic voltammetry and galvanostatic discharge methods.....351

Table 10.2: Impedance data obtained for MO nanocomposite modified electrodes in 1 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  and 1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  electrolytes at a fixed potential of 0.30 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl.....358

Table 10.3: Specific capacitance ( $\text{mFcm}^{-2}$ ) for the symmetric and asymmetric MWCNT-NiO based supercapacitor (two-electrode cell) in 1 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  and 1 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  aqueous electrolyte respectively. Values in parenthesis are the specific capacitance in F/g. ....363

Table 10.4: Impedance data obtained for the symmetry and asymmetry MWCNT-NiO nanocomposite based supercapacitor (two-electrode cell) in 1.0 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  and 1.0 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$  electrolytes at a fixed potential of 0.55 V vs Ag|AgCl sat'd KCl. ....366