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DESCRIPTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The field of the invention relates to a coating method for the preparation of a separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles for use in an electrochemical cell, an electrochemical cell comprising such a separator and the use of such an electrochemical cell.

Background of the Invention

[0002] Beyond consumer electronics, Li-ion batteries are growing in popularity for stationary applications as storage of renewable energy, grid levelling, solar, large hybrid diesel engines, military, hybrid electric vehicles (HEV-s), and aerospace applications due to their high energy density.

[0003] A separator is a critical component within an electrochemical cell, especially for safety issues and life time. The separator absorbs the electrolyte so that it is filled with the electrolyte. It thereby allows the ionic conduction through the liquid electrolyte while keeping the positive and negative electrode separate. In order to improve the electrochemical cell's performance the used separator has to fulfil various requirements: mechanical stability, high thermal stability, zero shrinkage, porosity, in some instances ionic conductivity, etc. The quality of the separator will influence the characteristics of the separator electrochemical cell interface, internal resistance, and effectively influence the electrochemical cell's capacity, charge/discharge cycling capabilities, charge/discharge current density, and various electrical properties.

[0004] For large-scale (high energy and high power) electrochemical cells, safety issues are a critical challenge and for this reason the electrochemical cell manufacturers focus on improving manufacturing methods and increasing safety. Nowadays, the demand for high energy and high power electrochemical cells is rising rapidly. To generate such high current capacity and current density without disrupting the high-voltage capability, the separator must be mechanically stable and possess higher porosity than those in traditional batteries for consumer applications. Furthermore, the separator must be thermally stable at high temperatures in order to produce a stable, high-powered electrochemical cell.

[0005] Separators of the state of the art are usually single layer or multilayer polyolefin based separators. Alternatively, the separator may be produced with direct coating of ceramic particles with a binder polymer on the surface of the porous substrate.

[0006] Ceramic and/or glass particles may also be coated directly on the electrode surface, as for example disclosed in WO 2005/076388.

[0007] Commercially available polyolefin separators do not readily absorb the electrolyte solvents with high dielectric constants, such as ethylene carbonate (EC), and propylene carbonate (PC), because of their hydrophobic surfaces with low surface energy, and they have poor ability to retain the electrolyte solutions. In addition, the solvent leakage from the interfaces between the electrodes or the opposite sides of current collectors often causes the deterioration of the cycle life of electrochemical cells. Conventional separators of the state of the art usually shrink during heat generation.

[0008] The patent US 8,216,722 discloses a battery comprising a separator which in turn comprises a first, second and possibly third phase intermixed with one another, wherein the second phase comprises ionically conductive particles, such as ceramic particles, glass particles, glass-ceramic particles, and mixtures thereof. There is only one layer of the separator and the separator is substantially non-porous and solid-state.

[0009] The US patent application No. 2006/057464 A1 describes a phase inversion method serving for the production of a nanoparticle-filled polymer electrolyte. The electrolyte comprises silica nanoparticles and the electrolyte is used to separate the anode and the cathode, in particular, polymer electrolyte can be interposed between an anode electrode and a cathode electrode in a lithium secondary battery to separate the two electrodes from each other. It is described that a predetermined amount of a nanoparticle inorganic filler having a particle diameter in a nanometer level is added to a specific polymer material and then, the mixture is dissolved in a solvent to obtain a slurry. Then, the obtained slurry is cast and immediately after the casting, the cast material is impregnated with a non-solvent to obtain a porous polymer electrolyte having highly developed pores on a surface of the membrane and in the membrane. The highly porous polymer electrolyte is produced using a phase inversion method.

Object of the Invention

[0010] The problem to be solved by the present invention is the provision of a method for the preparation of a separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles with controlled uniform porosity, improved wettability, electrochemical stability and safety for use in an electrochemical cell, and the provision of an electrochemical cell comprising such a separator.

[0011] The features as contained in the independent claims solve the problem, with advantageous embodiments being described by the features as contained in the dependent patent claims.

Description of the Invention

[0012] Provided is a coating method for the preparation of a separator according to claim 1 comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles, wherein the method comprises the steps of providing a mixture of an organic polymeric material, glass and ceramic particles and at least one solvent; and preparing a multilayer by phase inversion for use in an electrochemical cell.

[0013] The separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles may be deposited in a single step. That means that both steps of the method are performed together and no further steps are necessary.

[0014] The coating method by phase inversion allows the production of the separator under controlled conditions, which allows better processing control.

[0015] The method also allows a controlled uniform porosity of the separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles. The improved and controlled separator porosity leads to enhanced power capability. Thus, the performance of the electrochemical cell is enhanced. The improved separator porosity also leads to a better ion (e. g. Li-ion) diffusion through the separator. If the porosity is not appropriate, the Li-ions are limited in their diffusion, so the impedance will increase and the electrochemical performances (especially the C-rate) will decrease. It is important that the porosity is not too low and not too high. The porosity has to be high enough to hold a sufficient amount of electrolyte so that the ions can move easily between the electrodes. Uniform distribution of the pores is important for a uniform current distribution throughout the separator.

[0016] The increased impedance due to non-uniform distribution of the pores (leading to non-uniform current distribution throughout the separator) would also lead to more heat generation on the cell which in turn can lead to higher swelling. Thus, uniform distribution of the pores is advantageous for controlled swelling.

[0017] With the multilayer structure comprising glass and ceramic particles, soft shorts in the electrochemical cell are avoided or delocalized on the single particles. Therefore, the multilayer structure leads to an enhanced electrochemical cell safety and protects the electrochemical cell from thermal runaway.

[0018] The wettability is also improved. The improved wettability means that the separator wets easily with the electrolyte and retains the electrolyte in the separator.

[0019] The separators comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles produced by the disclosed method show zero shrinkage during heat generation. The separators are also electrochemically stable against the electrolyte and electrode materials. This electrochemical stability is especially important under the oxidative and reductive conditions when the electrochemical cell is fully charged. The separators are also mechanically stable in the separator processing during the electrochemical cell assembly.

[0020] The separators comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles have a controlled structure due to the different boiling point (volatility) of the different solvents.

[0021] The glass and ceramic particles comprise 5-95% of the mixture of organic polymeric material, glass and ceramic particles and at least one solvent. The organic polymeric material comprises 5-95% of the mixture.

[0022] The organic polymeric material may be selected from the group comprising poly(vinylidene fluoride)-hexafluoropropene (PVDF-HFP), polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF), PTFE, polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), polypropylene (PP), polyacrylic acid (PAA), polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP), water based PVDF, acrylate, polyacrylate, styrene butadiene rubber (SBR), natural and synthetic rubbers, latex, OPPANOL®, polyethylene (PE), ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer (EVA), polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), and mixtures thereof.

[0023] The glass and ceramic particles can be different in size, morphology, texture, shape and surface area (BET), which enhances the ability to produce separators tailored for various applications in order to control the safety, flexibility, porosity, tortuosity and wettability of the separator. The glass particles can be out of any glass material. The ceramic particles are made of a material selected from the group comprising lithium aluminium titanium phosphate $\text{Li}_x\text{Al}_y\text{Ti}_z(\text{PO}_4)_3$ where $1 \leq x \leq 2$, $0 \leq y \leq 1$ and $1 \leq z \leq 2$, nano-sized alumina (Al_2O_3), ZrO_2 , SiC , LiAlO_2 , SnO_2 or BaTiO_3 . The glass and ceramic particles are embedded in the organic polymeric material.

[0024] The glass and/or ceramic particles can be ionic conductive and/or non ionic conductive particles.

[0025] The at least one solvent is selected from the group comprising tetrahydrofuran (THF), acetone, ethanol, acetic acid, dimethyl acetamide (DMAC), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), hexamethyl phosphoramide (HMPA), N-methylpyrrolidone (NMP), triethyl phosphate (TEP), trimethyl phosphate (TMP), tetramethyl urea (TMU), butanone, propylene carbonate (PC), butanol water, silanole, silandiole, ethylene glycol monohexyl ether, N,N-dimethyl ethanolamine, isopropyl alcohol, toluene, normal butyl alcohol, maleic anhydride, xylene, and mixtures thereof. At least one solvent means that the phase inversion is performed with mixed solvents. Therefore, at least one solvent is necessary.

[0026] The coated method may also involve that an adhesion additive is added to the mixture. The adhesion additive may be selected from the group comprising urethane and resins.

[0027] The adhesion additives may enhance the adhesion between the organic polymeric material and the glass and ceramic particles.

[0028] The separator is intended for use in an electrochemical cell. An electrochemical cell (or battery) within the meaning of the present disclosure may be a primary cell or a secondary cell (i. e. an accumulator). The electrochemical cells may be stacked or wound. In one

embodiment, the electrochemical cell may be a Li accumulator. The coated method according to the present disclosure also comprises that the separator is used in a large-scale electrochemical cell.

[0029] However, the separator of the present disclosure may be used with any type of electrochemical cell and a person skilled in the art may adapt the properties of the separator to different applications, i. e. to the size and material of the electrochemical cells used.

[0030] The separator produced by the method according to the present disclosure is cost saving because expensive organic solvents can be partly replaced by inorganic or less expensive organic solvents. In addition, the separator is cost saving because it at least partly comprises glass particles which are less expensive than other particles, i. e. ceramic particles.

[0031] An electrochemical cell is also provided which comprises an electrochemical cell electrolyte, an anode, a cathode and a separator, wherein the separator is prepared by the coating method disclosed above.

[0032] An electrochemical cell with a separator prepared by the disclosed method shows high safety with a high tolerance towards overcharge and over-discharge. The safety level is comparable with electrochemical cells comprising only ceramic particles. However, replacing some or all of the ceramic particles by glass particles makes the electrochemical cells lighter. As a consequence, the electrochemical cells have a higher gravimetric and volumetric energy density.

[0033] A use of an electrochemical cell as disclosed above is also provided. The anode material may be selected from the group comprising graphite, or other carbon based materials, Si, or composites comprising Si, $\text{Li}_4\text{Ti}_5\text{O}_{12}$, $\text{Li}_2\text{Ti}_3\text{O}_7$, Li_xTiO_2 (where $0 \leq x \leq 1$), TiO_2 , $\text{TiO}_2(\text{OH})_x$ (where $x \geq 1$) and mixtures thereof.

[0034] The invention is, however, not limited to the above materials and any electrode or electrolyte material known can be used with the present disclosure.

[0035] The electrochemical cell may be used in consumer electronics, stationary applications as storage of renewable energy, grid levelling, solar, large hybrid diesel engines, military, hybrid electric vehicles (HEV-s), and aerospace applications. It is to be understood that the present disclosure also comprises any other suitable application. The applications may depend on the size and the energy density of the electrochemical cell. Small- and large-scale (in terms of energy and power) electrochemical cells are comprised by the present disclosure. The small Li-ion format cells are used for consumer applications and as a single cell show a maximal capacity of about 1.5 Ah. The large format cells (ESS-, Automotive- and other Industrial Application) show a capacity above 4 Ah. The capacity is strongly dependent on the type (power or energy) of the Li-ion cells.

[0036] Consumer electronics within the meaning of the present disclosure comprises but is

not limited to electronic equipment intended for everyday use, for example in entertainment, communications and office productivity. Electronic equipment comprises but is not limited to personal computers, telephones, MP3 players, audio equipment, televisions, calculators, GPS automotive electronics, digital cameras and players and recorders using video media such as DVDs, VCRs or camcorders.

[0037] The invention is defined by the claims and their equivalents. It will be understood that features of one aspect or embodiment of the invention can be combined with a feature of a different aspect or aspects and/or embodiments of the invention.

Summary of the Figures

[0038]

Fig. 1

Cross-section of an electrochemical cell comprising an anode, a cathode and a separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles.

Examples

[0039] Figure 1 shows a cross-section of an electrochemical cell. The electrochemical cell comprises a lithium titanate (LTO) anode, a nickel, manganese and cobalt (NMC) cathode and a separator comprising multiple layers of glass and ceramic particles in between the anode and the cathode which was produced by the method according to the present disclosure. The ceramic particles are visible in the separator structure.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- [WO2005076388A \[0006\]](#)

- US8216722B [0008]
- US2006057464A1 [0009]

PATENTKRAV

1. Coatingfremgangsmåde til fremstilling af en porøs separator, der omfatter flere lag, hvor hvert lag omfatter både glaspartikler og keramiske partikler, hvor fremgangsmåden omfatter følgende trin

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- tilvejebringelse af en blanding af et organisk polymermateriale af både glaspartikler og keramiske partikler og mindst to opløsningsmidler, hvor glaspartiklerne og de keramiske partikler omfatter 5-95% af blandingen, hvor det organiske polymermateriale omfatter 5-95% af blandingen og er valgt fra gruppen omfattende poly(vinylidenfluorid)-hexafluorpropen (PVDF-HFP), polyvinylidenfluorid (PVDF), PTFE, polymethylmethacrylat (PMMA), polypropylen (PP), polyacrylsyre (PAA), polyvinylpyrrolidon (PVP), vandbaseret PVDF, acrylat, polyacrylat, styrenbutadiengummi (SBR), naturlige og syntetiske gummier, latex, OPPANOL®, polyethylen (PE), ethylen-vinylacetat-copolymer (EVA), polyvinylalkohol (PVA) og blandinger deraf, hvor de keramiske partikler er fremstillet af et materiale valgt fra gruppen omfattende lithialuminiumtitanphosphat $\text{Li}_x\text{Al}_y\text{Ti}_z(\text{PO}_4)_3$, hvor $1 \leq x \leq 2$, $0 \leq y \leq 1$, og $1 \leq z \leq 2$, aluminiumoxid (Al_2O_3) af nano-størrelse, ZrO_2 , SiC , LiAlO_2 , SnO_2 eller BaTiO_3 , hvor opløsningsmidlet er valgt fra gruppen omfattende tetrahydrofuran (THF), acetone, ethanol, eddikesyre, dimethylacetamid (DMAC), dimethylsulfoxid (DMSO), hexamethylphosphoramid (HMPA), N-methylpyrrolidon (NMP), triethylphosphat (TEP), trimethylphosphat (TMP), tetramethylurinstof (TMU), butanon, propylencarbonat (PC), butanolvand, silanol, silandiol, ethylenglycolmonoheylether, N,N-dimethylethanolamin, isopropylalkohol, toluen, normal butylalkohol, maleinsyreanhydrid, xylene og blandinger deraf og

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- fremstilling af et multilag ved faseinversion.

2. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, hvor den separator, der omfatter flere lag af både glaspartikler og keramiske partikler, deponeres i et enkelt trin.

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3. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1 eller 2, hvor glaspartiklerne og/eller de keramiske partikler er ionledende og/eller ikke-ionledende partikler.

4. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 3, hvor et adhæsionsadditiv tilsættes til blandingen.
5. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 4, hvor adhæsionsadditivet er valgt fra gruppen omfattende urethan og resiner.
6. Elektrokemisk celle, der omfatter en elektrokemisk celleelektrolyt, en anode, en katode og en separator, hvor separatoren fremstilles ved fremgangsmåden ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 5.
7. Elektrokemisk celle ifølge krav 6, hvor den elektrokemiske celle er en elektrokemisk celle i storskala.
8. Elektrokemisk celle ifølge krav 6, hvor anodematerialet er valgt fra gruppen omfattende grafit eller andre carbonbaserede materialer, Si eller kompositter omfattende Si, $\text{Li}_4\text{Ti}_5\text{O}_{12}$, $\text{Li}_2\text{Ti}_3\text{O}_7$, Li_xTiO_2 (hvor $0 \leq x \leq 1$), TiO_2 , $\text{TiO}_2(\text{OH})_x$ (hvor $x \geq 1$) og blandinger deraf.
9. Anvendelse af en elektrokemisk celle ifølge krav 6 i forbrugerelektronik, stationære anvendelser som lagring af vedvarende energi, netnivellering, solenergi, store hybrid-dieselmotorer, militær, hybride elektriske køretøjer (HEV'er) og rumfartsanvendelser.

DRAWINGS

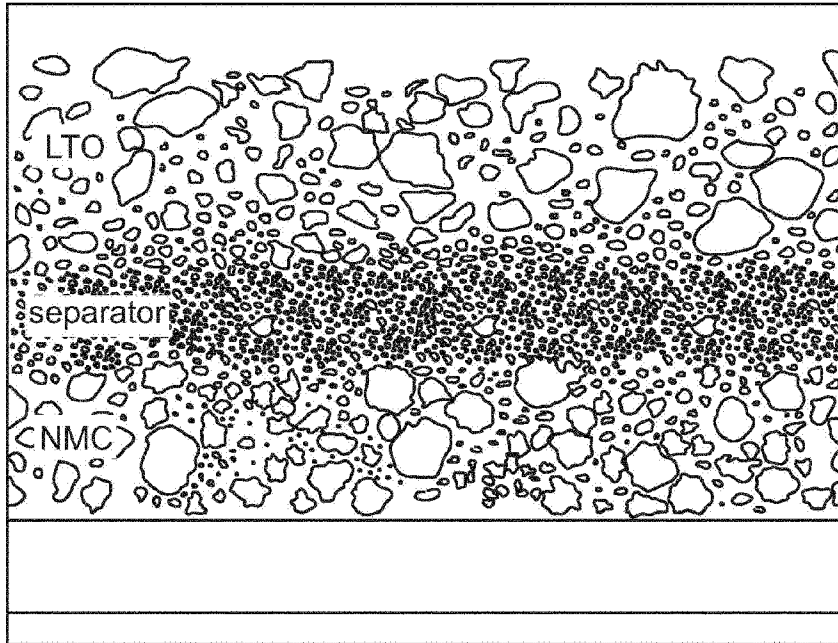


Fig. 1