

One Pot Multicomponent Green Synthesis of Triaryl Imidazoles Catalysed by Nano Nickel Cobalt Ferrite

KORUPOLU RAGHU BABU, SRIVIDHYA MARIPI,
SURI BABU MADASU* and NOOKA RATNAM APPNA

Department of Engineering Chemistry, A. U. College of Engineering (A),
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam - 530 003, Andhra Pradesh, India
suribabumadasu@yahoo.co.in

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Abstract: 2,4,5-Triaryl imidazoles have been developed by the reaction of benzil, ammonium acetate and aldehydes in ethanol using magnetically reusable nano nickel cobalt ferrite (NiCoFe₂O₄). It is a simple, highly efficient, three component one-pot green synthetic method. The advantages of this procedure are high product yields, easy operational method, mild conditions, magnetically recoverable and re-usable catalyst. Most important to all, the catalyst can be recovered by simple filtration and reusable up to five cycles without losing its catalytic activity.

Keywords: Multi component reaction, Heterogeneous catalyst, Nickel cobalt ferrites, One pot synthesis, 2,4,5-Tri substituted imidazoles

Introduction

A multicomponent reaction (MCR) is a process in which three or more easily accessible components are combined together in a single reaction vessel to produce a final product displaying features of all inputs and thus offers greater possibilities for molecular diversity per step with a minimum of synthetic time and effort. In spite of the significant useful attributes of MCRs for modern organic chemistry and their suitability for building up large compound libraries these reactions were of limited interest in the past fifty years. However, in the last decade, with the introduction of high-throughput biological screening, the importance of MCRs for drug discovery has been recognized and considerable efforts from both academic and industrial researchers have been focussed especially on the design and development of multi-component procedures for the generation of libraries of heterocyclic compounds. The advantages of MCR's are atom economy, less time consuming, easy purification process and avoid protection-deprotection steps. Therefore, the design and development of efficient and green MCRs focussed on a target molecule is one of the most important challenges in organic synthesis.

Imidazoles are a class of heterocyclic compounds that contain nitrogen hetero atom, these exhibits a wide range of biological activities in both *in vitro* and *in vivo*. In recent years, chemical and biological usefulness of tri substituted imidazoles have great applications in the field of pharmacological studies. A wide variety of biological properties have been found for imidazole derivatives such as therapeutic agent¹, herbicidal², antibacterial³, antitumor⁴, glucagon receptors⁵, fungicidal⁶, antithrombotic activity⁷. These are also act as inhibitors of P³⁸ MAP kinase⁸, B-Raf kinase⁹, transforming growth factor b1 (TGF-b1) type 1 activin receptor-like kinase (ALK5)¹⁰, cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2)¹¹ and biosynthesis of interleukin-1 (IL-1)¹². These are also used as modulators of *p*-glycoprotein (p-gp), mediated multi drug resistance (MDR)¹³ and pesticides¹⁴.

Poly substituted imidazoles were first synthesised in 1882 by using an aldehyde with 1, 2- dicarbonyl compound and ammonia (Radziszewski 1882)¹⁵. Afterwards, various methods have been developed for the synthesis of 2,4,5-trisubstituted imidazoles by using various catalysts such¹⁶ as Al₂O₃-ZrCl₄, NiCl₂.6H₂O, Zeolite Hy^{17,18}, InCl₃.3H₂O, DABCO^{19,20} and PEG-400²¹, acetic acid²², silica supported sulphuric acid²³, ceric ammonium nitrate²⁴, iodine²⁵, *L*-prolin²⁶ trichloro iso cyanuric acid^{27, 28, 29} Zr(acac)₄ and KH₂PO₄. According to literature survey, various synthetic protocols have been reported for the synthesis of substituted imidazoles using various type of copper containing catalyst such as synthesis of imidazoles through the Cu₂O catalysed cross-cyclo addition between two different isocyanides, synthesis of multi substituted imidazoles via CuI-catalysed [3+2]cyclo additions³⁰.

The above reported methods are having its own importance and virtues, however most of these methods require harmful catalysts, longer reaction time, poor yield, difficult work up and effluent pollution. Thus they were not appropriate for synthesis of structurally diverse imidazoles. Development of clean and highly yielding and environmentally benign approaches is still desirable and much in demand.

In recent years, magnetic nano particles have emerged as a useful group of heterogeneous catalysts. Separation of magnetic nano particles is simple and an attractive alternative to filtration as it prevents loss of catalyst and enhances reusability. The use of low cost and readily available species as catalyst plays a significant role for economic feasibility of the chemical process. The greener generation of nanoparticles and their eco-friendly applications in catalysis via magnetically recoverable and recyclable nano-catalysts for a variety of oxidation, reduction and condensation reactions³¹⁻³⁴, has made an incredible impact on the development of sustainable pathways. Magnetically recyclable nano catalysts and their use in benign media is an ideal merge for the development of sustainable methodologies in organic synthesis.

Due to the effective activity of magnetically separable nickel cobalt ferrite nano particles (NiCoFeNPs) have the advantages of recyclability, easy work-up and clean reaction profiles apart from the lack of necessity ligands and in minimizing the organic waste generation when compared to the conventional catalytic systems. As a part of our ongoing research towards the synthesis of biologically active heterocyclic compounds using magnetically separable nano catalysts, keeping environmental friendly methods in mind, here we report an efficient and simple work-up method for the synthesis of tri substituted imidazoles using magnetic separable nano nickel cobalt ferrite as heterogeneous catalyst under reflux conditions. The synthesised imidazole derivatives were characterised by IR, H¹ NMR and Mass spectral data.

Experimental

All the chemicals were purchased from Sigma Aldrich with purity not less than 99.9%. Analytical Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) was carried out by using silica gel 60 F254 pre-coated plates. Visualization was accomplished with UV lamp. All the products were characterized by their IR, ^1H NMR and Mass spectra. ^1H NMR was recorded on 300 MHz in $\text{CDCl}_3/\text{DMSO}$ and the chemical shifts were reported in parts per million (ppm, δ) downfield from the Tetramethyl silane (TMS).

General experimental procedure for synthesis of 2,4,5-tiarylimidazoles

Benzil (10 mmol), aromatic aldehyde (10 mmol), ammonium acetate (20 mmol) and nano nickel cobalt ferrite (20 mol %) were taken in a round bottomed flask and the contents are dissolved in 5 mL of ethanol. Then the reaction mixture was stirred for 20 min at reflux temperature. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC (*n*-hexane: ethyl acetate 4:1). After completion of the reaction the catalyst was separated from the reaction mixture by using an external magnet and then the reaction mixture was concentrated by evaporating solvent on a rotary evaporator. Then the dried product was recrystallized from hot ethanol for several times to get the corresponding pure product. The products were confirmed by IR, ^1H NMR and Mass spectras.

Spectral Data

2,4,5-Triphenyl -1-H-imidazole (4a)

White solid; M.P: 273-275 °C; ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ =7.95-7.36 (m, 15H), 9.31(brs, N-H), FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3453(N-H), 3060(C-H), 1657(C=C), 1576(C=N), ESI-MS (m/z): 297 (M^+ +1).

2-(4-Methyl phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4b)

White solid; M.P: 184-186 °C. ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 2.32 (s, CH₃), 7.12-7.63 (m, 10H), 7.75 (d, 2H, J=10 Hz), 7.32(d, 2H, J=10 Hz); FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3452 (N-H), 1605 (C=C), 1585 (C=N); ESI-MS (m/z): 311 (M^+ +1).

2-(4-Methoxy phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4c)

white solid; M.P: 222-224 °C; ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ =3.84 (S, 3H), 6.93-6.92 (d, J=8.8Hz, 2H), 7.52-7.23 (m, 10H), 7.82-7.80 (d, J=8.8Hz, 2H); FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3450 (N-H), 1612 (C=C), 1579 (C=N), 1385 (C-O); ESI-MS (m/z): 327 (M^+ +1).

2-(2-Methoxy phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4d)

White solid; M.P: 210-212 °C; ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ =11.81(s, 1H), 8.03 (d, J=7.5Hz, 1H), 7.50-7.01 (m, 13H), 3.92 (s, 3H); FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3430 (N-H), 1615 (C=C), 1580 (C=N), 1385 (C-O); ESI-MS(m/z): 327 (M^+ +1).

2-(4-Acetamido phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4e)

White solid; M.P: 220-222 °C; ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ =3.5 (s, 1H), 2,13 (s, 3H), 7.13 – 7.53 (m, 10H), 7.65 (d, 2H, J=10Hz), 7.22 (d, 2H, J=10 Hz); FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3450 (N-H), 1612 (C=C), 1579 (C=N), 1690 (C=O), 1610 (N-H def), 2920 (C-H), ESI-MS(m/z): 354 (M^+ +1).

2-(2-Hydroxy phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4f)

White solid; M.P: 117-119 °C ; ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ =12.62 (s, 1H), 8.03 (dd, 2H, J=8.7Hz), 7.59 (d, 2H, J=8Hz), 7.49 (s, 1H), 7.27-7.34 (m, 10H); FTIR (KBr, cm^{-1}): 3431 (N-H), 3300 (O-H), 3062 (=C-H), 1615 (C=C), 1580 (C=N), 1200 (C-O); ESI-MS(m/z): 313 (M^+ +1).

2-(4-Hydroxy, 3-methoxy phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4g)

White solid; M.P: 215-217 °C; ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ=12.50 (s, 1H), 9.11 (s, 1H), 7.46-7.54 (m, 6H), 7.42 (t, 2H), 7.35 (t, 1H), 7.25 (t, 2H), 7.21 (t, 1H), 7.01 (d, 1H), 3.80 (s, 3H); FTIR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3408 (N-H), 3260 (O-H), 1595 (C=C), 1510 (C=N); ESI-MS(*m/z*): 343 (M⁺+1).

2-(4-Nitro phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4h)

Yellow solid; M.P: 199-201 °C ; ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ=12.81 (s, 1H), 8.01-7.42 (m, 14H); FTIR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3402 (N-H), 2928 (=C-H), 1598 (C=C), 1519 (C=N), 1346 (NO₂), 856 (C-N); ESI-MS(*m/z*): 342 (M⁺+1).

2-(2-Nitro phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4i)

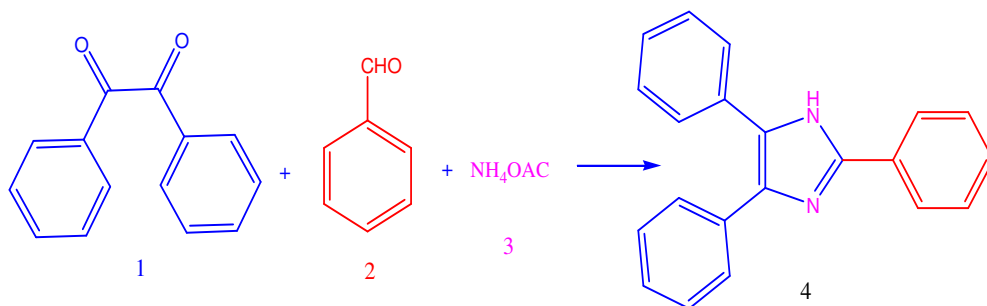
Yellow solid; M.P: 298-300 °C; ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ=13.10 (s, 1H), 8.95 (s, 1H), 8.53 (d, 1H, J=7.5 Hz), 8.23 (d, 1H, J=7.8 Hz), 7.81 (d, 1H, J=7.8 Hz), 7.54-7.33 (m, 10H); FTIR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3448 (N-H), 3068 (=C-H), 1526 (=C-N), 1352 (NO₂); ESI-MS(*m/z*): 342 (M⁺+1).

2-(4-Chloro phenyl)-4,5-diphenyl-1-H-imidazole (4j)

White solid; M.P: 248-250 °C ; ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ=12.76 (s, 1H), 7.22-7.55 (m, 12H), 8.11 (d, 2H, J=8.8 Hz); FTIR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3445 (N-H), 2924 (=C-H), 1646 (C=C) and 1255 (C-N); ESI-MS(*m/z*): 331 (M⁺+1).

Results and Discussion

Initially a model reaction was conducted by using different solvents and different mol% of catalyst for synthesis of 2,4,5-triaryl imidazoles to investigate the feasibility of the reaction. Benzil, benzaldehyde and ammonium acetate were taken in different solvents (DMSO, acetonitrile, dichloromethane, chloroform and ethanol) in the presence of catalyst NiCoFe₂O₄ NPs and results are summarized in Table 1. It was clearly observed that low yield of product is obtained with DMSO, acetonitrile, dichloromethane, chloroform (20%, 24%, 27% and 29%, Table 1, entry 1-4) respectively even after 2 h stirring. It was clearly observed that the reaction was carried out with ethanol as a solvent at 75-78 °C provided 60% yield with in 2 h. After finding the suitable solvent, the model reaction is performed with different mol% of NiCoFe₂O₄ catalyst and observed that 20 mol% suitable to obtained maximum yield at neat condition (Table 2, entry 4). No change was observed on further enhancing the catalyst mol%.



Scheme 1. Synthesis of 2,4,5-triaryl imidazoles

Table 1. Screening of solvent for synthesis of 2,4,5-trisubstituted imidazoles

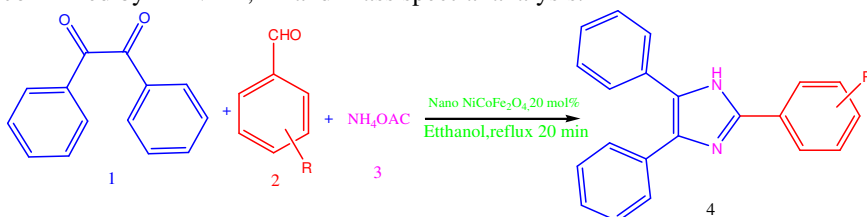
Entry	Solvent	Catalyst mol %	Temperature °C	Time	Yield ^a , %, w/w
1	DMSO	5	95-100	2 h	20
2	Acetonitrile	5	65-70	2 h	24
3	Dichloro methane	5	45-50	2 h	27
4	Chloroform	5	45-50	2 h	29
5	Ethanol	5	75-78	2 h	60

^aIsolated yields**Table 2.** Effect of NiCoFe₂O₄ catalyst percentage on synthesis of 2,4,5-trisubstituted imidazoles

Entry	Solvent	Catalyst, mol %	Temperature, °C	Time	Yield ^a , %, w/w
1	Ethanol	5	75-78	2 h	60
2	Ethanol	10	75-78	1 h	72
3	Ethanol	15	75-78	40 min	85
4	Ethanol	20	75-78	20 min	95
5	Ethanol	25	75-78	20 min	95
6	Ethanol	30	75-78	20 min	95

^aIsolated yields

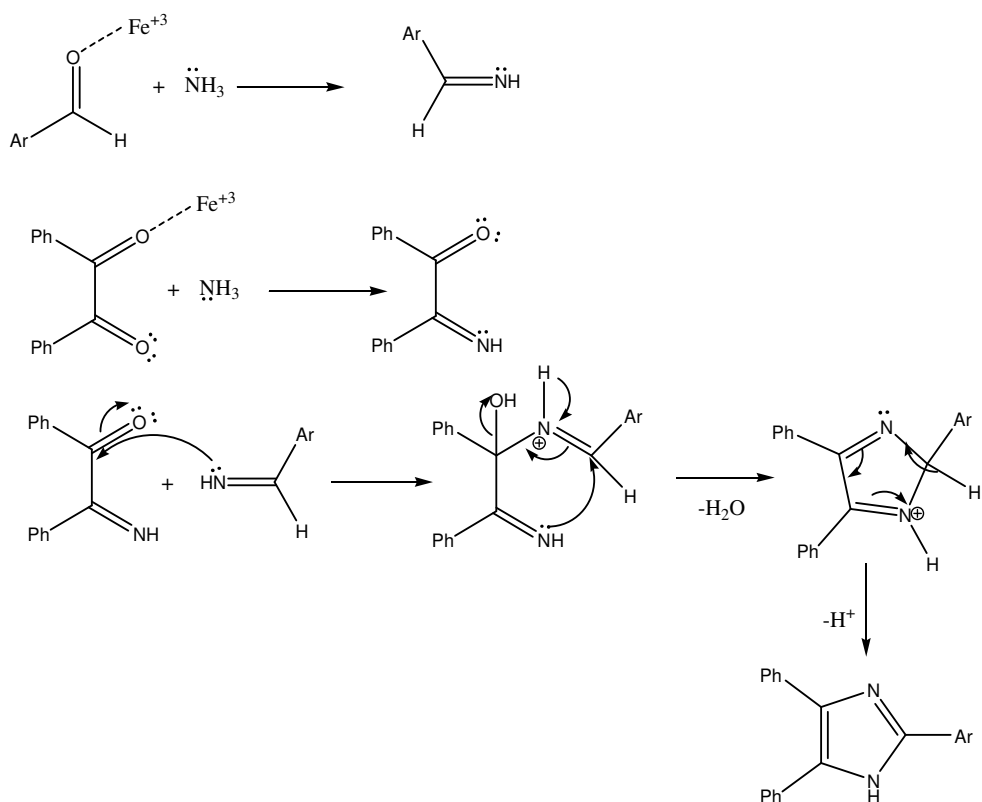
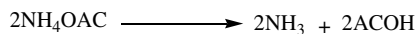
With the optimised conditions in hand, the reaction was performed with different benzaldehydes (Scheme 2) to explore the scope and generality of the present protocol and the results of these observations are summarized in Table 3. From the results, it can be concluded that the aromatic aldehydes with having electron withdrawing groups (Table 3, entries 8 & 9) reacts at faster rate compared with aromatic aldehydes substituted with electron releasing groups (Table 3, entries 2-5). The structures of synthesized imidazoles were confirmed by H¹ NMR, IR and Mass spectral analysis.

**Scheme 2.** NiCoFe₂O₄ catalysed synthesis of 2,4,5-trisubstituted imidazoles derivatives**Table 3.** NiCoFe₂O₄ catalysed synthesis of 2,4,5-tri substituted imidazole derivatives

Entry	Product	R	Time, min	Yield ^a , %, w/w
1	4a	H	20	94%
2	4b	4-CH ₃	20	92%
3	4c	4-OCH ₃	20	90%
4	4d	2-OCH ₃	20	89%
5	4e	4-NHCOCH ₃	20	91%
6	4f	2-OH	20	90%
7	4g	4-OH, 3-OCH ₃	20	92%
8	4h	4-NO ₂	15	98%
9	4i	2-NO ₂	15	97%
10	4j	4-Chloro	20	92%

^aIsolated yields

The plausible mechanism for the formation 2,4,5-trisubstituted imidazoles by using Ni CoFeNPs is shown in Scheme 3.



Scheme 3. Plausible mechanism for the formation of 2,4,5-tri substituted Imidazoles

Table 4. Comparison of various catalysts with nickel cobalt ferrite in the synthesis

Entry	Catalyst	Solvent	Temperature, °C	Time, min	Yield ^a , % w/w	Reference
1	$\text{InCl}_3 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$	Methanol	25-30	492	76	19
2	$\text{NiCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$	Ethanol	75-80	90	89	17
3	L-proline	Methanol	60-64	540	87	26
4	Zeolite-Hy	-	120	90	56	18
5	KH_2PO_4	Methanol	25-30	60	89	29
6	$\text{Zr}(\text{acac})_4$	Ethanol	75-80	120	95	28
7	DABCO	t-Butanol	60-65	720	92	20
8	CAN	Methanol		600	75	24
9	$\text{NiCoFe}_2\text{O}_4$	Ethanol	75-80	20	95	Present work

^aIsolated yields

The reusability of NiCoFe₂O₄ NPs is one of the most important advantages of this protocol that makes it useful for practical commercial applications. We have examined the recyclability of NiCoFe₂O₄ NPs catalyst for the model reaction. Interestingly, the recovered catalyst could be reused for up to five cycles under optimized reaction conditions without leaching of the Co, Ni and Fe metals which is evident from Table 5. The catalyst was separated by using a magnet after completion of the reaction, washed with water followed by chloroform, dried in oven and reused for the next cycle.

Table 5. Productivity with re-cycle catalyst

Entry	Catalyst re-use	Yield ^a , %, w/w
1	1 st cycle	94
2	2 nd cycle	92
3	3 rd cycle	90
4	4 th cycle	89
5	5 th cycle	87

^aIsolated yields

Conclusion

We have described a novel, efficient, multi-component one pot green synthetic method using nano nickel cobalt ferrite catalyst and ethanol as a solvent. The novelty and synthetic utility of this method is demonstrated in the efficient synthesis of 2,4,5-triphenyl imidazole derivatives. The advantages of this method include its simplicity of operation, cleaner reaction, and good to excellent yields. Further, the purification of the product is simple involving filtration. The catalyst is easily separated by using external magnet and is reusable up to five cycles.

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