In Situ Infrared Spectroelectrochemistry

By

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Prepared for Publication in
Journal of Vacuum Science and Technology B

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July 30, 1986

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<td>6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER</td>
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<td>8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(S)</td>
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| 9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS | University of Utah  
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Salt Lake City, UT 84112 |
| 10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS | Task No.-NR 359-718 |
| 11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS | Office of Naval Research  
Chemistry Program - Chemistry Code 472  
Arlington, Virginia 22217 |
| 12. REPORT DATE              | July 30, 1986 |
| 13. NUMBER OF PAGES          |    |
| 14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) |    |
| 15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) | Unclassified |
| 16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) | This document has been approved for public release and sale; its distribution unlimited. |
| 17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) |    |
| 18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES      |    |
| 19. KEYWORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) | IR spectroelectrochemistry, infrared, radiation. |
| 20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) | The vibrational spectrum of molecules at or near an electrode surface can be obtained using subtractively normalized interfacial Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (SNIFTIRS) and electromodulated infrared spectroscopy (EMIRS). |
01050358
Running Title: In situ infrared spectroelectrochemistry
In situ infrared spectroelectrochemistry

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The vibrational spectrum of molecules at or near an electrode surface can be obtained using subtracively normalized interfacial Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (SNIFTIRS) and electromodulated infrared spectroscopy (EMIRS). The large electric field existing at the electrode/solution interface is sufficient to induce dipole moments in highly polarizable molecules. The magnitude of the induced dipole moment is proportional to the electric field strength. As a result of this interaction some totally symmetric normal vibrations are made infrared active, and other bands appear in violation of the surface selection rule. This effect is known as the electrochemical Stark effect. Calculation of the expected absorption coefficients for the totally symmetric modes of adsorbed species gives values which are close to those observed experimentally. Experimental evidence of $A_e$ mode activation of adsorbed pyrene is presented.

The electric field dependence of the integrated absorption coefficient is demonstrated in the study of acrylonitrile adsorbed on a gold electrode.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years several techniques have been developed for obtaining in situ the infrared spectra of species at the electrode-solution interface. The vibrational spectra is strongly dependent upon the molecular orientation with respect to the electrode surface. Electromagnetic radiation polarized perpendicular to the metal surface is polarized; it undergoes a phase shift close to 180° for all angles of incidence resulting in a standing wave which has little amplitude at the metal surface. The electric vectors of light polarized parallel to the plane of incidence $p$ polarized add constructively upon reflection at glancing angles giving rise to a sizable component of electric vector normal to the surface. Therefore, only molecules which have a component of their dipole moment normal to the surface are able to interact with electromagnetic radiation.

Since intense electric fields exist near electrode surfaces, it is possible for the electric field to interact with highly polarizable molecules. This interaction may distort the diffuse electron cloud inducing a dipole in the direction of the electric field. If the polarization of the infrared radiation is in the same direction as the induced dipole, the integrated absorption coefficient for the transition is proportional to the square of the electric field strength. Therefore, the electric field at the electrode surface may allow infrared activity for vibrations normally forbidden by symmetry or the surface selection rule. This effect is known as the electrochemical Stark effect. Perturbation of vibrational spectra by strong electric fields was first predicted by Condon and has been demonstrated in several systems.

We report in this work a brief review and some new results that are related to the electrochemical Stark effect and vibrionic activation of symmetric vibrational modes. The techniques used are modulated potential specular reflectance types that have recently been introduced to electrochemical science.

II. EXPERIMENTAL

Experiments were performed in a three-electrode thin-layer cell (Fig. 1). The working electrode consisted of an 8-

![Diagram](image-url)
ratio. At small values of \( \delta R \) compared to \( R, \delta R / R \) corresponds to the absorbance \( A = \log_{10} \frac{I_0}{I} \).

This results in a small modulation of the reflectivity which is easily extracted by synchronous demodulation techniques. Details of both experimental techniques have been presented earlier.\(^{1,2}\)

For cleaning cells, triply distilled water was used for steaming previously acid-cleaned cells. Aqueous solutions were prepared from recrystallized salts and triply distilled water. Acetonitrile (Burdick and Jackson, Muskegon MI) was used as received. The water content was nominally <0.01%. Organic substrates were obtained from Aldrich and used as received. Electrochemistry was controlled by a potentiostat and waveform generator (JAS Instrument Systems, Inc.). Cells and electrodes were also obtained from JAS.

Typically, spectra were obtained at an electrode potential where the species of interest was either not adsorbed or weakly adsorbed; and at a potential where the species was present on the electrode surface or interfacial region to a large extent. The values of these potentials can be obtained usually by conventional double layer capacitance measurements which can give quantitative values of the surface coverage and information on the thickness of the electrical double layer near the interface.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Calculation of \( B \)

In an experiment where the electric field \( E_0 \) is applied in a direction \( z \), the induced dipole moment becomes

\[
\mu_z = \sigma_{0z} E_0,
\]

where \( \sigma_{0z} \) is the polarizability tensor. The integrated absorption coefficient is given by

\[
B = \frac{2\mu_0^2 T}{e \hbar c}, \mu_\|, \mu_z \|^2,
\]

where \( B \) is the transition dipole matrix element, \( T \) is the number of absorbing molecules per unit area in the beam path, and all other constants have their usual meaning. In the presence of an external electric field the transition dipole matrix element can be expressed as the sum of the permanent dipole moment \( \mu_0 \) and the induced dipole moment \( \mu_z \) where

\[
\mu_z = \sigma_{0z} E_0.
\]

Thus,

\[
|\mu_z| = (\sigma_{0z}) \mu_0 + \mu_z \psi - \frac{1}{2}.
\]

If the expression for \( \mu_0 \) and \( \mu_z \) are expanded in a Taylor series and the high order terms are neglected the integrated absorption coefficient becomes:

\[
B = \frac{2\mu_0^2 T}{e \hbar c} \left( \langle \sigma_\|, \mu_0 \rangle \right) + E \langle \sigma_\|, \psi \rangle,
\]

where \( \mu_0 \) and \( \sigma_\| \) correspond to the change in the permanent dipole moment and polarizability with respect to a normal coordinate, respectively. We have calculated the absorption coefficient for the \( C = C \) symmetric stretch of molecules adsorbed flat at an electrode surface. For these molecules \( \mu_z \) approaches zero and we are left with evaluating the remaining matrix element. Since the matrix elements \( \langle \sigma_\|, \psi \rangle \) are not tabulated for molecules larger than diatomic, we have estimated this change to be of the same order of magnitude as the polarizability normal to the molecular axis, providing an upper bound value to the matrix element. The polarizabilities necessary for the calculation were taken from Ref. 11. The value of the absorption coefficient is calculated as a function of electric field strength and shown in Table 1.

\[
A_\| \text{ mode activation}
\]

We have observed electric field activation of the totally symmetric \( A_\| \) mode of pyrene at or near the surface of a platinum electrode. Figure 2 is the SNIFTIRS spectra of 0.5

\[
\text{vol.

}\]
mM pyrene in acetonitrile. The limits of the modulation potential were set between +0.5 and -1.2 V vs Ag/Ag⁺ where no electrochemical reaction was occurring. Therefore, the bands appearing in the difference spectra are due to the changing electric field rather than a chemical process. The band which occurs at -1640 cm⁻¹ corresponds to the totally symmetric (A₁) C-C stretching mode of pyrene. The Raman spectrum of pyrene was obtained in our labs and three bands were found in this frequency region (Fig. 3). The intensity of the band is about an order of magnitude weaker than expected for perpendicular adsorption, and is strongly potential dependent. As the potential is made more positive the band intensity increases. Figure 5 shows the band intensity as a function of the amplitude of the potential modulation. If only desorption of acrylonitrile at higher potentials was occurring, the band intensity should increase over the entire potential range and a band of opposite sign corresponding to solution free acrylonitrile should appear. However, as the modulation amplitude increases the band intensity increases, reaches a maximum, and begins to decrease. The observed spectra can be explained in terms of an electric field effect.

Since the potential dependence of the electric field at the electrode surface is unknown, it is difficult to test the exact field dependence of the intensity. However, there should be a maximum in band intensity when one of the modulation limits is at the potential point of zero charge at the interface. The dashed curve sketched in the figure is the theoretical curve predicted by the squared electric field dependence of intensity. The maximum in the curve appears at about -0.5 V vs SCE which is not an unreasonable position for the potential of zero field.

Also, the position of the band is not a linear function of...
potential. In systems were perpendicular adsorption is certain, such as CO adsorbed on platinum and CN adsorbed on silver, band position is a linear function of potential.

Although the fit is only approximate it is sufficiently good to demonstrate the effect of strong electric fields on infrared spectra. Intense electric fields present near the electrode surface may interact with polarizable molecules and induce a dipole moment in the direction of the field which give rise to very weak absorptions. With refinements in the calculation it may possibly to use the electrochemical Stark effect to study the electric field intensity in the double layer region of the electrode.

8 C. Kortenewski and S. Pons, in preparation.

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