Electrically Conductive Polymer Grafts Prepared by Electrochemical Polymerization of Pyrrole onto Poly[(methyl methacrylate)-co-(2-(N-pyrrolyl) Ethyl Methacrylate)] Electrodes

Nuran BALCI, Ural AKBULUT
Department of Chemistry
Middle East Technical University
06531 Ankara - TURKEY

Levent TOPPARE*
Department of Chemistry
Bilkent University
06533 Ankara - TURKEY

Dietmar STANKE, Manfred L. HALLENSLEBEN
Institute für Makromolekulare Chemie
Universitaet Hannover
Am Kleinen Felde 30 D-30167, Hannover - GERMANY

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Pyrrole was grafted on poly[(methyl methacrylate)-co-(2-(N-pyrrolyl) ethyl methacrylate)] (PMMA-co-PEMA) using constant potential electrolyses. The thermal stability of PMMA-co-PEMA was improved as a result of electrochemical grafting with pyrrole. The electrochemical behavior of the films was studied by cyclic voltammetry. Pyrrole was found to be electroactive on PMMA-co-PEMA electrodes.

Introduction

Electrically conductive polymers have been the subject of a considerable amount of research because of their interesting and useful electronic, optical and redox properties\(^1\). Some of these materials have high conductivities with environmental stability. But many of these conjugated polymers are insoluble and difficult to process. Many studies have been conducted for the improvement of their processability by preparing composites\(^2\)\(^-\)\(^5\), and by blending\(^6\)\(^-\)\(^8\) the conducting polymers with thermoplastic polymers. Stanke et.al. comparatively studied two synthetic ways to synthesize copolymers of methyl methacrylate (MMA) with 2-(N-pyrrolyl) ethyl methacrylate with pyrrole containing side groups\(^9\). MMA and 2- bromo ethyl

* Corresponding author
methacrylate (BEMA) were copolymerized and a pyrrole moiety was introduced into the copolymer by using polymer analogous reaction. It has also been demonstrated that grafting between pyrrole and PMMA-PEMA-7 can be achieved via oxidative polymerization of pyrrole with FeCl₃ in nitromethane. This copolymer had also been self-crosslinked via oxidative polymerization with FeCl₃ in nitromethane. An increase in the glass transition temperature of the final product was observed due to crosslinking between pendant prrrole groups. Hallensleben et al. copolymerized 2-(2-Thienyl) ethyl methacrylate (2-TEMA) with methyl methacrylate (MMA) and grafted thiophene onto PMMA-co-2TEMA, PMMA-co-3TEMA, PMMA-co-PEMA oxidatively.

In this paper, we present the synthesis and characterization of electrochemical grafting of polypyrrole on PMMA-co-PEMA (copolymers containing 7% and 0.7% PEMA) using sodium p-toluene sulfonate as the supporting electrolyte in aqueous media.

**Experimental**

**Materials**

PMMA-PEMA copolymers were synthesized as described earlier. Pyrrole (Merck) and acetonitrile (AN) (Merck) were used as received. Sodium p-toluene sulphonate was prepared by titrating p-toluene sulfonic acid monohydrate (Aldrich) with sodium hydroxide.

**Synthesis of the Graft Films**

PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA grafts were prepared by electrochemical polymerization of pyrrole onto a PMMA-co-PEMA-coated electrode at a constant potential of 0.8 V versus Ag⁰/Ag⁺ (10⁻² M) at room temperature under nitrogen atmosphere. The working and the counter electrodes were 1.5-cm² platinum foils, and the reference electrode was a Ag⁰/Ag⁺ luggin capillary. The solvent-electrolyte couple was water (with 16% (v/v) acetonitrile)-sodium p-toluene sulphonate. Pyrrole and electrolyte concentrations were 0.05 M and 0.09 M, respectively. PMMA-co-PEMA (7% PEMA) and PMMA-co-PEMA (0.7% PEMA) were dissolved in acetonitrile and coated onto platinum electrodes by dipping the electrode in the polymer solution and allowing the solvent to evaporate. The coated electrode was then placed into the cell containing aqueous pyrrole solution with sodium p-toluene sulphonate, and electrolyses were carried out. After the polymerization, the films were washed with water and acetonitrile, and dried. Blank runs in the absence pyrrole were also done for both pristine copolymers to check their stability under electrolysis conditions.

**Measurements**

Differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) and thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA) studies were recorded on a Du Pont 2000 instrument. Scanning electron microscope (SEM) (JSM-6400) was used to observe the surface morphology of the films. Conductivities of the samples were measured by four-probe technique. Cyclic voltammetry was used in order to study electroactivities of the monomer and polymers. The multiscan voltammograms of the copolymers were recorded on potential range -0.2 to +1.0 V in 0.09 M electrolyte. Accordingly similar runs were repeated in the presence of 0.0036 M pyrrole solution.
Results and Discussion

Free standing black films were easily peeled off of the electrode surface. When these films were washed with the solvent of pristine copolymer (acetonitrile) for 3 days and dried, only 10% of the PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA.7 and 6% of the PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA.0.7 films were lost by weight. We believe the remaining insulating polymers were incorporated through the growing pyrrole chain. In cyclic voltammetry studies both PMMA-co-PEMA.7- and PMMA-co-PEMA.0.7-coated electrodes indicated electroactivity only in the first cycle (Figures 1a and d). However, this electroactivity was absent in successive runs. This may well mean that the possibility of self crosslinking through electrochemical coupling in the absence of pyrrole is unlikely. On the other hand, when pyrrole was added to solution, PMMA-co-PEMA coated electrodes revealed increasing electroactivity with the reaction time (Figures 1b and e), the cyclic voltammograms exhibited pyrrole-like behavior with further scans.

The glass transition temperature (Tg) of PMMA-co-PEMA.7 is 122 °C and the melting point (Tm) is 370 °C. Tg and Tm values for PMMA-co-PEMA.0.7 are 132 °C and 367 °C. The graft films (PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA) of each copolymer have transitions around 160 °C, 280 °C, and 430 °C, and no decomposition was observed (Fig. 2).

In thermal gravimetry analyses of the PMMA-co-PEMA.7 and PMMA-co-PEMA.0.7, the first derivative of the main weight loss is around 400 °C. However, for the p-TS− doped graft films there exist 10% and 4% remnants even at 1030 °C (Figures 3c and d). PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA.7 lost 35% at 349 °C and 55% at around 830 °C. While the grafts show double weight loss patterns, the simple mechanical mixtures of PPy and PMMA-co-PEMA have single weight loss patterns with 28% residue at 1030 °C (Figures 3a and b).
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Figure 2. DSC thermograms of (a) polypyrrole, (b) PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7, (c) PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7
SEM photographs indicated the films to have very homogeneous surfaces, and similar appearances were obtained for washed and unwashed films (Figures 4 and 5). Solution sides of the films have regular spherical morphologies.

Conductivities of the p-TS\(^-\) doped graft films were around 1.0 S/cm, which is very close to that of PPy synthesized under same conditions. There is no difference between the conductivities of PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7 and PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 films.

**Figure 3.** Thermal gravimetric analyses of (a) mechanical mixture of PPy and PMMA-co-PEMA-7, (b) mechanical mixture of PPy and PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7, (c) PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7, (d) PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7.
Figure 4. SEM photographs (1000 magnification) of (a) unwashed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7 solution side, (b) unwashed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7 electrode side, (c) washed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7 solution side, (d) washed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-7 electrode side.
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Conclusion

Syntheses of electrically conductive polymer grafts of PPy on PMMA-co-PEMA in the presence of sodium p-toluene sulphonate as the electrolyte were achieved. Both of the copolymers (without pyrrole) indicated poorly defined electroactivities for the first runs only. However, PPy showed reversible peaks on both of the copolymer coated electrodes. The PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA films behaved more like polypyrrole as the PPy chain grew longer on the copolymer backbone. PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 exhibited a narrower oxidation peak area than PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 because of the lower concentration of pyrrole moieties on the backbone.

DSC studies of the films revealed that the thermal behaviors of the grafts were quite different than that of the pure copolymers. TGA thermograms of the mechanical mixtures and the grafts were different from each other, as indicated by different weight loss patterns. It was observed that the PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA films were thermally more stable than the pristine copolymers.

SEM studies revealed PPy to grow uniformly on PMMA-co-PEMA since the washed an unwashed electrolytic films have similar surface morphologies. This idea is further supported by conductivity measurements of the films. They have conductivities as high as the pure polypyrrole synthesized under same conditions.

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Figure 5. SEM photographs (1000 magnification) of (a) unwashed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 solution side, (b) unwashed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 electrode size, (c) washed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 solution side, (d) washed PPy/PMMA-co-PEMA-0.7 electrode side.
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