Improvement of ion-selective detection method with nanopipette

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Ion-selective electrode (ISE) is widely used to detect aimed ions in solution.[1] Application of this method to nanoscale area detection using nanopipette requires different detection system because the usual detection system measuring electromotive force with DC voltage does not work well in case of nanopipette having cation-rich double layer due to the inner wall surface charge effect.[2] We developed a method to detect AC signal with a lock-in amplifier by applying both AC and DC voltages.[3] However, the more stable and reproducible detection method is preferred for the application of this method to ion-selective scanning ion conductance microscopy.

In this study, we have developed a method to fabricate ion-selective nanopipette based on a poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC) membrane containing ionophores, i.e., bis(benzo-15-crown-5) or bis(12-crown-4), and the membrane is at the conical shank in the nanopipette, which showed better results compared with our previous method in which the membrane is at the middle of the nanopipette.[3]

Nanopipettes with the inner diameter of 100 nm were prepared with Sutter P-2000. Details of the fabrication of PVC membrane in nanopipette were reported.[3]

The obtained signal was apparently improved, as shown in the right figure. The signal from the previous method (upper figure) was noisy with less reproducibility of the selective detection. On the other hand, the S/N ratio of the signal was improved with this novel method (lower figure) and the reproducibility was also improved.

This work was supported by KOSEF NRL Program grant funded by the Korea Government MEST (Grant No. 2010-0024525 and R0A-2008-000-20052-0), and WCU Program through the KOSEF funded by the MEST (Grant No. R31-2008-000-10057-0).