Ion sensing for nano liter level solution by a terahertz chemical microscopy

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1. Introduction
There are various ions in our body, such as sodium ion and potassium ion. Breaking of ion balances will lead to serious diseases. Therefore, the sensing systems for ions are required in the medical diagnoses. Conventionally, the distribution of ions is measured by the ion chromatography. However, this system can not separate ions that have similar magnitude of polarities. Our group developed a detection system named THz Chemical Microscope (TCM), which can use the amplitude of THz wave to visualize the chemical potential changes in the water solution. A device named the sensing plate is that the amplitude of radiated THz wave changes if there are chemical reactions on the sensing plate. Ion sensitive membranes are immobilized on the surface of SiO$_2$ side of THz sensing plate and dropped the ion solution with different concentration, which lead to different amplitude of radiated THz wave. Therefore, ions in solution can be detected by TCM. In this work, we first detected the amplitude of THz wave changes with dropping nano liter level water. From this result, ions can be detected by using several hundred μm size ion sensitive membrane.

2. General Instructions
We used the femtosecond laser pluses to irradiate sensing plate. Photo-excited carries inside the Si layer are generated by the laser pluses from the sapphire layer of THz sensing plate. It generates instantaneous current when the Photo-excited carriers are accelerated by the depletion layer electric field. As the result of the carriers acceleration, the THz wave proportional to the time derivative of the instantaneous current is radiated. When surface potential changes by the measuring object contacts surface of SiO$_2$, the local electric field at depletion layer in the Si layer changes. In this study, sodium ion sensitive membrane was immobilized on the THz sensing plate surface. Different concentration of sodium ion solution was dropped into sodium sensitive membrane. The concentration of sodium ion was varied in the range of $10^{-4}$- $10^{-1}$ M. Different concentration of sodium ion lead to changes of surface potential as changes in the intensity of THz wave. In order to detect Multi-ion in the same time, many kinds of ion sensing membrane should be immobilized on the sensing plate. Therefore, small size of ion sensing membranes are necessary. In order to understand how small size of sensitive membrane that the TCM can detect, a Nano size of water droplet which from 32 nL to 16 nL is dropped to the sensing plate. As the laser spot irradiate the water droplet, the amplitude of terahertz wave was changed.

3. Conclusions
Water droplet which size is 16 nL, 300 μm can be detected by TCM. Use the same size of ion sensitive membrane, ion also can be detected by TCM theoretically.

Acknowledgements
This work was supported by MEXT Subsidy of the Acceleration of a Translational Research Network Program Agency.

References