

Conformational mobility of 1,2-di-(*p*-bromophenyl)ethane dispersed in polymer matrices: correlations with relaxation transition phenomena and free volume distribution in glassy polymers

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Conformational mobility of 1,2-di-(*p*-bromophenyl)ethane (DPBPE) introduced into glassy poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC) and poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) matrices has been studied by infrared absorption spectra. For both systems under investigation the freezing of the *trans-gauche* conformational transitions in DPBPE has been found. The temperatures of freezing of the conformational equilibrium (T_f) have been determined: 276 ± 8 K (PVC) and 326 ± 18 K (PMMA). The T_f values are correlated with the secondary relaxation transition temperatures of the pure polymers. In the view of the obtained data, the processes responsible for the relaxation transitions in PVC and PMMA are analysed. The volume of the conformationally mobile group of DPBPE (108.2 \AA^3) was found to be close to the free volume entity sizes of the polymers, measured at T_f temperatures by positron annihilation lifetime spectroscopy. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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INTRODUCTION

Behaviour of small molecules introduced into polymer matrices is extensively studied by different physical methods¹⁻⁴. The interest in this problem is based on the fact that the mobility of low molecular weight compounds serves as a tool for investigating the segmental and local molecular dynamics of bulk polymers. The other motivation of such studies is a desire to develop new nonlinear optical materials using amorphous polymers^{5,6}.

Two different types of molecular mobility can be identified: (i) the mobility of molecules as a whole (i.e. translational and rotational diffusion), and (ii) the intramolecular transformations. A variety of approaches exists for studying each type of molecular motion. Translational and rotational diffusion has been investigated by gas diffusivity⁷, spin^{4,8}, electrochromic⁹, hydrogen-bond-forming^{10,11}, and some fluorescence^{6,12,13} and photochromic probes⁵. The intramolecular transformations have been studied for excimer-forming¹⁴, various kinds of fluorescent¹⁵⁻¹⁷, phosphorescent¹⁸ and photochromic¹⁹⁻²¹ probes. For the majority of the probes belonging to the latter group the transformations are achieved by photoexcitation of the molecules. There are also methods which provide information on the different types of molecular motion. Thus, dielectric relaxation spectroscopy was successfully used for studying the intramolecular rotational relaxation

and the orientational diffusion of the whole molecule embedded in glassy polymers²²⁻²⁴.

In our recent works we studied the conformational behaviour of some low molecular weight compounds introduced into amorphous glassy polymers^{25,26}. It has been proposed to investigate the temperature shift of the conformational equilibrium for analysing the relaxation transition phenomena and free volume distribution of the polymers. The decrease of the temperature causes the concentration redistribution over the conformers, but there is an equilibrium between them. However, if the conformational equilibrium is frozen, the concentrations of the conformers do not change with the temperature. It was reported²⁵ that each polymer/probe system is characterised by a certain temperature (T_f) below which the conformational equilibrium is frozen. The T_f values were found to be dependent both on the polymer and the probe. For the same polymer the freezing temperature increases, as a rule, with the size of the conformationally mobile part of the probe molecule. It was also noted that T_f values are close to the temperatures of the secondary relaxation transitions of the polymers. Thus, it was supposed that the freezing of the conformational equilibrium reflects some processes taking place in the polymers at the temperatures close to T_f . Comparing the structure of the probe and the polymer, one may propose a process, responsible for the observed relaxation transition. The distinctive feature of the method is that it does not use photoexcitation of the probe molecule.

Each probe can be characterised by its molecular volume

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