



A Study on the Coordination Polymerization Using C₂-Symmetric Dichloro[*rac*-ethylenebisindenyl] zirconium(IV)/Methylaluminoxane System

Dong Jin Yang, Hyun Ki Kim*, No-hyung Park, Jun Chul Lee, and Dong Hyun Kim[†]

Korea Institute of Industrial Technology, Ansan-si, 426-910, Republic of Korea

**Nexene Tire, Yusan-Dong, Yangsan-Si, 626-230, Republic of Korea*

(Received November 26, 2012, Revised December 5, 2012, Accepted December 10, 2012)

C₂-Symmetric Dichloro[*rac*-ethylenebisindenyl] zirconium(IV)/Methylaluminoxane 시스템을 이용한 배위 중합에 관한 연구

양동진 · 김현기* · 박노형 · 이준철 · 김동현[†]

한국생산기술연구원, *넥센타이어

접수일(2012년 11월 26일), 수정일(2012년 12월 5일), 게재확정일(2012년 12월 10일)

ABSTRACT : We synthesized polyethylene, poly(ethylene-*co*-1-decene), poly(ethylene-*co*-*p*-methylstyrene), and poly(ethylene-*ter*-1-decene-*ter*-*p*-methylstyrene) using a *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂ metallocene catalyst and a methylaluminoxane cocatalyst system. The materials were characterized using nuclear magnetic spectroscopy and fourier transform infrared spectroscopy. To identify suitable reaction conditions for terpolymerization, we studied the effects of catalyst content, cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio, polymerization time, and polymerization temperature. As the catalyst content increased, the catalytic activity and the molecular weight of the terpolymers increased. The catalytic activity sharply increased but little change was observed after a polymerization time of 30 min. The increase in the cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio resulted in a decrease in the molecular weight of the terpolymers and an increase in the catalytic activity to some degree. The catalytic activity increased with increasing polymerization temperature, while the molecular weight of the terpolymers decreased.

요 약 : *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂ 메탈로센 촉매와 메틸알루미늄옥산 공촉매를 이용하여 polyethylene, poly(ethylene-*co*-1-decene), poly(ethylene-*co*-*p*-methylstyrene) 및 poly(ethylene-*ter*-1-decene-*ter*-*p*-methylstyrene)를 합성하였다. ¹³C NMR과 ¹H NMR 및 FT-IR을 이용하여 삼원공중합체의 특성을 분석하였다. 삼원공중합의 최적조건을 확립하기 위해 동일한 중합조건을 유지한 채 촉매량, 공촉매/촉매 몰비, 중합 시간 및 중합 온도를 변경하여 실험하였다. 촉매량이 증가할수록 삼원공중합체의 촉매활성도 및 중량평균분자량은 증가하였으나, 중합시간이 30분을 초과하자 촉매활성도는 감소하였다. 공촉매/촉매 몰비를 증가시킨 결과 중량평균분자량은 감소하였고, 촉매활성도는 어느 정도 증가하였다. 촉매활성도는 중합온도가 증가함에 따라 상승하였으나 중량평균 분자량은 감소하였다.

Keywords : metallocene catalysts, polyolefins, elastomers, cocatalyst

I. Introduction

Research on polymerization using metallocene catalysts began with the identification of the structure of ferrocene by Wilkins and Fischer in 1952, and was further developed by Kaminsky in the 1980s. In the case of copolymerization using metallocene

catalyst, preparing polymers with narrow molecular weight distribution, high stereo-regularity, and uniform comonomer incorporation is much easier than is the case when using a conventional Ziegler-Natta catalyst. That is the reason why many studies have been performed regarding coordination polymerization using metallocene catalysts.¹

[†] Corresponding Author. E-mail: dhkim@kitech.re.kr

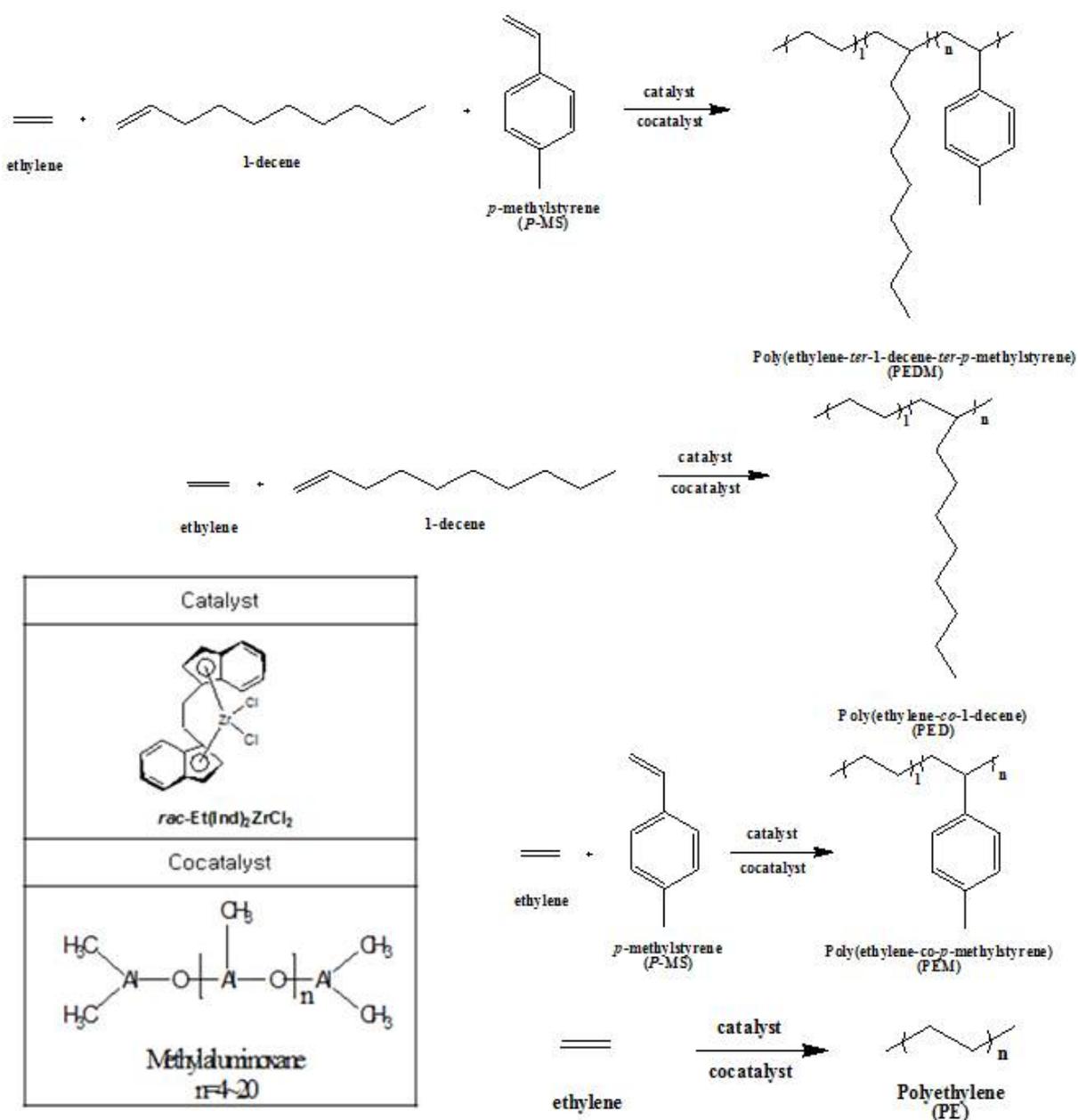


Figure 1. Synthetic procedures for homo-, co-, and terpolymer.

However, these studies have mainly focused on the copolymerization of ethylene with high- α -olefins, diene monomers, cyclo-olefins, and styrene.²⁻⁶ Also, other studies have been performed regarding the copolymerization of propylene with ethylene and high α -olefins.⁷⁻⁹ The main reason for carrying out research on the terpolymers is to examine the influence of termonomers on the properties of EPDM-rubbers and block-terpolymers.^{10,11} In particular, studies on the terpolymers with reactive groups has been limited even though it maybe possible to use the terpolymers

to develop new high-functional polyolefins.¹²⁻¹⁵

In this study, we prepared a polyethylene (PE), poly(ethylene-co-1-decene) (PED), and poly(ethylene-co-*p*-methylstyrene) (PEM), and poly(ethylene-*ter*-1-decene-*ter*-*p*-methylstyrene) (PEDM) using a bridged metallocene catalyst and a cocatalyst system. To optimize the coordination terpolymerization conditions, we studied the effects of the catalyst contents, cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio, and the polymerization temperature on the catalytic activity, molecular weight, and molecular weight distribution of the terpolymer.

II. Experimental

2.1 Materials & Specimens

All manipulations were carried out in an inert nitrogen atmosphere. We used high-purity grade ethylene gas (Dae-myung Gas Co.) after passing it through an alumina/zeolite column. 1-decene (Aldrich, 94%), n-hexane (SAMCHUN, 99.5%), and toluene (SAMCHUN, 99.5%) were purified by refluxing them over sodium, using benzophenone as an indicator, and stored in a dry box. A solution of *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂ (Sigma Aldrich) in toluene was also prepared. MAO (Tosho, methylaluminoxane) was used as received. *p*-methylstyrene was distilled under reduced pressure in the presence of CaH₂ after performing standard purification procedure.

2.2 Polymerizations

Typically, all of the polymerization reactions were carried out in a 300 mL stainless steel autoclave with a mechanical stirrer. After the autoclave was saturated with ethylene gas, the polymerization reaction was started by the injection of the required amount of catalyst solution and MAO. After several minutes, the polymer solution was poured into a diluted HCl/EtOH solution. The resultant polymer was washed with EtOH (600 mL) and dried in vacuo. After the polymerization reactions, we separated each soluble copolymer or terpolymer from insoluble by-products of the resultant polymer (some types of mixtures) using a soxhlet apparatus and n-hexane as a solvent. Through the soxhlet process, we could eliminate the insoluble polyethylene which was produced during the co- and terpolymerization. After drying the soluble fractions, we could finally obtain final PED, PEM, and PEDM which were completely soluble in common organic solvents, such as the hexane, toluene, and tetrahydrofuran.

2.3 Characterization

Fourier transformed infrared (FT-IR) analysis was performed by Thermo Scientific Co. NICOLET 6700. ¹³C NMR spectra were obtained at 60 °C. The equipment that was used was a Bruker AVANCE 500 MHz. Sample solutions of the polymer were prepared in CDCl₃. The deuterated solvent was used to provide an internal lock signal.

¹H NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker AVANCE 500

MHz. The NMR samples were prepared in CDCl₃ solvent. Using ¹H NMR spectra, we found the compositions of the polymers and also characterized the structures of the polymers.

The molecular weight and the molecular weight distribution of the polymers were measured using Polymer Laboratories Co. PL-GPC210 gel permeation chromatography fitted with Styragel (olexis guard column) HT-type columns. The analyses were performed at 140 °C and 1.0 mL/min with 1, 2, 4-trichlorobenzene as a solvent.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Homo-, Co-, and Terpolymerization

Figure 1 shows a synthetic scheme for the preparation of PEDM, PED, PEM, and PE using *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂ and MAO as a catalyst and cocatalyst, respectively. Generally, the most interesting aspect of these zirconocene-MAO catalytic systems is the production of random copolymers with higher catalytic activities. The C₂ symmetric metallocene catalyst, *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂, has a relatively electron-rich indenyl ligand. This electron-rich ligand stabilizes transition metals in catalyst with cationic character, which leads to a higher catalytic activity for *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂ compared to that of other complexes.

Table 1 reports the results of homo-, co-, and ter-polymerization using a metallocene catalyst/cocatalyst system under the same conditions of catalyst content, cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio, polymerization time, and polymerization temperature. The catalytic activities of PED and PEDM were higher than that of PE. The catalytic activity of PED went up 2.7 fold values more than that of PE. This was attributed to the "positive" comonomer (1-decene) effect: (1) enhanced solubility of the copolymer (PED) in comparison with that of the homopolymer (PE), which favored monomer diffusion to the active center; (2) comonomer activation of new catalyst sites by increased affinity for the metallocene catalyst; (3) increased solubility of the monomer in the liquid phase due to the presence of the comonomer, which increased its insertion rate.¹⁷

In the case of the terpolymer, the catalytic activity is lower than that of the copolymer (PED). This may have been due to the "negative comonomer (*p*-MS) effect." We can infer that, after the incorporation of *p*-MS into the terpolymer, its bulkiness made further insertion of ethylene and 1-decene difficult. This could also be confirmed by the very low catalytic activity of PEM, which was a copolymer of ethylene and *p*-MS.

Table 1. Summarization of homo-, co-, and ter-polymerization.

NAME ^a	Feeding			E : D : M Feed molar ratio	Composition			Catalytic activity ^d	M _w ^e (kg/mol)	M _n ^e (kg/mol)	MWD ^e
	E ^b (mol/L)	D ^b (mol/L)	M ^b (mol/L)		E ^{bc} (mol %)	D ^{bc} (mol %)	M ^{bc} (mol %)				
PE	0.4	0	0	1 : 0 : 0	100	0	0	1420	-	-	-
PED	0.4	0.4	0	1 : 1 : 0	79.8	20.2	0	3840	100	29	3.4
PEM	0.4	0	0.4	1 : 0 : 1	98.9	0	1.1	350	85	26	3.3
PEDM	0.4	0.4	0.4	1 : 1 : 1	65.4	33.4	1.2	2648	100	37	2.7

^a Polymerization conditions: catalyst = 2.5 μmol (*rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂), cocatalyst/catalyst = 3000, polymerization time = 30 min, polymerization temperature = 50 °C, and solvent = toluene.

^b E = Ethylene, D = 1-decene, M = *p*-MS.

^c Determined by ¹H-NMR spectroscopy.

^d Catalytic activity = kg of polymer/(mol of catalyst·h).

^e Determined by gel permeation chromatography (GPC).

Table 2. Terpolymerization of ethylene, 1-decene, and *p*-MS according to the polymerization time.

Run No. ^a	Polymerization time (min)	Catalytic Activity (kg of polymer / (mol·h))	M _w ^b (kg/mol)	M _n ^b (kg/mol)	MWD ^b
1	10	560	66	29	2.2
2	20	984	87	29	2.9
3	30	2648	96	45	2.2
4	40	2603	90	35	2.6
5	50	2680	95	28	3.3
6	60	2645	96	31	3.1

^a Polymerization conditions: catalyst = 2.5 μmol, ethylene = 0.4 mol/L, 1-decene = 0.4 mol/L, *p*-MS = 0.4 mol/L, catalyst = *rac*-Et(Ind)₂ZrCl₂, cocatalyst/catalyst = 3000, and solvent = toluene.

^b Determined by gel permeation chromatography (GPC).

3.2 Characterization

Figure 2 shows two kinds of Fourier transform infrared (FT-IR) spectra: (a) the spectrum of insoluble parts which is obtained through the soxhlet process for PEDM and (b) the spectrum of pure PE. The spectra of (a) and (b) have very similar peaks.

The C-H stretching peaks mutually appear near 2850 cm⁻¹ and 2950 cm⁻¹. The CH₂ bending peak and out of plane C-H bending are near 1400 cm⁻¹ and 720 cm⁻¹, respectively. We conclude with certainty that, through soxhlet process, we can separate the by-product (homo-polyethylene) from the terpolymer.

Figure 3 is the ¹H NMR spectrum of PEDM. The signatures near 7.0 ppm correspond to the aromatic peaks of *p*-MS. The peaks for the CH, CH₂, and CH₃ of ethylene or 1-decene appear in the range 0–3 ppm. The peaks for the CH₃ of the 1-decene and ethylene are near 0.9 ppm. The peak for the *p*-MS is at 2.3 ppm.

The peak for the CH of the 1-decene is near 1.5 ppm. Compared with the peaks for the CH₃ of *p*-MS, the CH₃ of 1-decene and ethylene occupy a relatively broad area. We can confirm the insertion of the 1-decene and *p*-MS into the terpolymer by the char-

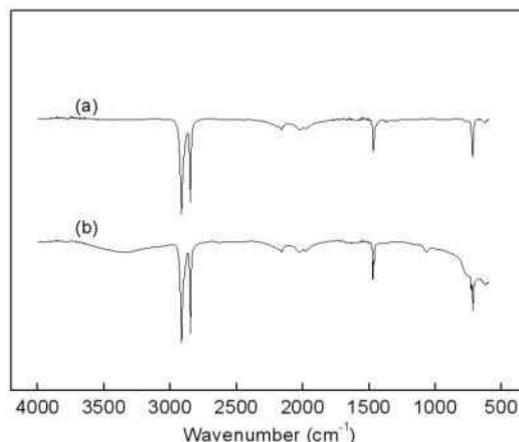


Figure 2. FT-IR spectra of (a) insoluble parts after soxhlet process for PEDM and (b) PE.

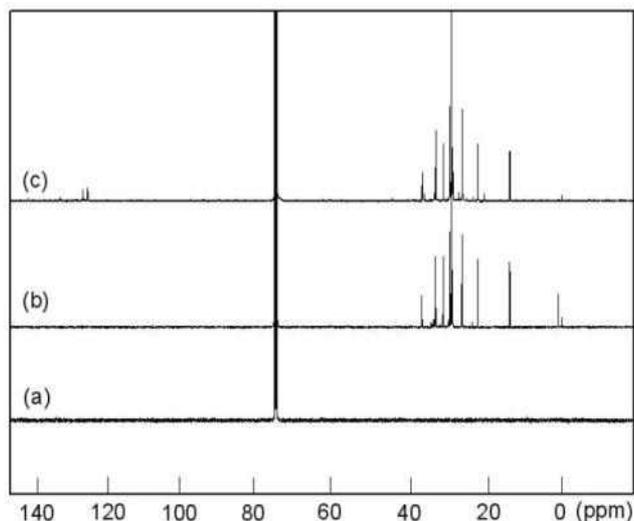


Figure 4. ^{13}C -NMR spectra of (a) PE, (b) PED, and (c) PEDM.

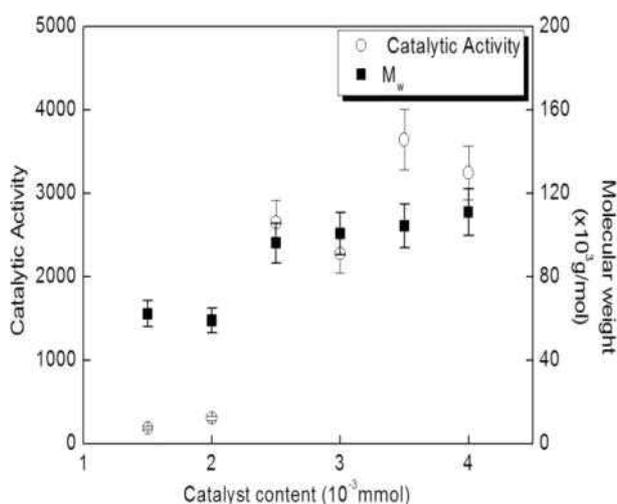


Figure 5. Catalytic activity and M_w of PEDM as a function of catalyst content.

from 60,000 to 110,000 g/mol as the catalyst content increases.

Figure 6 shows the changes of the catalytic activity and weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer according to the polymerization temperature. These factors are highly dependent on the polymerization temperature. The highest catalytic activity is obtained at the polymerization temperature of 70 °C, which reflected the increased reactivity of the monomer. Furthermore, the interaction between the cation in the catalyst and the anion in the cocatalyst increases as the polymerization temperature increases.¹⁹

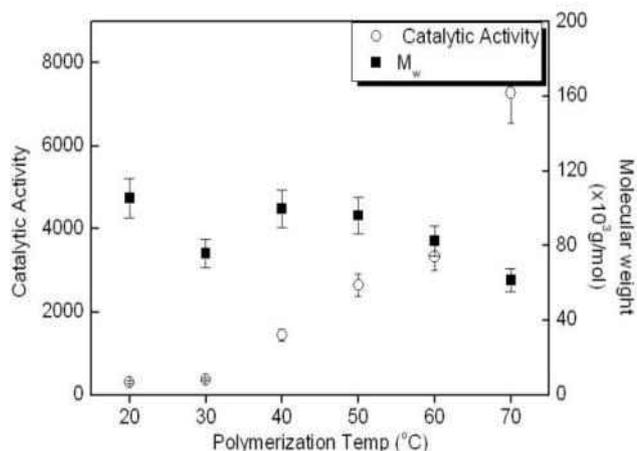


Figure 6. Catalytic activity and M_w of PEDM as a function of polymerization temperature.

However, the weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer decreases as the polymerization temperature increases. The weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer declines from 100,500 to 80,000 g/mol.

This result is in a agreement with the general behavior observed for ethylene/high- α -olefins copolymers under similar experimental conditions noted by Galland et al. This could be explained by the fact that during polymerization both the propagation and termination steps are affected by the reaction temperature.

The activation energy for chain-transfer reactions (termination step) is greater than that for propagation, which leads to a decrease in the molecular weight of the terpolymer at high reaction temperatures.²⁰

Figure 7 shows a comparison of the changes in catalytic activities and weight-averaged molecular weight as a function of the cocatalyst/catalyst (Al/Zr) molar ratio for the same polymerization conditions such as the monomer/comonomer feeding ratio, catalyst content, polymerization time, and polymerization temperature.

During metallocene catalyzed polymerization, the cocatalyst stabilizes the cation in the transition metal, which is the center of polymerization. In addition, the cocatalyst acts as a kind of alkylating agent at the same time.

We found that the catalytic activity increases with the increasing cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio until reaching a maximum value of 4408 at a cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio of 4000. Further increases in the molar ratio result in the decreased catalytic activity.

This phenomenon is possibly due to the TMA (trimethylaluminium) in the reaction medium, which is one of

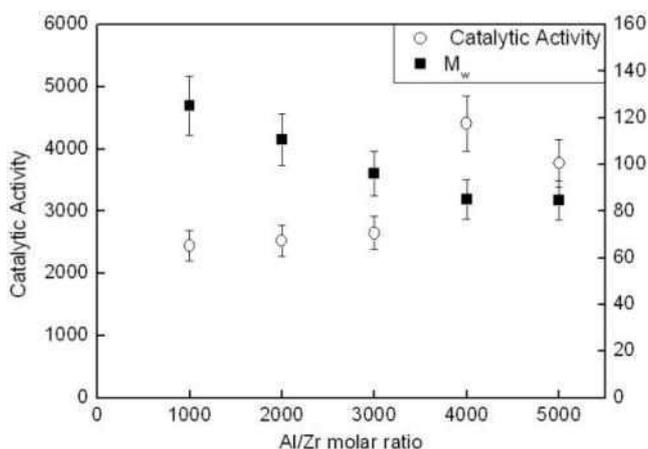


Figure 7. Catalytic activity and M_w of PEDM according to the cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio.

the ingredients for the cocatalyst. TMA enhances terpolymerization by stabilizing the metallocene catalyst and simultaneously eliminating impurities such as trace of water and oxygen in the polymerization medium provided that the TMA content are proper.

However, if the TMA content is in excessive, the TMA interacts with the metallocene catalyst and forms inactive compounds on the surface of the complex, which leads to lower catalytic activity.²¹

In terms of the weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer, a trend emerges whereby the weight-average molecular weight decreases when the Al/Zr molar ratio increases. Specially, the weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer decreases from 125,000 to 84,000 as the Al/Zr molar ratio increases from 1000 to 5000. This result is attributed to chain transfer by alkylation of the cocatalyst.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

We confirmed the synthesis of PE, PED, PEM, and PEDM using ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, and FT-IR analysis.

As the catalyst contents increased, the catalytic activity and the molecular weight of the terpolymer increased simultaneously. The catalytic activity sharply increased but changed little after a polymerization time of 30 min. The catalytic activity was promoted by the increase in the cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio until reaching maximum value at an Al/Zr molar ratio of 4000.

On the other hand, as the cocatalyst/catalyst molar ratio increased, the weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer gradually decreased. As the polymerization temperature increased,

the weight-average molecular weight of the terpolymer decreased, whereas the catalytic activity increased.

In this study, we synthesized the terpolymer with a reactive moiety (*p*-MS) which can be easily converted into functional groups like -OH, -NH, -COOH, anhydrides, and halogens under mild conditions. We have therefore opened up the possibility of developing new high-functional elastomers in the future.

Acknowledgement

This present research was supported by the Fundamental R&D Program for Core Technology of Materials funded by the Ministry of Knowledge Economy, Republic of Korea.

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