Investigation of 1-hexene isomerization and oligomerization catalyzed with β-diketiminato Ni(II) bromide complexes/methylaluminoxane system

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Received 11 October 2004; received in revised form 8 December 2004; accepted 20 December 2004

Available online 26 January 2005

Abstract

β-Diketiminato Ni(II) bromide complexes were synthesized and used to catalyze isomerization and oligomerization of 1-hexene in the presence of methylaluminoxane (MAO). GC–MS and GC analysis confirmed that the products are mainly hexene isomers and dimer isomers. 3-Hexene isomers, trimers and higher oligomers were not detected. The results were ascribed to the configuration of the β-diketiminato Ni(II) catalyst. The migration of the Ni atom from a secondary or tertiary carbon to another one along the alkyl chain of the Ni-alkyl intermediates is blocked by the coordination wedge of the β-diketiminato ligands. However, the migration of the Ni atom from a primary carbon to the adjacent secondary or tertiary carbon is thermodynamically favored.

Keywords: β-Diketiminato Ni(II) complexes; 1-Hexene; Isomerization; Oligomerization; Methylaluminoxane

1. Introduction

In 1995 [1], Brookhart and co-workers first reported the bulky α-dimine Ni(II) and Pd(II) catalysts. These late transition metal (LTM) catalysts are very active and efficient in ethylene polymerization [2], and the obtained ethylene polymers are of a novel branching rich microstructure. In the past decade, the researches on the α-olefin polymerization by using these LTM catalysts were focused on the topics including temperature, pressure, ligand structure [1,3], and mechanism [4]. The bulky axial aryl groups of the α-dimine catalysts retard the chain transfer, and thus lead to the formation of high molecular weight polymers. The concept of the axial steric bulk makes the application of the LTM in α-olefin polymerization become promising. The resting state of the cationic α-dimine catalyst species is an olefin/M-alkyl complex, which adopts a square planar structure [3a] (1 in Fig. 1).

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Researches [5] on β-diketiminato metal complexes went afresh hot in the middle of 1990s. The chemistry of unsaturated three-coordinate β-diketiminato LTM complexes was studied effectively by Holland’s group [6] and Warren’s group [7]. The neutral three-coordinate β-diketiminato LTM alkyl complexes (Fe, Co) adopt a tetrahedral structure. Due to the reduction of Ni(II) atom by alkylation agents, the direct synthesis of the β-diketiminato Ni-alkyl complexes by using methyl lithium or Grignard reagents was reported unproductive [6f]. Warren and co-workers reported series of four-coordinate β-diketiminato Ni-alkyl lutidine complexes that adopt square planar structure [7d] (2 in Fig. 1). Recently, the lutidine-free Ni(II) β-agostic alkyl complexes were successfully isolated and characterized [7f] (3 in Fig. 1). The alkyl intermediates of the β-diketiminato system favor the pseudo four-coordinate β-agostic alkyl 3 over the four-coordinate ethylene/M-alkyl complex 1.

Recently, Gibson gave a review [8] on β-diketiminato transition metal complexes that were used as the α-olefin polymerization catalyst. However, the reports on α-olefin
polymerization by using the \( \beta \)-diketiminato LTM complexes as catalyst precursors are rare in the past decade [7d,9].

Non-skeleton isomerization of \( \alpha \)-olefins, which was catalyzed by the transitional metal catalysts, had been reported everywhere [10]. The isomerization of the substrates was also reported coming along with the \( \alpha \)-olefin oligomerization and polymerization, which were catalyzed by the cationic LTM active center [11]. To our knowledge, the isomerization and oligomerization of 1-hexene catalyzed by the neutral LTM active center were still not reported.

We report here the isomerization and oligomerization of 1-hexene catalyzed by the \( \mathrm{Ni}^{2+} \) (LTM)-diketiminato Ni-P (P = polymeric alkyl) intermediates. That would help understanding the behaviors of \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni-P intermediates in the ethylene polymerization process. The other is to make clear the insertion behaviors of \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni-alkyl intermediates into the \( \alpha \)-olefin copolymerization process. The \( \beta \)-diketiminato \( \mathrm{Ni}^{2+} \) (P = polymeric alkyl) complexes and corresponding characterization will be published elsewhere in the near future.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. \( \beta \)-Diketiminato nickel complexes (4)

To illustrate the trend, we use the Ni(II) bromide complexes as catalyst precursor are rare in the past decade [7d,9].

Non-skeleton isomerization of \( \alpha \)-olefins, which was catalyzed by the transitional metal catalysts, had been reported everywhere [10]. The isomerization of the substrates was also reported coming along with the \( \alpha \)-olefin oligomerization and polymerization, which were catalyzed by the cationic LTM active center [11]. To our knowledge, the isomerization and oligomerization of 1-hexene catalyzed by the neutral LTM active center were still not reported.

We report here the isomerization and oligomerization of 1-hexene catalyzed by using the \( \mathrm{Ni}^{2+} \) (LTM)-diketiminato Ni-R (\( R = \) hexyl) intermediates. That would help understanding the behaviors of \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni-P (P = polymeric alkyl) intermediates in the ethylene polymerization process. The other is to make clear the insertion behaviors of \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni-alkyl intermediates into the \( \alpha \)-olefin copolymerization process. The \( \beta \)-diketiminato \( \mathrm{Ni}^{2+} \) (P = polymeric alkyl) complexes and corresponding characterization will be published elsewhere in the near future.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. \( \beta \)-Diketiminato nickel complexes (4)

\( \mathrm{Ni}^{2+} \) (LTM)-diketiminato Ni-R (4) were prepared according to the literature method [6c], following a two-step procedure as shown in Scheme 1. Lithium \( \beta \)-diketiminato salts were used as prepared in toluene solution and (1,2-dimethoxy-ethane)NiBr\(_2\) (DME)NiBr\(_2\) was used as the Ni(II) source. \( ^1 \)H NMR chemical shifts of these \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni(II) complexes were paramagnetically induced by the unpaired spin of the Ni atom [12] (see Fig. 2). \( ^1 \)H NMR spectrum indicates that there is an equilibrium that shifts between monomer and dimer [6c], depending on the concentration, temperature and the solvent used. The uncertain assignments of the CH(\( CH\)_2\) (e) and the m-Ar (f) in 4a (6c) were clarified by comparing the corresponding chemical shift of 4a with 4b. Compared with 4a, small bulk complex 4b is relative stable and likely to adopt dimer form in solution. Complexes 4a and 4b are noteworthy thermal-stable, but sensitive to air and moisture.

2.2. The isomerization and dimerization of 1-hexene

Table 1 lists the isomerization and oligomerization data of 1-hexene obtained by using 4a and 4b in the presence of MAO. GC-MS analysis confirmed the trace of C7 heptene isomers. This indicates that Ni(II) bromide complex is methylated by MAO and Ni-\( CH\) intermediate is produced as the initial active species. The products are mainly C6 olefin isomers and C12 olefin dimers. These even number olefins suggest the involvement of the Ni(II)-hydride (Ni-H) intermediate in the isomerization and oligomerization process. The Ni-H intermediate might be produced after the insertion of 1-hexene into the Ni-\( CH\) bond and following the release of C7 heptene via the \( \beta \)-H elimination.

GC-MS analysis confirmed that the C6 products are mainly linear inner hexenes (trans- and cis-2-hexene, see Fig. 3). Scheme 2 shows the proposed mechanism of the 1-hexene isomerization. Fig. 4 illustrates the nomenclature used in this work for the Ni-alkyl intermediates. The 2-Ni-hexyl intermediate originated from the 1,2 insertion of 1-hexene to the Ni=H intermediate. The wedge shape configuration of the \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni(II) active species might favor the 1,2 mode insertion of 1-hexene over the 2,1 mode (see Fig. 5). The \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni(II) catalysts show strong tendency of isomerizing the \( \alpha \)-olefin substrate comparing with the pyridine bis-imine Fe(II) system, of which only the small bulk catalysts exhibit this trend [11a,11b]. This isomerization phenomenon was also observed going along with the 1-hexene polymerization process that was catalyzed by the \( \alpha \)-diimine Pd(II) catalyst. After 3 h reaction at 0 °C, 71% of all hexenes in the
Fig. 2. $^1$H NMR spectrum of complex 4a and 4b in C6D6 (~10 mmol/0.5 mL), at 30°C.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalyst</th>
<th>1-Hexene (mL)</th>
<th>1-Hexene and isomers (%)</th>
<th>Dimers (%)</th>
<th>1-Hexene (%)</th>
<th>Trans-2-hexene (%)</th>
<th>Cis-2-hexene (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a $^a$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>46.61</td>
<td>29.85 (55.91)</td>
<td>23.54 (44.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b $^b$</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>81.51</td>
<td>18.49</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>18.59 (18.71)</td>
<td>26.11 (28.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ Measured with GC–MS with DB-5MS column.

$^b$ Measured by GC with HP-5MS column; temperature 45°C, Cat. 4a and 4b 7 × 10$^{-5}$ mol, MAO 80 mg, 3 h; the value in parenthesis is the relative abundance of cis- and trans-isomers in 2-hexenes.

Scheme 2. Presumed relationships of the Ni-hexyl intermediates with hexene isomers (ligands were omitted for clarity, R = propyl).
solution remained as 1-hexene, while 29% of them had been isomerized to internal olefin (2- and 3-hexenes) [11c]. Herein, the neutral Ni(II) active centers are hedged by the coordination wedge of the \( \beta \)-diketiminato ligands. Due to this configuration feature, the \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni-alkyl species should be relative idle comparing with the cationic \( \alpha \)-diimine M-alkyl species and likely to eliminate. Once the \( \beta \)-H elimination occurred and the hexene/Ni-H complexes formed, the reinsertion of these binding 2-hexenes into the Ni-H bond should be more difficult than that of 1-hexene (Scheme 2). Moreover, after being released, the rebounding probability of 2-hexene to the Ni-H intermediate should be lower than that of 1-hexene. Hereby, the preponderance of 2-hexenes in the total hexenes is regarded as the result of this accumulation circle.

Since the 1,2 insertion of 1-hexene to Ni-H is favored by kinetics, the preponderance of 2-hexenes indicates that considerable parts of 2-Ni-hexyl intermediates are derived from 1-Ni-hexyl intermediate. These suggest that the isomerization from 1-Ni-hexyl to 2-Ni-hexyl is thermodynamically favored.

The distribution of the hexenes was also observed being greatly affected by the initial concentration of 1-hexene (see Table 1). Thermodynamic equilibrium cannot be reached within the experiment time scale (due to the bad stability of the active species). The \( \text{trans} / \text{cis} \)-2-hexene ratio should be related to the stability of the respective \( \beta \)-agostic alkyl species and the freedom of C2–C3 bond rotation (see Scheme 2).

Fig. 3. GC spectrum of the hexene isomers (measured by GC with HP-5MS GC column, 1-hexene 0.01 mL, Cat. 4a and 4b = \( 7 \times 10^{-5} \) mol, MAO 80 mg, temperature 45°C, 3 h).

Fig. 4. Nomenclature for the Ni-alkyl intermediates.

Here is the table with the data from Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hexene</th>
<th>Initial Concentration (mol)</th>
<th>Product Distribution (mol%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-hexene</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-hexene</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5. The sketch map comparison of the literature \( \alpha \)-diimine Ni(II) complex [14] and \( \beta \)-diketiminato Ni(II) complex [6c,6e] (hydrogen and some of methyl carbon atoms were omitted for clarity. Ni to A1–A2 means the distance of the nickel atom to the line through A1 atom and A2 atom).
Moreover, decreased steric bulk of the β-diketiminato ligand leads to increases in the portion of 2-hexenes and the trans-/cis-2-hexene ratio (see Fig. 3 and Table 1). These suggest that the rotations of Ni-C and C2-C3 bonds are relative free in less bulky 4b/MAO system comparing with 4a/MAO system. The active species of the β-diketiminato Ni(II)/MAO system might adopt square planner structure or tetrahedral structure. In both cases, the Ni atoms of the β-diketiminato Ni(II) complexes [6] were deeply embodied into the ligands comparing with the α-dimine Ni(II) complexes [14] (see Fig. 5). The rotations [4c,15] and the reinsertion of the binding 2-hexenes to fit the formation of the 3-Ni-hexyl intermediate were thus not favored by the coordination wedge and became very difficult (see Scheme 2). The probability of deriving 3-hexenes was thus greatly lowered. This suggest that the migration (walking) of the Ni(II) atom from the second carbon to the third carbon along the hexyl chain is unfavorable in the β-diketiminato Ni(II)/MAO system.

GC–MS analysis confirmed that these marked peaks are the C12 inner olefin isomers (for these peaks: elm = 168, see Fig. 6). These dimers should be the elimination products of the m-Ni-dodecyl intermediates (m = 5), which formed after the insertion of 1-hexene to the m-Ni-hexyl intermediates (m = 1 or 2) as the literature pathways [11a,b]. The cis- and trans-position isomers of these dimers should be derived after the β-H elimination of Ni with the β′-H and β″-H (see Scheme 3). These C12 dimers include 7-methyl-trans-5-undecene (23.36 min), 7-methyl-trans-4-undecene (25.54 min), trans- or cis-4-dodecene (28.84 min), and trans-5-dodecene (30.31 min).

GC–MS analysis confirmed that those unmarked peaks in the spectrum are also C12 inner olefin isomers (their MS fragment distributions are similar to that of C12 inner olefins). Some of them, such as 5-methyl-trans-4-undecene (27.57 min), should be related to the Ni-methyl(undecyl) intermediates (see Scheme 3). These multi-substituted olefin products suggest that the tert-Ni-dodecyl intermediates could originate from the 1,2 insertion of α-olefin, and this is direct evidence that the metal center can migrate from a primary carbon to the adjacent tertiary carbon. Hereby, we propose an alternative pathway that would lead to the formation of the branch-on-branch structure in the ethylene polymerization process [2,13d,17] (see Scheme 4).

In theory, the binding and the direct insertion of the 1-hexene to the m-Ni-dodecyl intermediates (m = 5) are difficult in both the β-diketiminato and α-dimine system. Due to the open configuration of their ligands, α-dimine catalysts are capable of polymerizing α-olefins via the chain-strengthen mechanism [1,2,11c,13] (see Scheme 5). However, in β-diketiminato catalyst systems, after β-H elimination and the formation of the dodecene/Niβ-H complexes, the rotation and the reinsertion of these binding dodecenes were blocked by the coordination wedge. The m-Ni-dodecyl
intermediates \((m = 1 \text{ or } 2)\), which are fitting for 1-hexene to insert, cannot be produced as the same mechanism occurred in the \(\alpha\)-diamine catalyst systems. Thus, no trimers or higher oligomers were formed. In less bulky \(4b/\text{MAO}\) system, the portion of dimers is larger than that in \(4a/\text{MAO}\) system (see Table 1). Small bulk \(4b/\text{MAO}\) is more promising in \(\pi\)-olefin dimerization than \(4a/\text{MAO}\). In general, the obtained dimers are mainly inner olefin isomers that were derived from the direct \([\beta\text{ or } \beta']\)-H elimination of the \(m\)-Ni-dodecyl intermediates \((m = 5)\). No corresponding olefin products of the \(m\)-Ni-dodecyl intermediates \((m < 4)\) were detected by GC–MS. That is to say, the migration (walking) of the Ni(II) atom from a secondary carbon to another one along the alkyl chain of the \(m\)-Ni-dodecyl intermediates is blocked in the \(\pi\)-diketiminato Ni(II)/MAO system.

3. Conclusion

The \(\pi\)-diketiminato Ni(II) complex/MAO systems shows strong tendency of isomerizing the substrate 1-hexene. The preponderance of 2-hexene in all hexenes is the result of an accumulation circle. Due to the coordination wedge of the bulky \(\pi\)-diketiminato Ni(II) catalyst, 3-hexenes, trimers, and higher oligomers were not produced. The walking of the Ni atom from a primary carbon to the adjacent secondary or tertiary carbon of the alkyl chain is thermodynamically favored. However, the walking of the Ni atom from the secondary carbon to another one along the alkyl chain of the Ni-alkyl intermediates is unfavorable in the \(\pi\)-diketiminato Ni(II)/MAO systems. Small bulk \(4b/\text{MAO}\) is more promising in the purpose of \(\pi\)-olefin isomerization and dimerization than \(4a/\text{MAO}\).

4. Experimental

4.1. General remarks

All manipulations were performed by standard Schlenk techniques under nitrogen atmosphere or in a M. Braun glove-box. All the containers were thoroughly dried by heating under vacuum. Hexane and toluene were thoroughly dried over phosphorus pentoxide and sodium respectively. MAO solid was prepared by the controlled hydrolyzation of the trimethylaluminum (TMA) at 0–60 °C by using \(\text{Al}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3\cdot18\text{H}_2\text{O}\) \((\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{Al} = 1.3)\) that was dispersed in toluene. (DME)\(\text{NiBr}_2\) was prepared according to the reported literature [16]. 2,6-Diisopropylaniline, 2,6-dimethylaniline, \(n\)-butyllithium were purchased from Aldrich Chemical Co. Other commercially available reagents were purchased and used as received.

4.2. \(\text{H}[\text{CuH}_2\text{Pr}_2\cdot2.6\text{C(Me)}_2\cdot2\text{CH} (L_3)]\)

The synthetic routes of \(\pi\)-diketiminato ligand (L) had been reviewed in literature [5]. In this work, the \(\pi\)-diketiminato ligand was synthesized via the direct condensation of 2,6-diisopropylalanine with acetylacetone. 2,6-Diisopropylalanine (0.05 mol) and acetylacetone (0.02 mol) in 100 mL toluene were refluxed in a 230 mL flask for 3 h. After that, the flask was equipped with a Dean–Stark apparatus, and the mixture was further refluxed until no water
found. The solution was distilled under vacuum to remove the by-products (amines and β-keto-amines). The remains were recrystallized in methanol. Colorless crystal was obtained, 1.356 g (yield 67.3%). 1H NMR (CDCl3) (ppm): 12.11 (1H, H-6), 7.12 (6H, o-CH3 Ar), 1.69 (6H, CH(CH3)2). Anal. Calcd. for C21H26N2: C 83.08, H 9.93, N 6.64. Found: C 83.09, H 9.92, N 6.69.

4.3. H[N(C6H5Me2-2,6)C(Me)]2CH(L2)

The synthesis of L2 was performed as in the case of L1, using 0.05 mol 2,6-dimethylaniline, 0.02 mol acetylacetone and 100 mL toluene, and a refluxing time of 3 h. The product was obtained as colorless crystal, 1.189 g (yield 19.4%). 1H NMR (CD2Cl2) (ppm, 300 MHz): 8.95 (2H, p-Ar), 21.51 (2H, p-CH(CH3)2), 26.27 (2H, p-CH(CH3)2), 42.97 (4H, p-CH(CH3)2), 79.09 (6H, CH3); monomer/dimer ≈1/2.5.

4.4. Ni{(N(C6H5Pr2-2,6)C(Me))2CH}Br (4a)

The complex 4a was prepared as the literature method [6c]. Lindag lithium salt was used as prepared in toluene without further isolation. (DME)NiBr2 was used as Ni(II) source. The L2 1.20 g (0.003 mol) was dissolved in 50 mL toluene, and cooled to −78°C. n-Butylthiophenium 0.15 mL (hexane solution) was injected into the tube in sequence. After stirring at 45°C for 3 h, the mixture was cooled to −20°C in cooling bath, and terminated with 3 mL ethanol (NaOH solution in 95% ethanol). Additional water was added and the tube was sealed after CH4 bubbling out. The upper colorless and transparent toluene part was collected for GC or GC–MS analysis.

4.5. Ni{(N(C6H5HMe2-2,6)C(Me))2CH}Br (4b)

The synthesis of complex 4b was performed as in the case of complex 4a, using L2 0.92 g (0.003 mol), n-butylthiophenium 1 mL (hexane solution 2.6 M) and 50 mL toluene, (DME)NiBr2 1.08 g (0.0035 mol) and a stirring time of 12 h at 80°C. Product was obtained as dark blue solid, 0.85 g (yield 54.1%). 1H NMR (CDCl3) (ppm, 500 MHz): 55.59 (4H, m-Ar), 36.67 (4H, CH(CH3)2), −26.27 (2H, p-Ar), −88.08 (2H, p-Ch), monomer 41.10 (4H, m-Ar), 21.57 (2H, p-CH(CH3)2), 8.29 (24H, p-CH(CH3)2), −21.51 (2H, p-Ar), −60.54 (6H, CH3); monomer/dimer ≈5/1. 1H NMR (CD2Cl2) (ppm, ~10 mM): dimer 56.12 (4H, m-Ar), 36.87 (4H, CH(CH3)2), −26.64 (2H, p-Ar), −88.03 (6H, CH3); monomer 40.31 (4H, m-Ar), 22.17 (4H, CH(CH3)2), 8.95 (24H, CH(CH3)2), −22.77 (2H, p-Ar), −59.09 (6H, CH3); monomer/dimer ≈2/1.

4.6. Isomerization and dimerization of 1-hexene

Under nitrogen atmosphere, MAO (∼80 mg) was dissolved in toluene (2 mL) in a 20 mL glass tube, which was sealed with rubber cap and equipped with magnetic bar. 1-Hexene (toluene solution, 0.01 mL/mL) and β-diketiminato Ni(II) complexes 4 (7 × 10−3 mol dissolved in 1 mL toluene) were injected into the tube in sequence. After stirring at 45°C for 3 h, the mixture was cooled to −20°C in cooling bath, and terminated with 3 mL ethanol (NaOH solution in 95% ethanol). Additional water was added and the tube was sealed after CH4 bubbling out. The upper colorless and transparent toluene part was collected for GC or GC–MS analysis.

4.7. Measurement

1H NMR spectra were recorded on a Varian INOVA 500NB NMR spectrometer. Elemental analysis was determined with a Vario EL Series Elemental Analyzer from Elementar. The GC–MS data were recorded by a Finnigan Voyager GC–8000Top Series GC–MS System with DB–5MS GC column. The GC spectrum were recorded by a Varian CP3800 Series GC System with a HP–5MS GC column.

Acknowledgments

The supports by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and SINOPEC (joint-Project 20334030), the Science Foundation of Guangdong Province (Projects 039184, 013173) and the Ministry of Education of China (the Foundation for PHD Training) are gratefully acknowledged.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at 10.1016/j.molcata.2004.12.024.

References


