Prediction of the Influence of Concentration on the Photoluminescence Decay Time of Solutions

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Z. Naturforsch. 35a, 345–349 (1980); received November 7, 1979

A formula for the donor photoluminescence decay time in its dependence on the concentrations of donor D and acceptor A has been derived from equations for the non-radiative excitation energy transfer between randomly distributed donor and acceptor molecules within a nonactive medium. In the limit [D]/[A] → 0 the formula becomes identical with that of Galanin [7], while in the absence of concentration quenching the fluorescence decay time does not depend on the concentrations.

1. Introduction

A number of effects such as the donor photoluminescence (PL) quenching, acceptor PL sensitization, PL concentration depolarization, and also the concentration dependence of the PL decay time can be explained by non-radiative electronic excitation energy transfer (NEEET) between donor (D) molecules as well as donor and acceptor (A) molecules [1–4].

Among the studies of concentration dependent effects there are relatively few concerned with changes of the PL decay time τ. This regards especially theoretical works [5–12]. In the first phenomenological theory of the effect, developed by Vavilov [5], several empirical constants of rather ambiguous physical meaning were used. The theory developed by Galanin [7] is applicable, as will be shown further on, only if the reduced concentrations of acceptor and donator molecules γA, γD fulfill the condition

\[ γA ≥ γD. \]  

The NEEET from D* to A is in this case a one-step process.

In the general case of arbitrary concentrations the transfer of energy from D* to A can proceed in many steps according to the scheme

\[ D^* + D + \cdots + D + A \xrightarrow{\text{ND}} D + D^* + \cdots + D + A \xrightarrow{\text{ND}} D + D + \cdots + D^* + A, \]

where \( k_{DD} \) and \( k_{DA} \) are the rate constants for NEEET processes between D* and D, and D* and A, respectively.

It has been shown in a number of experimental works that it is necessary to take into account the multistep process (2) if inequality (1) is not satisfied [13–15]. This was confirmed by investigations of the dependence of the donor PL quantum yield on the acceptor concentration and on the quenching by dimers. The exact solution of the problem of concentration dependence of the PL decay time with the multistep NEEET process (2) taken into account is presented in this paper [16].

2. Photoluminescence Decay Time

As in our previous papers [18, 19] the following assumptions and notations have been adopted:

1. Donor D and acceptor A molecules, are randomly distributed.

2. The absorption and emission spectra of D as well as the emission spectrum of D and the absorption spectrum of A overlap partially.

3. The NEEET process occurs between molecules D* excited to the first singlet state and the molecules D and A in the ground state by dipole-dipole interaction, i.e. its rate constants \( k_{DD} \) and \( k_{DA} \) are proportional to the reciprocal of the sixth power of the donor-acceptor distance.

4. The desactivation of a D* molecule depends essentially on the configuration \( σ \) of unexcited molecules D and A in the vicinity of D*. This configuration is assumed to be invariant in time and determined by the distances of the molecules D and A from D*.

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tion $\sigma$ is denoted by $P_\sigma$. PL emission (rate constant $k_F$), internal conversion ($k_q$), NEEET from $D^*$ to $D$ ($k_{DD\sigma}$) or from $D^*$ to $A$ ($k_{DA\sigma}$) are competing processes.

5. The relative probabilities of the said processes amount to

$$P_\sigma = \sum k_{\sigma\alpha} k_\alpha^{-1} P_\alpha, \quad \sigma = F, q, DD \text{ or } DA,$$

where

$$k_\sigma = k_F + k_q + k_{DD\sigma} + k_{DA\sigma}.$$

6. The excited molecules $D^*$ can be classified into types $D_{\sigma}^{(m)}$ of order $m$, where $m$ is the number of preceding energy transfer steps. $D_{\sigma}^{(0)}$ denotes a molecule excited directly by the external light. Molecules in a configuration $\sigma$ are designated by $D_{\sigma}^{(0)}$, and their number by $N_{\sigma}^{(0)}$.

Note that molecules $D_{\sigma}^{(m)}$ can produce molecules $D_{\sigma}^{(m+1)}$ or lose their energy by one of the other processes specified in assumption 4.

The PL decay time can be calculated from the defining relation

$$\tau = \frac{\sum \sum \int t N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t) \, dt}{\sum \sum \int N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t) \, dt},$$

where $t$ is the time elapsed since a flash illumination.

The integrals

$$I_{\sigma}^{(m)} = \int_0^\infty N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t) \, dt \quad \text{and} \quad I_{\sigma}^{(m)} = \int_0^\infty t' N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t') \, dt'$$

can be determined from the set of the Eqs. [18]

$$\dot{N}_{\sigma}^{(0)}(t) = -k_\sigma N_{\sigma}^{(0)}(t),$$

$$\dot{N}_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t) = -k_\sigma N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(t) + \left[ \sum k_{DD\sigma} N_{\sigma}^{(m-1)}(t) \right] P_{\sigma}, \quad m = 1, 2, 3, \ldots, \infty,$$

with the initial and final conditions

$$N_{\sigma}^{(0)}(0) = N_{0\sigma}, \quad N_{\sigma}^{(0)}(\infty) = 0,$$

$$N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(0) = N_{\sigma}^{(m)}(\infty) = 0, \quad (m = 1, 2, \ldots, \infty).$$

The method of calculating $I_{\sigma}^{(m)}$ has been presented elsewhere [18]. The result was

$$I_{\sigma}^{(m)} = \left( N_{0\sigma}/k_\sigma \right) P_{DD}^m.$$

To calculate $I_{\sigma}^{(m)}$, Eqs. (7') and (7'') are multiplied by $t$ and integrated over $t$ within the range $0, \infty$. Using the identity

$$t \, dN_{\sigma}^{(m)} = dt (t N_{\sigma}^{(m)}) - N_{\sigma}^{(m)} \, dt,$$

(8) and (6) one gets

$$k_{\sigma} I_{\sigma}^{(0)} = I_{\sigma}^{(0)},$$

$$k_{\sigma} I_{\sigma}^{(m)} = I_{\sigma}^{(m)} + \sum k_{DD\sigma} I_{\sigma}^{(m-1)} P_{\sigma}. \quad (10')$$

By multiplying (10) by $k_{DD\sigma}/k_\sigma$ and summing up both sides with respect to $\sigma$ we obtain, using (9),

$$\sum k_{DD\sigma} I_{\sigma}^{(0)} = N_0 \cdot K,$$

with

$$K = \sum (k_{DD\sigma}/k_\sigma^2) P_{\sigma}, \quad N_0 = N_{0\sigma} P_{\sigma}, \quad \text{(11)}$$

and $N_0$ the number of directly excited donors at time $t = 0$. The system of Eqs. (10') and (10'') leads to (see Appendix 1):

$$I_{\sigma}^{(m)} = (N_{0\sigma}/k_\sigma^2) P_{DD}^m + m (N_{0\sigma}/k_\sigma) K P_{DD}^{m-1}. \quad (12)$$

After substitution of (9) and (12) into (5) and using the denotations

$$L = \sum \frac{P_{\sigma}/k_\sigma^2}{P_{DD}},$$

and

$$P_F = \sum (k_\sigma P_\sigma)/k_\sigma,$$

we obtain

$$\tau = \frac{k_F L \sum_{m=0}^\infty P_{DD}^m + K P_F \sum_{m=0}^\infty m \cdot P_{DD}^{m-1}}{P_F \sum_{m=0}^\infty P_{DD}^m}. \quad (15)$$

As $P_{DD} < 1$ [see definition (3)] we have

$$\sum_{m=0}^\infty m \cdot P_{DD}^{m-1} = (1 - P_{DD})^{-2} \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{m=0}^\infty P_{DD}^m = (1 - P_{DD})^{-1}. \quad (16)$$

Thus

$$\tau = L k_F/P_F + K (1 - P_{DD})^{-1}.$$  \quad (17)

To determine $\tau$ it is necessary to calculate $L$ and $K$. $P_F$ and $P_{DD}$ have been calculated elsewhere [18] with the result

$$P_F = \eta_0 [1 - f(\gamma)] \quad \text{and} \quad P_{DD} = \alpha f(\gamma), \quad (18)$$

with

$$\eta_0 = k_F/(k_F + k_q),$$

$$f(\gamma) = (\pi^{1/2}) \gamma \exp (\gamma^2) [1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)], \quad (19)$$

and

$$\gamma = \gamma_D + \gamma_A = \frac{(\pi^{1/2})}{2} \left[ C_D/C_{0D} + C_A/C_{0A} \right]; \quad \alpha = \gamma_D/\gamma. \quad (20)$$

$C_D$ and $C_A$, and $C_{0D}$ and $C_{0A}$ denote concentrations and critical concentrations, respectively, of the donor and the acceptor.
The calculation of \( L \) yields (see Appendix 2)

\[
L = r_G P_F / k_F, \tag{21}
\]

where

\[
\tau_G = \tau_0 [1 + \gamma^2 - (1.5 + \gamma^2) f(\gamma)] / (1 - f(\gamma)), \tag{22}
\]

is the PL decay time as obtained [20] by Galanin [7]. For \( k \) the following formula was obtained (see Appendix 3):

\[
K = r_0 \{ h_0 (y) - a y^2 [1 - f(y)] \}. \tag{23}
\]

Substitution of (18), (21), (22), and (23) into (17), together with adoption of the possibility of monomer quenching [21] results in the final formula for the concentration dependence of the PL decay time:

\[
\frac{\tau}{\tau_0} = 1 + \gamma^2 - (1.5 + \gamma^2) f + \alpha x_0 f(f + \gamma^2 - \frac{1}{2}) - \alpha x_0 \gamma^2 \left[ \frac{1}{1 - f} \right] (1 - f), \tag{24}
\]

where \( f = f(\gamma) \), and \( x_0 \) denotes the probability that no degradation of the excitation energy during the transfer between monomers takes place.

For the limiting case \( \gamma_A \rightarrow 0 \), \( \alpha \rightarrow 1 \), \( x_0 = 1 \) (no monomer quenching), formula (24) gives a constant decay time in the entire range of concentrations (\( \tau = \tau_0 \)). On the other hand, for \( \gamma_A > \gamma_D \), \( \alpha \rightarrow 0 \) formula (24) becomes (22) as obtained by Galanin. Figure 1 shows \( \tau/\tau_0 \) as described by formula (24) for several values of the parameter \( \alpha = \gamma_D / \gamma \) (\( x_0 = 1 \), solid lines) and for \( x_0 < 1 \) (monomer quenching). The effect of this quenching is especially pronounced for \( \gamma_D > \gamma_A \) (compare curves \( a, a' \) and \( c, c' \)).

3. Discussion and Final Remarks

Formula (24) may be adopted for systems with dimers as acceptor. In this case

\[
\gamma_A = \gamma_D = (\pi^{1/2} / 2) \cdot (C'' / C_0''), \tag{25}
\]

where \( C'' \) and \( C_0'' \) are the concentration and critical concentration, respectively, of dimers \( D_1 \), and

\[
\alpha = [(1 + 4 K_\gamma \gamma^{1/2} - 1) / (2 \gamma K_\gamma)].
\]

The dimensionless constant \( K_\gamma = \gamma_D / \gamma_D'' \) is related to the dimerization constant \( K = C'' / C^2 \) through the relation

\[
K_\gamma = 2 K C_0'' / (\pi^{1/2} C_0''), \tag{26}
\]

there \( C'' \) and \( C_0'' \) are the monomer concentration and critical concentration, respectively.

The curves representing \( \tau/\tau_0 \) calculated with (24) for several values of \( K_\gamma \) are shown in Figure 2. Characteristic for low values of \( K_\gamma \), \( \alpha \approx 1 \) within a wide range of concentrations, while for \( K_\gamma \gg 1 \) and in the high concentration region \( \alpha \approx 0 \) and the curves calculated according to (24) and (22) differ but slightly (compare dashed curve and curve \( f \)).

Presented in Fig. 2 are also experimental results for Rhodamine 6G in glycerin solutions, taken from Ref. [22]. The experimental values of \( \tau/\tau_0 \), corrected for secondary effects, remain constant within

![Fig. 1. PL decay time vs. reduced concentration \( \gamma = \gamma_D + \gamma_A \) calculated from (24) for different values of \( \alpha = \gamma_D / \gamma \) and \( x_0 \).](image)

![Fig. 2. PL decay time for rhodamine 6G (o) in pure glycerin solutions versus \( \gamma = \gamma_D + \gamma_D'' \). Continuous lines: theoretical curves calculated from (24) for different values \( K_\gamma \); dashed line: theoretical curve calculated from (22).](image)
a wide range of concentrations, dropping steeply afterwards. This is the typical course of concentration dependent changes of \( \tau / \tau_0 \) as observed experimentally for other luminescent systems [5 – 10]. Curve 1 has been calculated from (24) for \( K_\alpha = 0.02 \) and \( \tau_0 = 0.98 \). A good agreement of the experimental results with the theoretical curve in the entire range of concentrations is evident. It should be pointed out that the dimerization constant \( K \) and concentrations \( C', C'' \) respectively, \( C_0 \) therefore also \( K_\alpha \) and \( \gamma \), have been determined experimentally. Relation (24) corresponds to a multistep NEEET process as described by (2) and relation (22) to a single-step NEEET process. Thus relation (22) does allow for the migration of energy from donors of the zeroth order only (excited directly).

An other description of the multistep process is given in [17]. The formula obtained in that paper starts from the assumption that NEEET occurs upon completion of the vibrational relaxation in the excited state, and the mean time of localization of the excitation energy on molecules of any order is the same. This assumption has led to an expression predicting a rise of \( \tau / \tau_0 \) followed by its drop with increasing concentration.

The expression gave a correct description of experimental results however for a lowered value of probability \( \tau_0 \) only [22]. It has been shown in [23] that for a regular lattice of donor molecules the assumption under consideration is valid. Nonetheless it is the author’s opinion that for the general case of random distribution of molecules D and A in the solution it may prove incorrect.

The analysis of relation (24) carried out in the preceding section has led to the conclusion that the NEEET process in an assembly of molecules of the same kind does not change the value of \( \tau / \tau_0 \) as long as no PL quenching occurs in this assembly. Note that formula (24) obtained in this work has been derived without any simplifications of mathematics from a set of kinetic equations (7) which proved to play the essential part in the solving of the problem under consideration.

Appendix 1

For \( m = 1 \) formula (10’’’’) leads to

\[
I_{cl}^{(1)} = I_{c}^{(1)}/k_c + (\sum_{\sigma} k_{DD\sigma} I_{cl}^{(2)}(P_{cl}/k_c)).
\]  

(App.1)

Substitution of (9) and (10’’’’) in (A.1) results into

\[
I_{cl}^{(1)} = (N_0/\kappa )^2 P_{DD} + N_0/k_c.
\]  

In a similar fashion (10’’’’) gives

\[
I_{cl}^{(2)} = I_{c}^{(2)}/k_c + (\sum_{\sigma} k_{DD\sigma} I_{cl}^{(2)}(P_{cl}/k_c)).
\]  

(App.3)

Substituting relations (9) and (A.2) for \( I_{c}^{(2)} \) and \( I_{cl}^{(2)} \) respectively, we obtain

\[
I_{cl}^{(2)} = (N_0/\kappa )^2 P_{DD}
\]  

(A.4)

\[+ \left[ N_0 P_{DD} \sum_{\sigma} (k_{DD\sigma}/\kappa ) P_{c} + N_0 K \sum_{\sigma} k_{DD\sigma}/\kappa _\sigma P_{c} \right] P_{cl}/k_c.\]

The first sum in the bracket is \( K \), the other sum is equal to \( P_{DD} \) (compare formulae (11) and (3)). Thus, finally, we have

\[
I_{cl}^{(2)} = (N_0/\kappa )^2 P_{DD} + (2 N_0 K/k_c) P_{DD}.
\]  

(A.5)

Hence the general formula (12).

Appendix 2. Calculation of \( L \)

The identity \( \int_0^\infty t \exp (-k_c t) dt \) applied to formula (13) yields

\[
L = \sum_{\sigma} \int_0^\infty t [\sum_{\sigma} P_{c} \exp (-k_c t)] dt.
\]  

(A.6)

For an equal-probability distribution of molecules D and A in the volume \( V \) of a sample there is (see assumption 4)

\[
P_{c} = V^{-N_0 + N_\alpha} dR_1 \ldots dR_{N_0 - 1} \cdot dr_1 \ldots dr_{N_\alpha},
\]  

(A.7)

where \( R_1, R_2, \ldots \) and \( r_1, r_2, \ldots \) are the distances D-D\(^{(0)} \) and A-D\(^{(0)} \), respectively. According to (A.7) and (4) the sum in the integral in relation (A.6) can be written as

\[
\sum_{\sigma} P_{c} \exp (-k_c t)
\]  

\[= \exp \left( -\frac{t}{\tau_0} \right) \int_0^\infty \exp (-k_D N_{D-1} + k_A N_{A-1} \frac{dR_1 \ldots dR_{N_D-1}}{V^{N_D-1}} \frac{dr_1 \ldots dr_{N_A-1}}{V^{N_A}}.)
\]  

(A.8)

where

\[
k_{DD\sigma} = (k_F + k_D) \sum_{i=1}^{N_{D-1}} \left( \frac{R_{0D}}{R_i} \right)^6;
\]

\[
k_{DA\sigma} = (k_F + k_A) \sum_{i=1}^{N_{A-1}} \left( \frac{R_{0A}}{r_i} \right)^6; \quad \tau_0 = (k_F + k_A)^{-1}.
\]

Formula (A.8) represents a normalized decay func-
tion $g(t) = N(t)/N(0)$ for the excited state of molecules $D$ averaged over all configuration $\sigma$ of molecules $D$ and $A$. The limiting value of the last integral (A.8) is

$$\lim_{t \to \infty} \int \exp\left(-k_{DA} t\right) \frac{dV_{DA}}{V_{DA}} = \exp\left(-2\gamma_A \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right).$$

This result has been obtained by Förster [21], and also by other investigators [7, 18].

An analogous result holds true for the first integral in (A.8). Thus

$$g(t) = \sum_{\sigma} P_{\sigma} \exp\left(-k_{\sigma} t\right) = \exp\left[-\int \exp\left(-k_{DA} t\right) \frac{dV_{DA}}{V_{DA}}\right].$$

(S.10)

Substitution of (A.10) in (A.6) leads, together with [7]

$$\tau_0 = \int_0^\infty t \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt$$

to

$$L = \int_0^\infty t \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt$$

$$= \tau_0 \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt$$

$$= \tau_0 \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt$$

$$= \tau_0 \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \left[1 - \text{erf}(\gamma)\right] dt$$

After substitution of (A.12) in (A.11) we have, finally,

$$K = \frac{\gamma_D}{(\tau_0)^{1/2}} \int_0^\infty t \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right]$$

$$= \tau_0 \left[\frac{1}{2} \gamma \left[\frac{\gamma D}{\gamma_A} (1 - f(\gamma)) - \gamma \gamma_D (1 - f(\gamma))\right]\right].$$

Appendix 3. Calculation of $K$

From the relation

$$k_{DA} = \int_0^\infty t \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + k_{DA} \right) \right] dt \exp\left[-k_{DA} t\right] dt$$

it follows

$$K = \sum_{\sigma} k_{DA} \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)\right] dt \sum_{\sigma} \exp\left(-k_{DA} t\right) dt \exp\left(-k_{DDa} t\right) dt$$

The term in the brackets can be calculated in a similar way as (A.9). As a result the following relation is obtained:

$$\sum_{\sigma} \exp\left(-k_{DA} t\right) dt \exp\left(-k_{DDa} t\right) dt$$

$$= \exp\left[-2\gamma_A \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right] dt$$

$$= \exp\left[-2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right].$$

(12)

After substitution of (A.12) in (A.11) we have, finally,

$$K = \frac{\gamma_D}{(\tau_0)^{1/2}} \int_0^\infty t \exp\left[-\left(\frac{t}{\tau_0} + 2\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right] dt \exp\left[-\gamma \left(\frac{t}{\tau_0}\right)^{1/2}\right]$$

$$= \tau_0 \left[\frac{1}{2} \gamma \left[\frac{\gamma D}{\gamma_A} (1 - f(\gamma)) - \gamma \gamma_D (1 - f(\gamma))\right]\right].$$

References


[9] Recently an approximate solution of this problem was given in [17].


[13] Acc. to (20) $\gamma$ in (22) is a sum of $\gamma_D$ and $\gamma_A$, this differs from the original expression obtained by Galanin, where $\gamma = \gamma_A$.

[14] See cases (Ba) and (C) in Chapter 6 of [18].
