Syntheses and specific interactions of poly(hydroxyethyl methacrylate-\(b\)-vinyl pyrrolidone) diblock copolymers and comparisons with their corresponding miscible blend systems

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Abstract

Combination of atom transfer radical and conventional free radical polymerizations has been successfully used to prepare poly(hydroxyethyl methacrylate-\(b\)-vinyl pyrrolidone) (PHEMA-\(b\)-PVP) copolymers with controlled molecular weight and low polydispersity (<1.4). The thermal behavior and specific interaction of PHEMA-\(b\)-PVP diblock copolymers and their corresponding PHEMA/PVP blends were characterized. The result shows that glass transition temperatures of diblock copolymers analysed by differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) are higher than those of the blends. Infrared and solid-state NMR spectroscopic analyses show that hydrogen-bonding interaction of hydroxyl—carbonyl groups of diblock copolymers was also greater than that of the blends. Measurement of the proton spin—lattice relaxation time in the rotating frame, \(T_1^{\text{H}}\), reveals that all diblock copolymers and blends possess one composition-dependent \(T_1^{\text{H}}\), indicating that both diblock copolymers and blends are homogeneous, which is consistent with the DSC analysis.

Keywords: Atom transfer radical polymerization; Block copolymer; Hydrogen bonding

1. Introduction

Block copolymers composed of segments with different properties have been of considerable interest. Some fundamental research and practical technologies to clarify or improve the block copolymers have been reported [1,2]. These complex nanostructures have shown promising utilizations in environmental, biomedical, sequestration of pollutants, drug delivery, gene therapy, coatings, and composites.

Atom transfer radical polymerization (ATRP) is known to polymerize a relatively broad range of monomers such as styrenes, acrylates, and methacrylates, etc. However, not all alkenes have been successfully polymerized by ATRP including vinyl acetate, vinyl pyrrolidone, olefins, etc., presumably due to either relatively strong carbon—halogen bonds or low radical reactivities. Several efforts have been attempted to overcome this limitation to prepare related diblock copolymers. The controlled/living radical polymerizations (CRPs) were performed by combining with different polymerization methods to prepare novel block copolymers, i.e., with cationic [3], ring-opening [4], condensation [5], and anionic polymerizations [6]. Another approach is to combine CRP with conventional radical polymerization. Priddy et al. reported a method to prepare diblock copolymers by combining conventional radical polymerization and TEMPO-based CRP [7]. Destarac and Boutevin reported a similar approach by combining conventional radical polymerization and ATRP to prepare block copolymers of styrene with \(n\)-butyl acrylate using a difunctional initiator [8]. Matyjaszewski et al. reported four different methods to synthesize block copolymers by combining ATRP and conventional radical polymerization [9].
2-Hydroxyethyl methacrylate (HEMA) is a commercially important monomer that has been widely used in the manufacture of soft contact lenses and intraocular lenses [10]. HEMA copolymers exhibit excellent biocompatibility and good blood compatibility [11]. Other biomedical applications for HEMA-based materials include an embedding substrate for the examination of cells using light microscopy [12], and inert matrices for the slow release of drugs [13]. Poly(vinyl pyrrolidone) (PVP) is a water-soluble tertiary amide and a strong Lewis base that also possesses good biocompatibility. Devices based on hydrogels of PVP have found several medical applications. Poly(vinyl pyrrolidone) with molecular weight (Mw) of 11,000 g/mol was purchased from Acros Chemical Company, Inc.

2.2. Synthesis of difunctional initiator

The initiator was synthesized as described previously by Matyjaszewski et al. [9]. The 2,2'-azobisis[2-methyl-N-(2-(2-bromoisobutryloxy)ethyl)propionamid] (AMBEP) was prepared by adding 2-bromoisobutyl bromide (5.63 mL, 4.34 × 10^{-2} mol) into a stirring mixture of 2,2'-azobisis[2-methyl-N-(2-hydroxyethyl)propionamide] (5 g, 1.73 × 10^{-2} mol) and triethylamine (6.02 mL, 4.34 × 10^{-2} mol) in 150 mL of dry CHCl3 in an ice bath for 1 h. After complete addition of the acid bromide, the reaction flask was stirred at room temperature for 3 h. The mixture was then transferred to a 500 mL separatory funnel and extracted consecutively with 3 × 200 mL of H2O. The organic phase was dried over MgSO4, filtered and the solvent was removed by rotary evaporation. The product, a white solid, was recrystallized from diethyl ether/ethyl acetate and dried under vacuum (3 g, 39.2%). 1H NMR (CDCl3), δ: 7.18 (s, 2H), 4.32 (t, 4H), 3.67 (q, 4H), 1.90 (s, 12H), 1.35 (s, 12H) ppm. Anal. Calcd for C20H34Br2N4O6: C, 40.97; H, 5.84; N, 9.56. Found: C, 40.89; H, 5.90; N, 9.48.

2.3. Polymerization procedures

For a typical HEMA atom transfer radical polymerization via monofunctional initiator, PHEMA0, CuCl (0.10 g, 1 × 10^{-3} mol) was added into a dry round-bottom flask equipped with a stir bar. After sealing the flask with a rubber septum, the flask was degassed and back-filled with nitrogen three times and then left under nitrogen. MeOH (1 mL) and HEMA (14 mL, 11.61 × 10^{-2} mol) were added; both were deoxygenated and added via syringes that had been purged with nitrogen. The complexing agent, bpy (0.94 g, 5.5 × 10^{-3} mol) in 1 mL of MeOH, was added, and the solution was stirred until the Cu complex was formed. After the complex formation, (1-bromomo)benzene (BrB) (0.41 mL, 3 × 10^{-3} mol) was added to the flask and the flask was placed at room temperature for 24 h. Purification was achieved by passing the methanolic reaction solution through a silica column to remove the Cu(II) catalyst. The blue catalyst was adsorbed onto the silica to yield a colorless azeotropic solution. MeOH was evaporated by vacuum distillation to obtain concentrated mixture and the mixture was precipitated into cold diethyl ether to produce white polymer. Based on 1H NMR analysis, conversions greater than 80% were routinely obtained. GPC analysis using DMF as eluent gave M_w = 12,800 g/mol and M_w/M_n = 1.13. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the resulting PHEMA homopolymers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polymer</th>
<th>M_w (theory)</th>
<th>M_w (1H NMR)</th>
<th>M_w (GPC)</th>
<th>M_w/M_n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA0</td>
<td>4100</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA2</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>9900</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA4</td>
<td>3700</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>11,400</td>
<td>1.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHEMA6</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>5300</td>
<td>16,200</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA8</td>
<td>9400</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>19,500</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a typical HEMA atom transfer radical polymerization via difunctional initiator, (PHEMA)$_2$, the AMBEP initiator (0.80 g, 1.37 × 10⁻³ mol) and CuCl (0.27 g, 2.74 × 10⁻³ mol) were added to a 50-mL flask containing a stir bar. The flask was degassed and back-filled with nitrogen three times before adding deoxygenated HEMA (17 mL, 14.25 × 10⁻² mol) and MeOH (20 mL) via purged syringes. After the flask was in ice bath for 10 min, the bpy (1.04 g, 5.48 × 10⁻³ mol) was added and the copper complex formed. After 20 min, the reaction flask was stirred at room temperature for 24 h. Purification was achieved by passing the methanolic reaction solution through a silica column to remove the Cu(II) catalyst. The blue catalyst was adsorbed onto the silica to yield a colorless aqueous solution. MeOH was removed by vacuum distillation to obtain concentrated mixture and the mixture was precipitated into cold diethyl ether to produce white polymer. Conversions greater than 70% were routinely obtained, based on $^1$H NMR analysis. GPC analysis using DMF as eluent gave $M_n = 16,200$ g/mol and $M_n/M_w = 1.17$. The characteristics of the resulting (PHEMA)$_2$ homopolymers are also summarized in Table 1.

For conventional radical polymerization of diblock copolymer, the homopolymer (PHEMA$_{k1}$)$_2$ (1.50 g, 1.58 × 10⁻⁴ mol) was added into a 50 mL flask containing a stir bar. The flask was degassed and back-filled with nitrogen three times before adding deoxygenated VP (3.50 mL, 3.20 × 10⁻² mol) via purged syringes. After 20 min, the flask was placed in an oil bath set at 70 °C. After 24 h, the product was precipitated into cold ether. Conversions greater than 50% were routinely obtained, based on $^1$H NMR analysis. GPC analysis using DMF as eluent gave $M_n = 35,400$ g/mol and $M_n/M_w = 1.32$. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the resulting PHEMA-b-PVP block copolymers.

### 2.4. Blend preparation

Desired composition containing HEMA and PVP was dissolved in MeOH at a concentration of 5 wt% and stirred for 6–8 h. The solution was allowed to evaporate slowly at 25 °C for 1 day on a Teflon plate and dried at 90 °C for 3 days to ensure total elimination of the solvent.

### 2.5. Characterizations

$^1$H NMR spectra were recorded in solutions using a Bruker AM500 (500 MHz) spectrometer, with the solvent’s proton signal as a standard. Elemental analysis was carried out on a Heraus CHN-rapid elemental analyzer. Molecular weights and molecular weight distribution were determined by GPC using a Waters 510 HPLC-equipped with a 410 Differential Refractometer, a UV detector, and three Ultrastyragel columns (100, 500, and 10³ Å) connected in series in the order of increasing pore size using DMF as an eluent at a flow rate of 0.6 mL/min. The molecular weight calibration curve was obtained using poly styrene standards. Glass transition temperatures ($T_g$) were measured by DSC from Du-Pont (model 910 DSC-9000 controller). Heating rate was 20 °C/min ranging 30–220 °C in nitrogen atmosphere. Approximately 4–6 mg sample was weighted and sealed in an aluminum pan. The sample was quickly cooled to 0 °C from the first scan and then scanned between 0 and 220 °C at a scan rate of 20 °C/min. The $T_g$ was taken as the midpoint of the heat capacity transition between the upper and lower points of deviation from the extrapolated glass and liquid lines. FT-IR spectra were obtained on a Nicolet Avatar 320 FT-IR Spectrometer, 32 scans at a resolution of 1 cm⁻¹ were collected with a KBr disk at room temperature. MeOH solution containing the sample was cast onto a KBr disk and dried under similar condition to that used in bulk preparation. The sample chamber was purged with nitrogen in order to maintain the film dryness. High-resolution solid-state $^{13}$C NMR experiments were carried out at 25 °C using a Bruker DSX-400 Spectrometer operating at a resonance frequency of 100.47 MHz for $^{13}$C. The high-resolution solid-state $^{13}$C NMR spectra were acquired by using the cross-polarization (CP)/magic angle spinning (MAS)/high-power dipolar decoupling (DD) technique. A 90° pulse width of 3.9 ms with 3 s pulse delay time and an acquisition time of 30 ms with 2048 scans were used. A magic angle sample-spinning rate of 5.4 kHz was used to avoid absorption overlapping. The proton spin–lattice relaxation time in the rotating frame ($T_1^p$) was determined indirectly via carbon observation using a 90°–τ–spin lock pulse sequence prior to CP. The data acquisition was performed at a delay time ($	au$) ranging from 0.1 to 12 ms with a contact time of 1 ms.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Polymer characterizations

Since acrylates can be polymerized in a controlled manner by ATRP at relatively low temperatures (e.g., 20 °C), the combination of conventional radical polymerization with ATRP using a difunctional initiator can be achieved. The synthetic routes of PHEMA homopolymer and PHEMA-b-PVP diblock copolymer are shown in Scheme 1. The synthesis strategy of the diblock copolymer includes two major steps, the PHEMA homopolymer is first synthesized by ATRP using difunctional AMBEP initiator at room temperature to avoid significant loss of the central azo functional group and the above PHEMA macroinitiator containing the central azo linkage was used in the block copolymerization with N-vinyl-2-pyrrolidone (VP) by conventional radical polymerization. As the fragments from the decomposition azo group of the macroinitiator,
VP monomer can be incorporated into each PHEMA chain to form the PHEMA-b-PVP block copolymer. Additionally, we also prepared PHEMA homopolymer with monofunctional initiator of (1-bromoethyl)benzene to further compare the difference between the miscible block copolymer and its blend systems. The (1-bromoethyl)benzene is considered less likely to cause a significant “end-group” effect when assessing the water solubility of the PHEMA homopolymers (Scheme 1). Moreover, the phenyl protons also provide a useful 1H NMR label for end-group analysis. These observed discrepancies between results from GPC and NMR shown in Tables 1 and 2 are probably due to the large systematic errors (200–300%) that incurred in the GPC analysis. Polystyrene calibration standards are not suitable for the analysis of methacrylic polymers. In addition, the DMF is only a marginal solvent for polystyrene, which could lead to a significant over-estimation of the true molecular weight of the well-solvated PHEMA homopolymer. This latter problem has been reported by Armes et al. [14]. The synthetic details and characterization data for various PHEMA polymers are summarized in Table 1. By comparing the GPC data obtained using this protocol with the Mn calculated from end-group analysis using 1H NMR spectroscopy, we believe that the latter method is more accurate. Table 2 shows the synthetic details and characterization data for PHEMA-b-PVP copolymers. Their polydispersities are below 1.4, suggesting that these diblock copolymers prepared by conventional radical polymerization are controllable.

3.2. DSC analyses

The most widely used criterion for the judgment of the miscibility behavior of the diblock copolymers and the blends is the existence of a single $T_g$. The composition $T_g$ of the diblock copolymers or blends are shown in Fig. 1. All diblock copolymers and blends show composition-dependent single $T_g$, implying that they are all fully miscible with a homogeneous amorphous phase. Fig. 2 shows that single $T_g$ of all diblock copolymers and blends are significantly higher than those predicted by Fox or Linear rule. The observed large positive deviation reveals that strong hydrogen bonding must have existed between the hydroxyl group of PHEMA and the carbonyl group of PVP. Generally, if the $T_g$–composition relationship is substantially deviated, neither the linear relationship nor the ideal rule of Fox is applicable. It has been generally suggested that the Kwei equation[16] is more appropriate to fit the $T_g$ relationship to the composition of these highly deviated miscible block copolymer or polymer blends:

$$T_g = \frac{W_1T_{g1} + kW_2T_{g2}}{W_1 + kW_2} + qW_1W_2$$

(1)

where $W_1$ and $W_2$ are the weight fractions of the components, $T_{g1}$ and $T_{g2}$ represent the corresponding glass transition temperatures, and $k$ and $q$ are the fitting constants. In this study, $k = 1$ and $q = 185$ for the diblock copolymers and $k = 1$ and $q = 80$ were obtained for the blends from the non-linear
least-squares ‘best fit’ approach as shown in Fig. 2. Here \( q \) is a parameter corresponding to the strength of hydrogen bonding in the system, reflecting a balance between the breaking of the self-association and the forming of the inter-association hydrogen bonding. These observed positive \( q \) values of 185 and 80 indicate a stronger inter-association of hydrogen-bonding interaction that existed between the hydroxyl group of PHEMA and the carbonyl group of PVP than self-association hydrogen bonding of the pure PHEMA. Furthermore, the observed difference in \( q \) value from these two systems implies that the strength of the inter-association interaction within the PHEMA-b-PVP copolymer is greater than that of the corresponding PHEMA/PVP blend, which is also consistent with our previous studies [17,18].

3.3. FT-IR analyses

FT-IR spectroscopy has been successfully applied in numerous diblock copolymers and blends possessing intermolecular interaction through hydrogen bonding. Taking into account the chemical structure of the pure PHEMA, it possesses both proton donor of hydroxyl group and proton acceptor of carbonyl group, now, we turn our attention to the hydrogen-bonded blends in the hydroxyl stretching of PHEMA-b-PVP copolymers and PHEMA/PVP blend as shown in Fig. 3. The pure PHEMA shows two unresolved bands in the hydroxyl-stretching region, corresponding to the free hydroxyl at \( 3525 \text{ cm}^{-1} \) and the hydrogen-bonded hydroxyl—carbonyl of the PHEMA at \( 3380 \text{ cm}^{-1} \). Fig. 3 also illustrates that the intensity of free hydroxyl group decreases gradually with the increase of the PVP content in both diblock copolymer and blend systems as would be expected. Furthermore, the intensity of the free hydroxyl group in diblock copolymers nearly disappeared at any PVP content, while, the intensity of free hydroxyl group in blends is still observable at rich PHEMA content, indicating that the copolymer system has the greatest tendency to form intermolecular hydroxyl—carbonyl hydrogen bonding. Meanwhile, the absorption of the intramolecularly hydrogen-bonded hydroxyl group with carbonyl group of PHEMA shifts to lower wavenumber with the increase of the PVP content in both systems. This result reflects a new distribution of hydrogen-bonding formation resulting from the competition between the hydroxyl—carbonyl group within the pure PHEMA and the hydroxyl—carbonyl group between PHEMA and PVP. It also reveals that interaction between PHEMA hydroxyl and PVP carbonyl becomes dominant in those PVP-rich blends. Therefore, it is reasonable to assign the bands at \( 3365 \text{ cm}^{-1} \) and \( 3350 \text{ cm}^{-1} \) to the hydrogen-bonding interactions between PHEMA hydroxyl and PVP carbonyl in blend and block copolymer systems, respectively. The frequency difference between the hydrogen-bonded hydroxyl absorption and the
Free hydroxyl absorption ($\Delta v$) can be used to roughly estimate the average hydrogen-bonding strength and its enthalpy in a hydrogen-bonding blend system [19]. Hydrogen-bonding interactions between PHEMA hydroxyl and PVP carbonyl in both copolymer and blend systems ($\Delta v = 160$ and $175$ cm$^{-1}$) are stronger than that of the pure PHEMA ($\Delta v = 105$ cm$^{-1}$) which is consistent with the observed positive $q$ value in the Kwei equation. In addition, frequency difference in the block copolymer is also greater than that in the blend system, also indicating the stronger hydrogen-bonding interaction strength than the blend system.

Fig. 4 shows the infrared spectra of the carbonyl stretching measured at room temperature ranging from 1675 to 1765 cm$^{-1}$ for different compositions of the diblock copolymers and the blends. Chemical structures and their IR carbonyl vibrations of the free and hydrogen-bonded PHEMA and PVP are shown in Scheme 2. The carbonyl stretching of the original PHEMA splits into two bands, absorption by the free and hydrogen-bonded carbonyl groups at $1730$ and $1710$ cm$^{-1}$, respectively. Similarly, the carbonyl stretching of PVP with increasing PHEMA content also splits into two bands at $1680$ and $1665$ cm$^{-1}$, corresponding to the free and the hydrogen-bonded carbonyl groups, respectively, that can be well fitted to a Gaussian function. The fraction of hydrogen-bonded carbonyl group of PVP can be calculated by using an appropriate absorptivity ratio ($\alpha_R = \alpha_{HB}/\alpha_F = 1.3$) that has been discussed in our previous study [20,21]. Table 3 summarizes results from these curve fittings, indicating that the carbonyl

![Scheme 2. Schematic representation of PHEMA and PVP hydrogen bonding and their chemical structures of atom numbering.](image)

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbonyl group of PVP</th>
<th>Carbonyl group of PHEMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carbonyl group</strong></td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA/PVP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100/0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70/30</td>
<td></td>
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<td>50/50</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30/70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHEMA-b-PVP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56–44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–50</td>
<td></td>
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<td>44–56</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37–63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32–68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$n_c$: wavenumber of free C=O (cm$^{-1}$); $n_b$: wavenumber of hydrogen-bonded C=O; $A_c$: area percent of free C=O; $A_b$: area percent of hydrogen-bonded C=O. $f_b$: percent of hydrogen-bonded C=O.
hydrogen-bonded fraction of PVP increases with the increase of the PHEMA content in both diblock copolymer and blend systems and the hydrogen-bonded carbonyl fraction of PHEMA will decrease with the increase of PVP content because most hydroxyl groups of the PHEMA will interact with the carbonyl of PVP as shown in Fig. 3. In addition, the fraction of hydrogen-bonded carbonyl group of PVP at same PHEMA weight fraction (50/50) reveals that the hydrogen-bonding interaction of the diblock copolymers is greater than that of the blends and these results are consistent with previous Kwei equation.

3.4. Solid-state NMR analyses

In addition to FT-IR, evidences on interactions in the diblock copolymers and the blends can also be obtained from solid-state NMR spectroscopy as demonstrated by the changes in chemical shift and/or line shape. Fig. 5 shows the selected $^{13}$C CP/MAS spectra of various PHEMA-b-PVP copolymers and PHEMA/PVP blends. The pure PHEMA displays six peaks where the carbonyl atom (C-12) is at $\delta = 178.3$ ppm and the CH$_2$-OH carbon atom (C-10) is at $\delta = 67.2$ ppm. Six peaks are also observed for pure PVP where the peak at $\delta = 175.0$ ppm corresponds to the carbonyl carbon atom (C-6). All other peaks designated in Fig. 5 are assigned in Scheme 2(d). Table 4 summarizes the values of the chemical shifts observed in the $^{13}$C CP/MAS NMR spectra of PHEMA/PVP blends and PHEMA-b-PVP copolymers. Compared with the $^{13}$C CP/MAS NMR spectra of the pure PHEMA and PVP with the spectra of the blends and copolymers, significant

![Fig. 5. $^{13}$C CP/MAS NMR for (a) blends and (b) diblock copolymers with different compositions (weight ratio).](image)

![Fig. 6. $^{13}$C CP/MAS NMR chemical shift of 65 and 178 ppm with different compositions.](image)
changes were observed, especially for the resonances of those carbon atoms that are involved in intermolecular interactions. Fig. 6 shows chemical shift resonances of CH$_2$OH (C-10) and carbonyl carbons (C-12) of the PHEMA and the carbonyl carbon (C-6) of PVP against the PHEMA content. Clearly, the signals of the CH$_2$OH group of PHEMA shift upfield upon increasing the PVP content in both the blend and copolymer systems. This result is consistent with previous studies suggesting the existence of specific interactions between PHEMA and PVP. Furthermore, the chemical shift of the diblock copolymer is greater than the corresponding blend system, also indicating that the diblock system has the stronger interaction than the blend. However, based on the chemical shifts of carbonyl carbons from the PVP and PHEMA in the diblock copolymers and blends, it is still difficult to differentiate the strength of hydrogen-bonding interaction between the diblock and blend systems. In order to confirm the existence of the hydrogen-bonding interaction involving the carbonyl group in PHEMA-\textit{b}-PVP copolymers and PHEMA/PVP blends by solid-state NMR spectra, the experimental and the simulated data are shown in Fig. 7, which are similar to our previous study about the poly(methyl methacrylate-\textit{co}-methylacrylamide) copolymer system [22]. The simulated spectra for copolymers and blends are obtained from simple sum of each experimental $^{13}$C NMR spectrum of pure PHEMA and pure PVP at the respective molar ratio and they are shown in the right hand side. Fig. 7 shows that the experimental spectra of block copolymers and blends differ noticeably from the simulated spectra, implying that the hydrogen bonding exists between the hydroxyl group of PHEMA and the carbonyl group of PVP. We can realize that the hydrogen-bonding interaction between the copolymer and blend systems is quite different, only one single peak is present in blend system but two peaks are shown in copolymer system. According to earlier FT-IR analyses, four

![Fig. 7. Experimental and simulated data of $^{13}$C CPMAS spectra at room temperature (a) and (b) for blends, (c) and (d) for diblock copolymers.](image-url)
types of carbonyl situations are possible: (1) free carbonyl group of PHEMA, (2) self-associating hydrogen-bonded carbonyl group of PHEMA, (3) free carbonyl group of PVP, and (4) intermolecular hydrogen-bonded carbonyl group of PVP with PHEMA. For the carbonyl carbon of PHEMA, the carbonyl shifts upfield with increasing PVP content while the free carbonyl carbon appears at higher PVP content or at stronger intermolecular hydrogen bonding of PVP carbonyl with PHEMA hydroxyl. On the contrary, the carbonyl carbon of PVP shifts downfield with the increase of PHEMA content. In the blend system, the carbonyl group shows single peak since the upfield shift of the PHEMA carbonyl is overlapped with the downfield shift of the PVP carbonyl. However, in the relatively stronger hydrogen-bonding copolymer system, the larger upfield shift of the PHEMA carbonyl can be separated from the larger downfield shift of the PVP carbonyl, so that two peaks in copolymer system can be observed. Therefore, solid-state NMR is able to provide additional evidence that the hydrogen-bonding strength in copolymer system is indeed greater than that in the blend system.

Solid-state NMR spectroscopy has been used to better understand the phase behavior and miscibility of the diblock copolymers and the blends. A single $T_\text{g}$ based on DSC analysis implies that the mixing of two blending components is in a scale of about 20–40 nm [23]. The dimension of mixing smaller than 20 nm can be obtained through measurement of the spin–lattice relaxation time in the rotating frame ($T_{1p}^H$) [23]. The $T_{1p}^H$ values of the blends and copolymers were measured through the delayed-contact $^1$H/MAS experiments. The $T_{1p}^H$ values are calculated from Eq. (2):

$$\ln(M_t/M_0) = -\tau/T_{1p}^H$$

where $\tau$ is the delay time used in the experiment, and $M_t$ is the corresponding resonance.

Fig. 8 shows plots of $\ln(M_t/M_0)$ vs. $\tau$, for the PHEMA resonance (60 ppm) in the diblock copolymers and the blends. The experimental data are in good agreement with Eq. (2). From the slope of the fitting line, the $T_{1p}^H$ value can be determined. Table 5 lists the results of the $T_{1p}^H$ values for the diblock copolymers and the blends.

A single composition-dependent $T_{1p}^H$ was obtained for each of the diblock copolymers and the blends where $T_{1p}^H$ values of the blends are intermediate between those two pure polymers, while $T_{1p}^H$ values of the diblock copolymer are above that of the pure PVP. It suggests that both diblock copolymers and the blends are homogeneous to a scale where the spin-diffusion occurs within the time $T_{1p}^H$.

The upper spatial scale of the spin-diffusion path length $L$ can be estimated from the following expression [24]:

$$L = \left(6DT_{1p}^H\right)^{1/2}$$

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Blend</th>
<th>Diblock Copolymer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100/0</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>100/0 5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90/10</td>
<td>7.63</td>
<td>56/44 6.81</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7.46</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0/100</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>0/100 8.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 8. Logarithmic plots of the intensities of 60 ppm vs. delay time for (a) blends and (b) diblock copolymers with different compositions.
where $D$, which is typically assumed to be $10^{-16} \text{m}^2\text{s}^{-1}$, is the effective spin-diffusion coefficient depending on the average proton to proton distance as well as the dipolar interaction (Table 4). Therefore, the upper limit of the domain sizes for the blends is estimated to be 1.2–1.6 nm while that of the diblock copolymers is estimated to be 0.9–1.5 nm. It can be seen that the diblock copolymers have relatively smaller domain sizes than the corresponding blends, indicating that the degrees of homogeneity of the diblock copolymers are relatively higher than those of the blends. By comparing the polymer blend of poly(acrylic acid) (PAA)/poly(vinyl pyrrolidone) (PVP) with the complex PAA/PVP, the resultant $T_{1p}^H$ values show that the complex PAA/PVP is shorter than the corresponding blend [25]. As a result, we proposed that the polymer chain behavior of PHEMA/PVP blend is separated coils, but increasing the hydrogen-bonding strength for PHEMA-b-PVP diblock copolymer, polymer complex aggregate is proposed. Spin–lattice relaxation time in the rotating frame ($T_{1p}^H$) based on solid-state NMR analysis is able to provide positive evidence that polymer complex aggregate in the diblock copolymer has the shorter $T_{1p}^H$ value than the separated coils in the miscible blend.

4. Conclusions

In this study, we have successfully synthesized diblock copolymers of PHEMA with PVP. From DSC analyses, we observed higher glass transition temperatures for PHEMA-b-PVP copolymers relative to their corresponding PHEMA/PVP blends as a result of stronger specific interactions existing in the former copolymer system. FT-IR and solid-state NMR spectroscopic analyses provided evidence that the specific interaction in the PHEMA-b-PVP copolymer arises from the hydroxyl group of PHEMA and the carbonyl group of PVP, similar to that observed for the PHEMA/PVP blend system. Measurements of $T_{1p}^H$ reveal that all systems possess a single composition-dependent $T_{1p}^H$, indicating that all diblock copolymers and blends are in homogeneity. Moreover, the calculated domain sizes of the diblock copolymers are relatively smaller than the corresponding blends.

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