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Analysis of quasi-reversible cyclic voltammograms: transformation to scan-rate independent form

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Abstract

A simple procedure is suggested by which cyclic voltammograms, CVs, pertaining to partially diffusion controlled charge transfer reactions can be analyzed. Using this procedure, from a set of CVs taken at varied scan rates, two scan-rate independent, hysteresis-free functions can be calculated. One of them is the diffusion-free polarization curve, the other is the semiintegrated form of the reversible CV.

Keywords: diffusion, charge transfer, semiintegration, kinetics, redox system

1. Introduction

Cyclic voltammetry (CV) is a widely used experimental method for studying kinetics of electrode processes: the current density, as a function of time, j(t) is measured as a function of time-varying potential, E(t). The latter is scanned between two limits with constant speed, v = dE/dt; the CVs are the j(E) curves. Both j(t) and j(E) are complicated functions of v; hence comparison of two CVs measured with different v is far from being trivial.

In rare, simple cases, however, there exist mathematical transformations by which CVs taken with different scan rates can be transformed to the one-and-the-same T(E) function – which function does not "remember" the actual form of E(t), it has hysteresis-free, scan rate independent form. That is, T(E) is a state function. To illustrate this statement, two typical cases are worth to be mentioned: (*i*) In the case when double-layer charging proceeds only, the *dc* capacitance defined as j(E)/v is independent of *v*; (*ii*) The CVs of reversible redox couples can be transformed to hysteresis-free polarograpic-wave shaped curves using semiintegration. In these two cases the scan-rate normalized and semiintegrated currents, respectively, are the scan-rate independent representations of the measured data.

In contrast to the case of the reversible CVs, the CVs of slower redox systems, called quasireversible CVs cannot be transformed to a single T(E) function. However, as shown in this paper, by measuring a set of quasi-reversible CVs with different scan rates, two such state functions can be obtained by a simple procedure. One of them characterizes charge transfer kinetics, the other the diffusion. Having derived the relevant equations, the transformation is tested with simulated quasireversible CV curves.

2. Theory

Consider a CV measurement of a quasi-reversible redox system [1] with the condition that only the reduced form is present. This species takes part in an *n*-electron, single-step charge transfer reaction on the electrode. Were the charge transfer not hindered by slow diffusion, the current density would be expressed by the

$$j_{\rm inf}(E) = k(E)nFc_{\rm red}$$
⁽¹⁾

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