Numerical Modeling; Thickness Dependence of J-V Characteristic for Multi-Layered OLED Device

Sang-Gun LEE†(a), Hong-Seok CHOI†, Chang-Wook HAN†, Seok-Jong LEE†, Yoon-Heung TAK†, and Byung-Chul AHN†, Nonmembers

SUMMARY A numerical model of multi-layered organic light emitting diode (OLED) is presented in this paper. The current density-voltage (J-V) model for OLED was performed by using the injection-limited current and bulk-limited current. The mobility equation was based on the field dependent model, so called “Poole-Frenkel mobility model.” The accuracy of this simulation was represented by comparing to the experimental results dependent model, so called “Poole-Frenkel mobility model.” The accuracy and bulk-limited current. The mobility equation was based on the field dependent model, so called “Poole-Frenkel mobility model.” The accuracy of this simulation was represented by comparing to the experimental results dependent model, so called “Poole-Frenkel mobility model.”

1. Introduction

The active matrix organic light emitting diode (AM-OLED) is attracting a great interest in the display industry, due to its low cost for large sized panel. However, compared with inorganic semiconductor LED, the carrier transportation in OLED is not clear yet and still being debated [1]. Therefore, the current density-voltage (J-V) equation has not been presented clearly in textbooks or research papers. So, many OLED researchers want to find out accurate universal and theoretical J-V equation.

There are two ways of J-V interpretation; the empirical interpretation and the device simulation. The former just represents the relation between current and voltage, but it is not enough to interpret the physical meaning. On the other hand, the latter is based on the physical equations in which all the parameters have physical meaning, and is valuable for understanding operation principles in OLED. Therefore, the objective of this work is to explain J-V characteristics, using device simulation for multi-layered OLED device.

In this study, firstly we extracted fitting parameters contributing to the electronic transport of hole-only device (HOD) and electron-only device (EOD), respectively. Next, using the extracted fitting parameters, we simulated J-V characteristic of double-layered and multi-layered OLED device with varied layer thicknesses. Finally, we calculated the Langevin recombination rate in the multi-layered (EML = 20 nm) OLED device.

2. Electronic Conduction for Organic Device

2.1 Injection-Limited Current (JILC)

Generally, the thermionic emission model has been used to represent the injection current from the metal to the organic material through the Schottky barrier. However, the concept is appropriate for inorganic semiconductors which have high mobility and long mean-free-path. In case of organic semiconductors which have low mobility and short mean-free-path, the carrier injection should obey a diffusion model [2]. The following equation can be used to represent the injection current from metal to organic semiconductor;

\[ J_{ILC} = q\mu EN \exp\left( -\frac{q\phi_b}{kT} \right) \exp\left( \frac{q\gamma V}{kT} \right) \]  

where \( q \) is the elemental charge, \( \mu \) the mobility, \( E \) the electric field, \( N \) the density state, and \( \phi_b \) the injection barrier height. The barrier lowered due to the image force is expressed by the last term with the factor \( \gamma \).

Assuming the Coulomb potential of a charged trap, the mobility in OLED which usually has field dependence is expressed by the Poole-Frenkel model, as follows;

\[ \mu_{PF} = \mu_0 \exp\left( \frac{q\epsilon_i}{kT} \right) \exp\left( \frac{q\beta}{kT} \sqrt{E} \right) \]  

where \( \mu_0 \) is the temperature-independent pre-factor mobility, \( \epsilon_i \) the thermal-activation energy of the trapped carrier, and \( \beta \) the Poole-Frenkel factor as a fitting parameter. By substituting this into \( \mu \) of Eq. (1) and assuming \( E = V/L \) over the whole layer, the following equations can be obtained;

\[ J_{ILC} = q\mu_0 N V L \exp\left[ \frac{q(\phi_b + \epsilon_i)}{kT} + \frac{q(\gamma + \beta)}{kT} \sqrt{\frac{V}{L}} \right] \]  

This corresponds to the J-V equation for the injection limited current (JILC) at the interface between metal and organic layer.

2.2 Bulk-Limited Current (JBLC)

The other limitation of the current can occur in the bulk region, due to the space-charge effect. The field-dependence mobility is given as follows [3];

\[ \frac{J_{BLC}}{\mu_0 E E_0} = \frac{2}{\beta^4} \exp\left( \beta \sqrt{E} \right) \left( \beta E^{3/2} - 3\beta^2 E + 6\beta \sqrt{E} - 6 \right) \]  

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where the initial field at \( x=0 \) is assumed to be zero. This assumption is valid when the injection barrier is low enough or the contact is Ohmic. In the equation, the electric field is function of \( x \) and cannot be represent by \( V/L \). To obtain the \( J-V \) relation, Eq. (4) must be integrated again on \( x \). Under the condition of \( \beta \sqrt{E} \gg 1 \), the approximate expression can be obtained by neglecting the lower order terms as follows [4];

\[
J_{BLC} \approx \frac{2\mu_0 e_0 \rho_0}{\beta} a^{3/2} \sqrt{\frac{V^3/2}{L^{5/2}}} \exp \left( \beta \sqrt{\frac{V}{L}} \right)
\] (5)

where the field is assumed \( \alpha(V/L) \) at \( x = L \). The \( \alpha \) is an adjusting parameter to fit electric field to the real value [5]. This is the \( J-V \) equation for the bulk limited current \( (J_{BLC}) \) with field dependent mobility.

2.3 Transition between \( J_{ILC} \) and \( J_{BLC} \)

We obtained \( J-V \) Eqs. (3) and (5), which are valid in different conditions where \( J_{ILC} \) and \( J_{BLC} \) are dominant, respectively. The \( J-V \) characteristics in organic semiconductor, however, must be considered \( J_{ILC} \) and \( J_{BLC} \) simultaneously. One of the simplest ways is that the total current density leads to equation as follows;

\[
J_{Theoretical} = \frac{J_{ILC} \cdot J_{BLC}}{J_{ILC} + J_{BLC}}
\] (6)

where the current is simply limited by the smaller current, \( J_{ILC} \) or \( J_{BLC} \). This equation can express transition between \( J_{ILC} \) and \( J_{BLC} \) very well.

2.4 Extraction of Fitting Parameters

When the electrical modeling is studied, there are a lot of unknown input parameters to be considered. The most important ones are energy levels, charge mobility, width of density of states and trapping levels in each layer. So, we proposed an alternative method to determine electrical parameters of organic materials. This method enables to automatically extract certain material parameters from experimental data, and is useful to determine material parameters of unknown information of materials.

First, hole-only device (HOD) for hole transport layer (HTL) was fabricated with its thickness of 80, 130 and 180 nm. HOD consists of a single layer of HTL between ITO anode and aluminum (Al) cathode.

Figure 1 shows comparison of \( J-V \) characteristics in single-layered device between experimental results (solid line) and fitting results (dashed line) as a variable of HTL thickness in linear scale (left) and logarithmic scale (right) of current density \( (J) \).

![Fig. 1 Comparison of J-V characteristics in single-layered device between experimental results (solid line) and fitting results (dashed line) as a variable of HTL thickness in linear scale (left) and logarithmic scale (right) of current density (J).](image)

Table 1: Extracted parameters contributing to the electronic transport of single-layer devices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>HOD</th>
<th>EOD</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrier height (( \phi_0 ))</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>eV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band gap (( E_g ))</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>eV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric affinity (( \phi_i ))</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>eV</td>
</tr>
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<td>Zero field mobility (( \mu_z ))</td>
<td>7.71E-06</td>
<td>1.72E-04</td>
<td>cm/V.s^-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poole-Frenkel factor (( \beta ))</td>
<td>3.2E-04</td>
<td>4.0E-04</td>
<td>Unitless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permittivity (( \epsilon_r ))</td>
<td>8.85E-14</td>
<td>8.85E-14</td>
<td>F/cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative permittivity (( \epsilon_{rel} ))</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Unitless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective DOS (( N_e, N_c ))</td>
<td>5.0E+20</td>
<td>3.0E+21</td>
<td>cm^-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thickness (d)</td>
<td>80, 130, 180</td>
<td>33, 83, 133</td>
<td>nm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our numerical modeling. We have simulated the $J$-$V$ characteristics of the devices by changing all parameter values related to the electrical conduction using 2-D device simulator, ATLAS (Silvaco Co.) in order to evaluate how each parameter affects the $J$-$V$ characteristics. The simulation was performed based on the thermionic-emission-diffusion model for the carrier injection, and the Poole-Frenkel model for the field-dependent mobility, and hetero-junctions model for interface.

### 3.1 Double-Layered Bipolar OLED Device

Figure 2 shows a typical energy band diagram for a double-layered bipolar OLED composed of the ETL and HTL used in the simulation for EOD and HOD in the previous section. The OLED device has an internal hetero-junction interface between HTL and ETL. We considered the thermionic emission and field emission transport model [7], [8] at the interface between ETL and HTL for the simulation. The abrupt hetero-junction interface is taken into account on the basis of the one dimensional drift-diffusion formula. For instance, hole current density at the interface is represented by Eq. (8).

$$J_p = q

\nu_p (1 + \delta) \left( p^+ - p^- \exp \left( \frac{-\Delta E_v}{kT} \right) \right)$$

(8)

where $J_p$ is the hole current density from HTL to ETL, $\nu_p$ is hole thermal velocities, and $\Delta E_v$ is HOMO energy change going from HTL to ETL. $p^+$ and $p^-$ are hole current densities at ETL and HTL, respectively. The $\delta$ parameter stands for the contribution due to thermionic field emission (tunneling) and can be approximated as zero in our case.

The double-layered OLED device of light emission occurs in ETL since the internal energy band offset for electrons was assumed to be much higher than that for holes.

Figure 3 shows the comparison of $J$-$V$ characteristics between the results from device simulation and from experimental data. The ETL thickness was fixed at 33 nm. The experimental results of the double-layered OLED at the multiple thickness were simulated using the extracted HOD and EOD parameters. As shown in Fig. 3, a relatively good agreement between experimental results and simulated data as a variable of HTL thickness.

### 3.2 Multi-Layered Bipolar OLED Device

Figure 4 shows a typical energy band diagram for the multi-layered bipolar OLED composed of an ETL, an emitting layer (EML) including fluorescent host-dopant system, and an HTL, which are used in the experiment and simulation with a variable of doped EML thickness of 20, 70 and 120 nm.

Figure 5 shows the comparison of $J$-$V$ characteristics between the results from device simulation and from experiment as a variable of doped EML thickness for the multi-layered bipolar OLED device. The multi-layered bipolar OLED device was simulated, using the extracted parameters of the bi-layered bipolar OLED. The simulation considered an interface trap model at the interfaces both HTL/EML and EML/ETL. In order to take into account EML materials in the simulation, we adopted a model of the equilibrium hopping transport in a doped disordered EML [9], [10], in which the density of state (DOS) of the dopant has Gaussian distribution, as shown in Eq. (9).

$$g(E) = \frac{N_d}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma_d} \exp \left( \frac{E^2}{2\sigma_d^2} \right) + \frac{N_i}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma_i} \exp \left( \frac{(E+E_d)^2}{2\sigma_i^2} \right)$$

(9)

where $N_d$ are the total density of dopants, $\sigma_d$ is the Gaussian
widths of the dopant DOS distributions, and $E_d$ is the energy shift between the intrinsic and doping states for traps; $N_i = 2.1 \times 10^{17} \, \text{cm}^{-3}$, $\sigma_i = 0.5 \, \text{eV}$, $N_d = 3.4 \times 10^{18} \, \text{cm}^{-3}$, $\sigma_d = 0.3 \, \text{eV}$.

As shown in Fig. 5, a relatively good agreement between both results was obtained, except for the case of high current density. The deviation can be explained by the inaccuracy of the parameters such as the layer thickness, barrier height, or mobility. In the simulation on the various conditions of EML thickness, the same values were used for all the fitting parameters including barrier height and mobility. However, such parameters can be easily varied, since it is hard to keep the same fabrication conditions for the different samples. In addition, it is also difficult to change the fitting parameters individually, as the parameters are closely related to one another in the simulation.

Figure 6 shows the calculated Langevin recombination rate (LRR) in the multi-layered OLED device (EML = 20 nm). The rate becomes biggest at the interface between HTL and EML, as the barrier for holes of HTL is much higher than that for the electrons of EML. So, using the device simulation, we could understand the various distributions in this structure, such as the emission zone.

### 4. Conclusions

The parameters contributing to the electronic transport of HOD and EOD were extracted by the theoretical $J$-$V$ equations. The extracted parameters not only represent thickness dependence of $J$-$V$ characteristic but also have physically meaningful results. The extracted parameters can explain various experimental results and be included into quantitative database of organic materials.

Next, we successfully simulated the double-layered bipolar OLED devices, using the extracted parameters of the HOD and EOD. We considered the thermionic emission and field emission transport model at the interface between ETL and HTL for double-layered OLED simulation. The simulation successfully showed the agreement between experimental data and simulation results for the double-layered bipolar OLED devices with the varied HTL thickness.

Finally, we successfully simulated multi-layered OLED bipolar devices, considering the extracted parameters of double-layered OLED and the interface trap model at interfaces of HTL/EML and EML/ETL. The simulation successfully represented the agreement between experimental data and simulation results for the multi-layered bipolar OLED device as a variable of doped EML thickness. Also, the simulation of multi-layered bipolar OLED device could inform us of the distribution of the recombination rate. The simulation of the $J$-$V$ characteristics can help understanding the electrical-transport mechanism of OLED and will be very useful in explaining various experimental results.

### References


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