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Tuning Photophysical Properties and Improving Nonlinear Absorption of Pt(II) Diimine Complexes with Extended π-Conjugation in the Acetylide Ligands

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ABSTRACT: Two new Pt(II) 4,4′-di(5,9-diethyltridecan-7-yl)-2,2′-bipyridine complexes (1 and 2) bearing 9,9-diethyl-2-ethenyl-7-(2-(4-nitrophenyl)-ethyl)fluorene ligand and N-(4-(2-(9,9-diethyl-7-ethenyl-9H-fluoren-2-yl)ethyl)phenyl)-N-phenylbenzenamine ligand, respectively, were synthesized and characterized. Their photophysical properties were investigated systematically by UV–vis absorption, emission, and transient absorption (TA) spectroscopy, and the nonlinear absorption was studied by nonlinear transmission technique. Theoretical TD-DFT calculations using the CAM-B3LYP functional were carried out to determine the nature of the singlet excited electronic states and to assist in the assignment of significant transitions observed in experiments. Complex 1 exhibits an intense, structureless absorption band at ca. 397 nm in CH2Cl2 solution, which is attributed to mixed metal-to-ligand charge transfer (MLCT)/ligand-to-ligand charge transfer (LLCT)/intraligand charge transfer (ILCT)1π,π* transitions, and two 3MLCT/3LLCT transitions in the 300–350 nm spectral region. Complex 2 possesses an intense acetylide ligand localized 1π,π* absorption band at ca. 373 nm and a moderately intense 2MLCT/2LLCT tail above 425 nm in CH2Cl2. Both complexes are emissive in solution at room temperature, with the emitting state being tentatively assigned to the predominant 3π,π* state for 1, whereas the emitting state of 2 exhibits a switch from 2π,π* state in high-polarity solvents to 1MLCT/2LLCT state in low-polarity solvents. Both 1 and 2 exhibit strong singlet excited-state TA in the visible to NIR region, where reverse saturable absorption (RSA) is feasible. The spectroscopic studies and theoretical calculations indicate that the photophysical properties of these Pt complexes can be tuned drastically by extending the π-conjugation of the acetylide ligands. In addition, strong RSA was observed at 532 nm for nanosecond (ns) laser pulses from 1 and 2, demonstrating that the RSA of the Pt(II) diimine complexes can be improved by extending the π-conjugation of the acetylide ligands.
is extended, the contribution of acetylide ligand localized $^3\pi,\pi^*$ state to the lowest triplet excited state becomes more significant, and the configurational mixing and triplet excited-state inversion can be induced by solvent with different polarity. Zhao and co-workers also demonstrated that extending the $\pi$-conjugation of the acetylide ligand in Pt(II) diimine complexes led to long-lived acetylide ligand localized $^3\pi,\pi^*$ state and one of the complexes is suitable for triplet−triplet-annihilation based upconversion application.\footnote{Very recently, our group revealed that when a strong electron-withdrawing aromatic substituent naphthalimide was introduced to the fluorenylacetylide ligand, the lowest singlet and triplet excited states were dominated by the intraligand charge transfer (ILCT) characters in CH$_2$Cl$_2$.\footnote{Moreover, the triplet-excited-state lifetimes of these complexes become very long and their reverse saturable absorption is significantly enhanced due to the extended $\pi$-conjugation in the acetylide ligand.}}

On the other hand, our previous studies on the Pt(II) bipyridyl bisfluorenylacetylide complexes\footnote{In order to reduce the intermolecular aggregation and consequently improve the solubility of the Pt(II) complexes, branched alkyl chains were introduced on bipyridine ligand. Complexes 3 and 4 (Scheme 1) have been reported previously by our group\footnote{and are included in this paper as references for better understanding of the effect of extended $\pi$-conjugation.}} and Pt(II) bipyridyl bisstilbenylacetylide complexes\footnote{manifested that when a strong electron-donating diphenylamino substituent was introduced to the acetylide ligand, both the singlet and triplet excited-states of the resultant Pt(II) complexes absorb strongly in the visible spectral region with $\lambda_{\text{max}} \approx 520$ nm, resulting in remarkably strong reverse saturable absorption at 532 nm. Considering these exciting results and the effect of extended $\pi$-conjugation of the acetylide ligand, we envision that extending the $\pi$-conjugation of the acetylide ligands in Pt(II) diimine bisfluorenylacetylide complexes with nitro or diphenylamino substituents would prolong the triplet excited state lifetime and further improve their reverse saturable absorption. With these considerations in mind, two Pt(II) bipyridyl complexes (complex 1 and 2 in Scheme 1) with terminal NO$_2$ or NPh$_2$ substituent on the acetylide ligand were synthesized.} manifested that when a strong
The singlet and triplet excited-state characteristics of 1 and 2 are systematically investigated via UV-vis absorption, steady-state emission, and TA techniques and TD-DFT calculations. The influence on RSA has been demonstrated by nonlinear transmission at 532 nm using ns laser pulses.

**EXPERIMENTAL SECTION**

**Synthesis.** The synthetic route for complexes 1 and 2 is provided in Scheme 2. The synthesis and characterization of 3 and 4 were reported by our group previously. All reagents and solvents for synthesis were purchased from Aldrich or Alfa Aesar and used as received. The precursor complex 4,4′-di(5,9-diethyltridecan-7-yl)-2,2′-bipyridyl Pt(II) dichloride (Pt(ddtbpy)Cl2) ligand 1L, 2L were prepared according to literature procedures. All HPLC grade solvents used for spectroscopic studies were purchased from VWR International and used without further purification unless otherwise stated. Silica gels used for chromatography were purchased from Sorbent Technology (230–400 mesh). Complexes 1 and 2 were characterized by 1H NMR and elemental analyses. 1H NMR spectra were obtained on a Varian Oxford-400 VNMR spectrometer or a Varian Oxford-500 VNMR spectrometer. Elemental analyses were carried out by NuMega Resonance Laboratories, Inc. in San Diego, California. HRMS data for 1 and 2 were not obtained due to the difficulty in ionizing the complexes.

**General Procedure for Synthesis of Complexes 1 and 2.** The ligand 1L or 2L (0.70 mmol) and Pt(ddtbpy)Cl2 (0.33 mmol) were dissolved in degassed mixture of dry CH2Cl2 (30 mL) and diisopropyl amine (20 mL). The catalyst CuI (∼5 mg) was then added. The reaction mixture was refluxed under argon for 12 h. After cooling to room temperature, the reaction solution was washed with brine and dried with MgSO4 and the solvent was removed. The residual solid was purified by column chromatography on silica gel using CH2Cl2 as the eluent. The product was further purified by recrystallization from CH2Cl2 and hexane to yield desired product.

**Complex 1.** A total of 332 mg of yellow solid was obtained (yield: 63%). 1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl3) δ 9.84 (d, J = 5.5 Hz, 2H), δ 7.43 (s, 2H); 7.67 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.62–7.56 (m, 6H), 7.45 (d, J = 4.5 Hz, 2H), 7.33–7.30 (m, 4H), 7.28–7.25 (m, 2H), 2.95 (br, 2H), 2.09–1.98 (m, 8H), 1.62–1.56 (m, 12H), 1.33–1.09 (m, 36H), 0.93–0.80 (m, 22H), 0.36–0.33 (m, 10H). Anal. Calcd. (%) for C110H91N2Pt1/2/CH2Cl2; C, 73.40; H, 8.30; N, 2.08. Found: C, 73.21; H, 8.37; N, 2.35.

**Complex 2.** A total of 261 mg of yellow solid was obtained (yield: 43%). 1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl3) δ 9.77 (d, J = 6.0 Hz, 2H), 7.68 (s, 2H), 7.59–7.51 (m, 8H), 7.45–7.36 (m, 10H), 7.27–7.34 (m, 8H), 7.09 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 8H), 7.05–6.98 (m, 8H), 2.91 (s, 2H), 2.03–1.98 (m, 8H), 1.57 (s, 8H), 1.34–1.05 (m, 36H), 0.82–0.75 (m, 24H), 0.31 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 12H). Anal. Calcd. (%) for C122H103N2Pt2; C, 79.06; H, 7.40; N, 3.02. Found: C, 79.07; H, 7.57; N, 2.97.

**DFT Calculations.** The ground electronic states of complexes 1 and 2 were simulated by density functional theory (DFT) and their excited singlet electronic states were calculated using the time-dependent DFT (TDDFT) method to simulate their theoretical UV–vis absorption spectra. The specific DFT methods used include Becke’s exchange (B3) functional, in conjunction with Lee–Yang–Parr (LYP) correlation functional, commonly known as the B3LYP method and the Coulomb attenuating model (CAM) modified version of the B3LYP method (CAM-B3LYP) developed by Handy and co-workers. The B3LYP method was used for geometry optimizations, and the CAM-B3LYP method was used for calculating excited electronic states transition energies. The CAM-B3LYP method is one of the recently developed DFT functionals that takes into account the long-range correction effects often encountered in the calculation of charge transfer molecules such as those involved in this work. The basis sets used in all calculations includes functions from the 6-31G* set used to describe all light element atoms and the LANL2DZ set for the Pt atom; the particular combination is abbreviated in this work as LANG631. LANL2DZ is an effective core potential (ECP) basis set, which was used to provide some corrections for the scalar relativistic effects of the Pt atom.

Full equilibrium geometry optimizations were performed for the ground electronic states of all complexes using a tightened self-consistent-field (SCF) convergence threshold of 10−9 a.u. To simplify the calculations on these large complexes, methyl groups were used to replace the branched alkyl chains on the bipyridine ligand and on the fluorenyl components in complexes 1 and 2.

Excited state calculations were performed at the fully optimized ground state molecular geometry of the complexes. In addition, bulk solvent effects have been included in all calculations using the polarizable continuum model (PCM). For consistency with experiments, dichloromethane (CH2Cl2) that was used as the solvent for experimental measurements was selected as the solvent in theoretical calculations as well. All calculations were performed using the Gaussian 09 (Revision A.1) software suite running on a 96-node distributed-memory cluster with 192 Dual 3.06 GHz Xeon-HT processors at North Dakota State University.

**Photophysical Measurements.** Ground-state UV–vis absorption spectra of Pt complexes and ligands were measured in 1 cm quartz cuvette on a Shimadzu UV-2501 spectrophotometer in different solvents (HPLC grade). The steady-state emission spectra were carried out using a HORIBA FluoroMax 4 fluorometer/phosphorimeter. Relative actinometry method was applied to measure the emission quantum yields of ligands in degassed solutions. A degassed aqueous solution of [Ru(bpy)3]2+ (Φem = 0.042, λex = 436 nm) was used as the reference for Pt complexes and an aqueous solution of quinine bisulfate (Φem = 0.546, λex = 365 nm) was used as the reference for ligands.

The femtosecond (fs) TA spectra and the singlet excited-state lifetimes were measured using a fs pump–probe UV–vis spectrometer. The laser system for the ultrafast TA measurement was described previously. The laser system output consists of a Ti:sapphire oscillator/regenerative amplifier (Hippocrates, Spectra Physics) as a source of 800 nm light with full width at half maximum (fwhm) of 110 fs operating at a repetition rate of 1 kHz. The 800 nm light was split into pump (85%) and probe (10%) beams. The probe beam (800 nm) was delayed by a delay stage (MM400, Newport). A white light continuum probe beam was produced using a CaF2 crystal. The sample solution in a 2-mm flow cell was excited using 400 nm light (∼2 μJ/pulse) produced by a second harmonic generator (Super Tripler, CSK).

The ns TA spectra, triplet excited-state lifetimes, and triplet excited-state quantum yields were measured on an Edinburgh LP920 laser flash photolysis spectrometer. The excitation source was the third harmonic output (355 nm) of a Nd:YAG laser (Quantel Brilliant, pulsedwidth ~4.1 ns, 1 Hz). Before each
measurement, all of the sample solutions were degassed with Ar for 30 min.

The triplet excited-state molar extinction coefficients ($\varepsilon_T$) at the TA band maximum was determined by singlet depletion method in which $\varepsilon_T$ was calculated by the following equation:

$$\varepsilon_T = \frac{\varepsilon_0 \Delta OD_T}{\Delta OD_S}$$

where $\varepsilon_0$ is the ground-state molar extinction coefficient at the wavelength of the bleaching band minimum in TA spectrum; $\Delta OD_T$ and $\Delta OD_S$ are the optical density changes at the minimum of the bleaching band and the maximum of the positive band, respectively. When the $\varepsilon_T$ value was obtained, the triplet excited-state quantum yield can be calculated by the relative actinometry, in which SiNc in benzene was used as the reference ($\varepsilon_{090} = 70,000 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$, $\Phi_T = 0.20$).

Nonlinear Transmission Measurement. Using 4.1 ns laser pulses at 532 nm, the nonlinear transmission experiments for Pt complexes were carried out in CH$_2$Cl$_2$ solution in a 2-mm cuvette. The linear transmission of the solution was adjusted to 80%. A Quantel Brilliant ns laser with a repetition rate of 10 Hz was used as the light source. The experimental setup and details were described previously. An $f = 40$ cm plano-convex lens was used to focus the beam to the sample cuvette. The radius of the beam waist at the focal point was approximately 96 $\mu$m measured by knife edge.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Electronic Absorption. The UV–vis absorption spectra of the complexes 1 and 2 and ligands 1L and 2L in CH$_2$Cl$_2$ are presented in Figure 1. The absorption band maxima and molar extinction coefficients are listed in Table 1. The UV–vis absorption of the complexes and ligands obey Beer’s law in the concentration range of $1 \times 10^{-6}$ to $1 \times 10^{-7}$ mol L$^{-1}$, suggesting that no dimerization or oligomerization occurs in this concentration range.

The absorption spectra of 1 and 2 are quite distinct. For complex 1, the spectrum is dominated by an intense, broad, structureless absorption band at $\lambda_{\text{max}} = 397$ nm ($\varepsilon \approx 7.1 \times 10^4$ L mol$^{-1}$ cm$^{-1}$) in CH$_2$Cl$_2$. Comparing this absorption band to the corresponding band in ligand 1L, both bands exhibit similar molar extinction coefficient and similar feature. Therefore, this band should contain significant acetylide ligand based $^1\pi,\pi^*$ character. However, the band in 1 is substantially red-shifted and broadened. On one hand, the red-shift could partially arise from the de-localization of ligand-centered molecular orbital due to the interaction with the Pt(II) d orbital. On the other hand, the broadening and red-shift imply admixture of other charge transfer transitions with the $^1\pi,\pi^*$ transition, which is partially reflected by the structureless feature of this band. With reference to the UV–vis absorption spectra of complex 3 and Pt(II) diimine complex with nitrostilbenylacetylide ligands (which all exhibit the similar intense structureless absorption band), this band could be tentatively attributed to acetylide ligand localized $^1\pi,\pi^*$ transition mixed with some $^1\text{MLCT}/^3\text{LLCT}$ transitions. In addition, considering the extended $\pi$-conjugation of the acetylide ligands and the strong electron-withdrawing ability of the NO$_2$ substituent, $^1\text{ILCT}$ from the ethynylfluorene component to the nitrophenyl component also likely to contribute to this band. The configurationally mixed transition nature of this absorption band is partially reflected by the minor solvent effect (Figure 2a) and is supported by the TDDFT calculation results that will be discussed later.

The UV–vis absorption spectrum of 2 mainly consists of an intense absorption band at ca. 373 nm and a broad tail from 425 to 525 nm. The similar shape and energy of the 373 nm band to the major absorption band in ligand 2L suggests that this band should predominantly emanate from the acetylide ligand based $^1\pi,\pi^*$ transitions. The minor solvent effect observed for this band (Figure 2b) supports this assignment. In contrast, the broad tail from 425 to 525 nm displays a negative solvatochromic effect (i.e., the band bathochromically shifts when the polarity of solvent decreases, such as the case in toluene and hexane) (Figures 2b). The negative solvatochromic effect is indicative of a charge-transfer transition in which the dipole moment of the ground state is larger than that of the excited state. Based on the similar results reported for other Pt(II) diimine acetylide complexes and for complex 4, this band can be attributed to the $^1\text{MLCT}/^3\text{LLCT}$ transitions. This assignment is also supported by the TDDFT calculation results discussed later.

The major absorption bands in 1 and 2 are influenced significantly by the extended $\pi$-conjugation in the acetylide ligands. A comparison of 1 and 3 and 2 and 4, respectively, indicates that the molar extinction coefficients in 1 and 2 are substantially increased; especially in 2 the enhancement is dramatic. In addition, for complex 2, the $^1\text{MLCT}/^3\text{LLCT}$ band is slightly blue-shifted compared to that in 4. The blue-shift of the $^1\text{MLCT}/^3\text{LLCT}$ absorption band with increased $\pi$-conjugation of the phenylacetylide ligand has also been reported by Che’s group and by our group on cyclo-metalated Pt(II) CANAN complexes.

**Calculation of Singlet Excited Electronic States.** The ground state equilibrium geometry and the electronic structure of the complexes 1 and 2 were calculated using the B3LYP DFT method in conjunction with LANL631 basis set. All calculations were performed in the condensed phase using the polarizable continuum model (PCM) and CH$_2$Cl$_2$ as solvent to maintain close similarity to the experimental conditions. Results of the ground state electronic structure calculations were used to generate the frontier molecular orbital (FMO) electron density plots of four highest occupied molecular orbitals (HOMOs) and four lowest unoccupied molecular orbitals (LUMOs) for each complex.
orbitals (LUMOs) displayed in Figure 3, to assist in the interpretation and assignment of significant electron transitions in the experimentally observed UV−vis absorption spectra.

For complex 1, the electron density of the HOMO includes contributions from the Pt metal and the ethynylfluorene unit of only one of the acetylide ligands and that of the LUMO is located almost exclusively on the nitrophenylacetylene component of the same acetylide ligand. The HOMO-1 electron density comes from the Pt metal and the other acetylide ligand that does not contribute to the HOMO. Similarly, the electron density of the LUMO+1 is located almost exclusively on the nitrophenylacetylene component of the other acetylide ligand that shows dominant contribution to the HOMO-1 density. For complex 2, the electron density distributions on the HOMO and HOMO-1 orbitals have similar features; with almost equal contributions from both acetylide ligands and considerable contributions from the Pt metal. The LUMO and LUMO+1 electron densities are quite

Table 1. Photophysical Data for Ligands 1L and 2L and Pt(II) Complexes 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>λ_{abs}/nm (ε/10^4 L/mol cm)</th>
<th>λ_{em}/nm (τ_{em}/μs; Φ_{em})</th>
<th>λ_{T1-Tn}/nm (τ_{T}/ns; ε_{T1-Tn}/10^4 L/mol cm; Φ_{T})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1L</td>
<td>303 (5.39), 369 (7.64)</td>
<td>549 (c, 0.049)</td>
<td>476 (108 ± 2), 552 (sh, 101 ± 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>478 (1870, 6.51, 0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2L</td>
<td>305 (4.05), 369 (6.07)</td>
<td>448 (c, 0.81)</td>
<td>555 (sh, 8 ± 1), 651 (17 ± 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>475 (31200, 3.51, 0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>314 (6.03), 338 (5.64), 397 (7.13)</td>
<td>576 (25; 0.001)</td>
<td>489 (40 ± 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500 (3220, 7.20, 0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>300 (6.44), 373 (15.0), 450 (1.37)</td>
<td>568 (970; 0.070)</td>
<td>646 (13 ± 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>550 (610, i, i)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Electronic absorption band maxima and molar extinction coefficients in CH₂Cl₂ at room temperature. Room temperature emission band maxima and decay lifetimes measured in CH₂Cl₂ at a concentration of 1 × 10⁻⁴ mol/L. A degassed aqueous solution of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ (Φ_em = 0.042, excited at 436 nm) was used as the reference. Not measured. The emission band maxima and decay lifetimes at 77 K measured in MTHF glassy solution at a concentration of 1 × 10⁻⁵ mol/L. FS TA band maxima, triplet extinction coefficients, triplet excited-state lifetimes and quantum yields. SiNc in C₆H₆ was used as the reference. (ε_{590} = 70 000 L mol⁻¹ cm⁻¹, Φ_T = 0.20). In CH₃CN. In toluene. Too weak to be measured.
indicate that the CAM-B3LYP functional is a good performer for predicting excited state energies of molecules involving charge transfer transitions as has been observed in other organic dye systems.50

Based on the electron density distribution on the FMOs and the predicted vertical excitation energies, the lowest-energy absorption bands for these complexes should arise from \(1^\text{LLCT}/1^\text{MLCT}/1^\text{ILCT}/1^\text{ILCT} \) transitions for \(1\), and the \(1^\text{LLCT}/1^\text{MLCT} \) transitions for \(2\). This is consistent with the experimental data of the ground-state absorption, and further supports the absorption band assignments. It is worth noting that for complex \(1\), the \(1^\text{LLCT}\) and acetylide ligand-based \(1^\pi\pi^*\) transitions (HOMO → LUMO+3) partially overlap with the \(1^\text{LLCT}/1^\text{MLCT} \) transition bands and the charge transfer band observed from the UV−vis measurement is an intense, structureless absorption band. Additionally, because the FMOs are localized only on one of the acetylide ligands in \(1\), the molar extinction coefficient for the major absorption band in \(1\) is much smaller than that for the major absorption band in \(2\), in which the HOMOs are delocalized on both acetylide ligands.

**Emission.** The steady-state emission spectra of complexes \(1\) and \(2\) were measured in different solvents at R.T. and in butyronitrile matrix at 77 K. The normalized emission spectra of the Pt complexes and their respective acetylide ligands in \(\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2\) are illustrated in Figure 4. The fluorescence spectra of \(1\) and \(2\) exhibit structureless feature and positive solvatochromic effect (Supporting Information, Figure S3 and S4), indicating an intramolecular charge-transfer (ICT) emission. In contrast, excitation of \(1\) and \(2\) in \(\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2\) solution at their respective charge-transfer band produces orange luminescence, which can be quenched by oxygen. Their emission spectra exhibit significant Stokes shifts, relatively sharp and narrow shape, with emission lifetimes of 25 ns for \(1\) and approximately 1 μs for \(2\) in deaerated \(\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2\). Taking into account these pieces of information, we believe that their emission emanates from the first triplet excited state (T₃).

| Table 2. Excitation Energies (eV), Wavelengths (nm), Oscillator Strengths, Main Contributing Transitions, and the Associated Configuration Coefficients of Five Singlet Electronic States of Complexes 1 and 2 Obtained at the CAM-B3LYP/LANG631//B3LYP/LANG631 Level of Theory. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| complex | \(S_n\) | excitation energy | main contributing transitions | configuration coefficients |
| 1 | 1 | 3.21 | 386 | HOMO → LUMO | 0.48 |
| 2 | 3.30 | 375 | 1.8968 | HOMO → LUMO+3 | 0.26 |
| 3 | 3.49 | 355 | 0.1099 | HOMO → LUMO+1 | 0.53 |
| 4 | 3.61 | 343 | 0.0001 | HOMO → LUMO+2 | 0.55 |
| 5 | 3.85 | 322 | 0.1609 | HOMO → LUMO+2 | 0.56 |
| 1 | 3.22 | 384 | 1.9284 | HOMO → LUMO | 0.42 |
| 2 | 3.34 | 370 | 1.3008 | HOMO → LUMO | 0.38 |
| 3 | 3.48 | 356 | 2.5675 | HOMO → LUMO+1 | 0.40 |
| 4 | 3.57 | 346 | 0.2158 | HOMO → LUMO+1 | 0.37 |
| 5 | 3.88 | 319 | 0.0091 | HOMO → LUMO+1 | 0.34 |

LANG631 basis set refers to 6-31G* for C, H, N, and S and LANL2DZ for Pt. All calculation results are corrected for solvent effects using the PCM model.
However, the nature of the emitting state of 1 and 2 varies in different solvents. The emission energies, lifetimes and quantum yields in different solvents are summarized in Table 3. As shown in Figure 5a for complex 1, a minor solvatochromic effect was observed. The emission was significantly quenched in polar solvents, such as CH$_3$CN and CH$_2$Cl$_2$. In contrast, in low-polarity solvents like toluene and hexane, the lifetime becomes much longer compared to those in polar solvents, which is indicative of a charge-transfer emitting state in polar solvents. However, compared to 3, the emission spectrum of 1 is more structured and relatively narrower; and the emission lifetime is also significantly longer. Considering that the emission of complex 3 was attributed to a triplet charge transfer (CT) state caused by the strong electron-withdrawing NO$_2$ substituents and the extended $\pi$-conjugation could significantly admix the $3\pi_1\pi^*$ character into the lowest triplet excited state, we attribute the emitting state of 1 to mixed $1\pi^*/\pi_1\pi^*$ states (where the charge transfer states could be $3MLCT/1LCT/3ILCT$). In the case of complex 2 (shown in Figure 5b and Table 3), a structured emission band in CH$_2$Cl$_2$ (vibronic spacing of $\sim$1159 cm$^{-1}$) with a longer emission lifetime ($\sim$1 ns in CH$_3$Cl$_2$) was observed. This indicates that the emitting state in polar solvent could be dominated by the $3\pi_1\pi^*$ excited state that is mainly localized on the acetylide ligands, possibly mixed with some $3MLCT/3LCT$ characters. On the contrary, the negative solvatochromic effect, structureless feature, and shorter lifetime in low-polarity solvents imply that the emitting state is predominantly $3MLCT/3LCT$ in low-polarity solvents. Similar solvent-induced switch between the $3\pi_1\pi^*$ dominated emission and $3MLCT/3LCT$ dominated emission in other Pt(II) diimine complexes has also been reported previously by Castellano’s group$^{11}$ and our group.$^{15}$ It is noted that complex 4 only shows a very weak emission band in CH$_2$Cl$_2$, which was ascribed to the enhanced ICT (intramolecular charge transfer) state, particularly the $1L^*$ state caused by the electron-donating NPh$_3$ group.$^{21}$ With the extension of $\pi$-conjugation in the acetylide ligands, the nature of emitting state could be altered by admixing $3\pi_1\pi^*$ character with the $3MLCT/3LCT$ excited states in 2. This configurational mixing is probably accounted for the blue-shift of the emission band in 2 compared to that in 4. The blue-shift of the emission band with extended $\pi$-conjugation in the acetylide ligand has also been observed in Pt(II) C$^6$N$^4$N complexes by Che and co-workers previously.$^{28}$

The emission of 1 and 2 in BuCN glassy matrix at 77 K was investigated to better understand the nature of their emissive triplet excited states. As shown in Figure 5, their emission spectra at 77 K are blue-shifted and become narrower and more structured. The lifetimes are also much longer compared to those at room temperature. The thermally induced Stokes shift ($\Delta E_s$) is relatively small for both complexes ($\sim$554 cm$^{-1}$ for 1 and $\sim$933 cm$^{-1}$ for 2). The small $\Delta E_s$ values indicate that the triplet emitting states of 1 and 2 indeed possess substantial $3\pi_1\pi^*$ characters.

**Transient Absorption.** The fs (Figure 6) and ns (Figure 7) TA spectra of complexes 1 and 2 were investigated to further understand the properties of both singlet and triplet excited states. The time-resolved fs TA spectra of 1 and 2 in CH$_3$CN/CH$_2$Cl$_2$ are presented in Figure 6a,b, and the singlet-excitestate lifetimes deduced from the fs TA decay profiles are listed in Table 1. The fs TA spectroscopic study not only provides the singlet excited-state difference absorption spectrum, but also deduces the singlet excited state lifetime that cannot be obtained from the decay of fluorescence due to the undetectable fluorescence in many Pt(II) complexes.

As illustrated in Figure 6, complexes 1 and 2 both exhibit positive absorption bands from 450 to 800 nm, which resemble the spectral region of their respective ligands (Supporting Information, Figures S5 and S6) but with somewhat different shapes. This indicates that their singlet excited state absorptions should partially originate from the $1LCT/\pi^*$ excited states of the acetylide ligands. Immediately following the 400 nm excitation, ultrafast intersystem crossing occurs for complexes 1 and 2. The shapes of the TA spectra of complex 1 remain the same over the whole time range of the $\sim$1.4 ns delay line after the 400-nm excitation, which are quite similar to those measured by ns laser flash photolysis (Figure 6d). The minor difference between the fs TA and ns TA spectra could be due to the different solvents used in these two measurements. For complex 1, the intensity of the fs TA spectrum decreases within 1.7 ps after excitation; then the intensity of the spectrum increases to the maximum at 23 ps delay and then decay relatively slowly. This feature implies a fast intersystem crossing in less than 23 ps from the singlet to the triplet excited state.

**Table 3. Emission Energies, Lifetimes and Quantum Yields of Complexes 1 and 2 in Different Solvents at R.T.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CH$_3$CN</th>
<th>CH$_2$Cl$_2$</th>
<th>MTHF</th>
<th>toluene</th>
<th>hexane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\lambda_{em}$/nm</td>
<td>576 (25.0001)</td>
<td>595 (190.005)</td>
<td>581 (1330.0061)</td>
<td>578 (2790.0071)</td>
<td>578 (2790.0071)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spectra and lifetimes were measured in dilute solutions with an absorbance of approximately 0.08 at 436 nm in a 1-cm cuvette. A degassed aqueous solution of [Ru(bpy)$_3$]Cl$_2$ ($\Phi_{em} = 0.042$, excited at 436 nm) was used as the reference. $^{a}$Too weak to be measured.

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and the triplet excited state exhibits a very similar absorption spectrum to that of the singlet excited state. Kinetic study of the triplet excited-state absorption at 550 nm reveals that the decay of the absorbing triplet excited state is approximately 610 ns. Unfortunately, the full ns TA spectrum of 2 was unable to be measured due to the very weak signal under our ns TA experimental condition. However, the fs TA spectra at longer decay times (>23 ps) indicate that the triplet excited state of 2 absorbs broadly from 430 to 800 nm. For complex 1, both fs TA and ns TA spectral features resemble the ns TA spectrum of 1L (Supporting Information, Figure S7) and the fs TA spectrum of 1L at longer delay (Supporting Information, Figure S5). Considering this character and the much longer lifetime ($\tau_T = 3.2 \, \mu s$), the excited states that contribute to the observed fs and ns TA for complex 1 should be dominated by the $1\pi,\pi^*$/$1\text{ILCT}$ and $3\pi,\pi^*$/$3\text{ILCT}$ states, respectively, possibly mixed with some MLCT/LLCT characters. For complex 2, considering the nature of the lowest singlet excited state being

Figure 5. Normalized emission spectra of (a) complex 1 and (b) complex 2 in different solvents at room temperature and in BuCN glassy matrix at 77 K, $\lambda_{ex} = 436$ nm.

Figure 6. (a) Time-resolved fs TA spectrum of complex 1 in 10:1 (v/v) CH$_3$CN/CH$_2$Cl$_2$; (b) Time-resolved fs TA spectrum of complex 2 in 12:1 (v/v) CH$_3$CN/CH$_2$Cl$_2$; (c) Comparison of the fs TA spectra of complexes 1–4 in CH$_3$CN/CH$_2$Cl$_2$ mixture (1, 10:1; 2, 12:1; 3, 12:1; 4, 1:1) at zero delay after excitation; (d) Comparison of the fs and ns TA spectra of 1 at zero delay after excitation. $\lambda_{ex} = 400$ nm for fs TA and $\lambda_{ex} = 355$ nm for ns TA measurements. The fs TA spectrum was measured in mixed 10:1 (v/v) CH$_3$CN/CH$_2$Cl$_2$ solution; while the ns TA spectrum was measured in toluene solution with $A_{355} = 0.4$ in a 1-cm cuvette. The inset shows the time-resolved ns TA spectrum of 1 in toluene.
1MLCT/1LLCT as discussed earlier and the similar spectral region to its corresponding ligand, the observed fs TA is presumably attributed to 1MLCT/1LLCT probably mixed with some 1π,π*/1ILCT characters. It is worth noting that the fs TA spectra of 1 and 3 (Figure 6c) are similar in that both of them possess a strong absorption band in the visible and another band in the NIR spectral region. However, the NIR band in 3 is much broader and stronger than that in 1 although the NIR band in 1 is red-shifted. In contrast, the fs TA spectrum of 2 at zero delay is pronouncedly broadened and red-shifted compared to that of 4. The same trend is observed for the triplet transient absorption spectra of 1 and 3, and 2 and 4 (Figure 7). The different features in the respective fs and ns TA spectra of 1 and 3, and 2 and 4 reflect the influence of the extended π-conjugation of the acetylide ligand on the singlet and triplet excited-state absorption. Meanwhile, the observed trend implies that the transient absorbing species in 2 should be closely related to the acetylide ligand, which could possibly be the LLCT, π,π*, or ILCT states.

Reverse Saturable Absorption. Our TA study indicates that complexes 1 and 2 exhibit stronger excited-state absorption than ground-state absorption in the visible to near-IR spectral region. Thus, reverse saturable absorption (RSA, i.e., transmission of sample solution decreases with increased incident energy) is anticipated to occur in this spectral region. To demonstrate this, the transmission vs incident energy experiment at 532 nm was carried out in a 2-mm cuvette in CH2Cl2 solutions using 4.1 ns laser pulses, and the results are shown in Figure 8. For easy comparison, the concentrations of 1 and 2 were adjusted in order to obtain a linear transmission of 80% at 532 nm. To manifest the effect of extended π-conjugation of the acetylide ligand on the RSA, the nonlinear transmission curves of 3 and 4 at the identical experimental conditions are provided in Figure 8 as well. Obviously, with increased incident energy, the transmission of 1–4 all decrease drastically, which clearly indicates the occurrence of RSA at 532 nm. Compared to 3 and 4, the strength of the RSA at 532 nm for complexes 1 and 2 is significantly increased. For example, complex 4 shows a RSA threshold (defined as the incident energy at 70% of the linear transmittance) of 26.1 μJ and the transmission decreases to 0.31 when the incident energy reaches ∼170 μJ. In contrast, for complex 2, its RSA threshold decreases to 5.1 μJ and the transmission decreases to 0.15 when the incident energy reaches ∼170 μJ. The respective 5- and 2-fold decreases in the RSA threshold and transmission suggests that extension of π-conjugation of the acetylide ligand dramatically increases the degree of RSA in the studied complexes; and, hence, demonstrating that RSA in Pt(II) diimine complexes can be improved by extending the π-conjugation of the acetylide ligands. This provides a useful approach for developing efficient nonlinear absorbing materials.

CONCLUSION

Two new Pt(II) diimine bis(phenylethynylfluorenylacetylide) complexes with terminal NO2 and NPh2 substituents (1 and 2) were synthesized and their photophysical properties were systematically investigated. Complex 1 exhibits intense structureless absorption at ∼397 nm, which is attributed to the 1π,π*/1ILCT/1LLCT/1MLCT transitions. Complex 2 possesses a very intense acetylide ligands localized 1π,π* absorption band at ∼373 nm and broad 1MLCT/1LLCT transition tail from 425 to 525 nm. The ground state electronic structure and vertical excitation energies of several excited singlet electronic states were computed using DFT (B3LYP) and TDDFT (CAM-B3LYP) methods, respectively, and the results of the calculations assisted in the interpretation and assignment of the UV–vis absorption bands. The emitting state of 1 was found to be mixed 3CT/3π,π* states; while the emitting state of 2 exhibits a switch from predominantly 3π,π* state in high-polarity solvents to 1MLCT/1LLCT states in low-polarity solvents. The fs TA study indicates that 1 and 2 exhibit ultrafast intersystem crossing and broadband excited-state absorption in 450–800 nm. Their triplet excited states appear to be populated via rapid intersystem crossing in only a few picoseconds after laser excitation. In addition, strong RSA was observed at 532 nm for ns laser pulses from 1 and 2, which are drastically stronger than each of their corresponding complex with shorter π-conjugation in their acetylide ligands, i.e., 3 and 4, respectively. The photophysical and nonlinear transmission studies revealed that extending the π-conjugation of the acetylide ligand can alter the singlet and triplet excited state properties substantially and improve the RSA at 532 nm drastically. The broad excited-state absorption and strong nonlinear transmittance performance at 532 nm for 1 and 2 suggest that these complexes could be promising candidates as broadband nonlinear absorbing materials.
**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

Supporting Information

Solvent-dependency UV–vis and emission spectra of 1L and 2L, time-resolved fs and ns transient absorption spectra of 1L and 2L, TDDFT calculation results for 1 and 2, and the full author list for ref 39. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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**Notes**

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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