

Open up Future Electronics by Organic Molecules

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Awards

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Spintronics is a new ingredient of electronics in which a magnetic moment of an electron is utilized as an information carrier together with its charge. Spin-polarized current is one of the most important resources in spintronics, because it can drive devices such as ferromagnetic memory with spin angular momentum. In conventional spintronics, such a spin-polarized current is generated by passing a charge current through ferromagnetic metals. However, recently, researchers are finding other ways of spin-polarized current generation by using topological insulators and non-collinear antiferromagnets, which can sometimes be more efficient than those with ferromagnets.

Chiral molecules are attracting recent attention as a new source of spin-polarized current. Chirality-Induced Spin Selectivity (CISS) effect generates spin polarization parallel to or antiparallel to the electron's velocity depending on the handedness of the chiral molecule that is being passed through by a tunneling electron (Figure 1). Although the mechanism of CISS effect is still under debate, it seems to create spin-polarization higher than those of ferromagnets, which is surprisingly large when the small spin-orbit coupling energy of organic molecules is considered. In order to rationalize such a large effect, some microscopic hypotheses are proposed based on experimental results, whose proofs are being waited for.

Selected Publications

- R. Nakajima, D. Hirobe, G. Kawaguchi, Y. Nabei, T. Sato, T. Narushima, H. Okamoto and H. M. Yamamoto, *Nature* **613**, 479 (2023).
- Y. Nabei, D. Hirobe, Y. Shimamoto, K. Shiota, A. Inui, Y. Kousaka, Y. Togawa and H. M. Yamamoto, *Appl. Phys. Lett.* **117**, 052408 (2020).
- A. Inui, R. Aoki, Y. Nishiue, K. Shiota, Y. Kousaka, H. Shishido, D.

Our group is trying to unveil such mechanisms that drive CISS effect by using chiral crystalline materials.

The use of crystalline materials has several advantages. For example, one can employ theoretical framework with well-defined wave number of electrons. Another advantage is the size of the chiral material which allows direct attachment of detection electrodes in different positions. With these merits in mind, we are fabricating spintronic devices suitable for the CISS investigations.

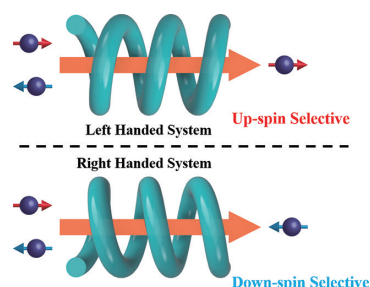


Figure 1. Conceptual schematic for CISS effect. P-helix molecule (lower panel) can transmit more electrons with spins antiparallel to the velocity (negative helicity electrons) than the other, while M-helix molecule (upper panel) favors transmission of electrons with parallel spin (positive helicity electrons).

Hirobe, M. Suda, J.-i. Ohe, J.-i. Kishine, H. M. Yamamoto and Y. Togawa, *Phys. Rev. Lett.* **124**, 166602 (2020).

- M. Suda, Y. Thathong, V. Promarak, H. Kojima, M. Nakamura, T. Shiraogawa, M. Ehara and H. M. Yamamoto, "Light-Driven Molecular Switch for Reconfigurable Spin Filters," *Nat. Commun.* **10**, 2455 (7 pages) (2019).

1. Spin Current Generation in a Chiral Organic Superconductor

Although *s*- and *d*-wave superconductors are in a spin singlet state at its ground state, a superconductor with broken mirror symmetry is expected to show spin triplet state when supercurrent is flowing, according to a theory developed by Edelstein.¹⁾ This means spin polarization can be generated by applying supercurrent in a chiral superconductor. The magnetization direction that depends on the lattice symmetry has been recently calculated by group theory.²⁾ We have tested this idea by employing κ -(BEDT-TTF)₂Cu(NCS)₂ (hereafter, κ -NCS) which is an organic superconductor with chiral and polar crystal lattice. The space group of this crystal is $P2_1$, and its handedness is defined by the relative arrangement between the anionic Cu(NCS)₂ and cationic BEDT-TTF. This handedness can be experimentally determined by X-ray diffraction or circular dichroism (CD).

After confirming pure enantiomeric lattice system with CD microscope, a thin crystal of κ -NCS has been laminated onto a resin substrate with prepatterned gold and nickel electrodes. At temperature lower than superconducting T_c , an a.c. electrical excitation was applied to induce spin polarization (Figure 2). The spin polarization accumulated at the interface between κ -NCS and the magnetic electrode was detected as a built-up voltage that is dependent on the relative angle between the accumulated and ferromagnetic spins. We have compared the observed voltage with theoretical estimation and found that it exceeds the value predicted by Edelstein effect more than 1000 times. This surprising result suggests that there is a spin enhancement effect other than Edelstein effect, implying existence of an effect analogous to CISS for a chiral superconductor.

By measuring the angle dependency of this magneto-voltaic signal, the direction of accumulated spin could be determined. The observed spin polarization direction was dependent on the location of the detection electrode inside the crystal, and its arrangement was consistent with a magnetic monopole structure which has been hypothesized in a chiral molecule under non-equilibrium state with CISS effect. More specifically, the spin accumulation was forming an antiparallel pair on the upper and lower sides of the κ -NCS crystal. With a right-handed crystal, the accumulated spins showed outward spin pairs.

To our surprise, this spin accumulation could be observed in nonlocal measurements where the excitation and detection electrodes are separated by 600 μm . We have also fabricated a nonlocal detection device with a crystal possessing two chirality domains where right- and left-handed crystal structures are spatially separated. By exciting this crystal at two different positions with opposite handednesses, we have observed a switching of spin pairing mode from outward to inward. This corresponds to the sign reversal of magnetic monopole in the language of multipole expression.³⁾ An interesting point here is that the sign of magnetic monopole, which shows time-

reversal-odd (*T*-odd) characteristics, is connected to the chirality of underlying crystal lattice so that representing *T*-odd chirality. Although this *T*-odd chirality is a metastable state and disappears at ground state, its relevance to the enantio-separation experiments in CISS effect is directly implied in this experiment. If one accepts the fact that a sign of such a metastable magnetic monopole at excitation can represent the sign of chirality (electric toroidal monopole) at ground state lattice, both the large enhancement of spin polarization and the enantio-separation of chiral molecules at non-equilibrium state observed in CISS experiments can be naturally understood, because such a monopole can interact with magnetic substrate in a handedness-specific manner. In this sense, this experiment provides the first direct observation of spin pair (or magnetic monopole) formation from coherent chiral system and provides proof of concept for microscopic CISS mechanism. Although the Hamiltonians describing the chiral superconductor and chiral molecules are quite different, there are many common features such as singlet ground state, chiral lattice and quantum coherence over the entire body. Therefore, we believe the present result provides a lot of stimulating insights for microscopic understanding of CISS. Since the conversion from *T*-even spin current to *T*-odd spin accumulation requires time integration with an existence of spin reservoir, the spin carriers in chiral molecules and superconductors should be identified in future studies. We also expect emergence of superconducting spintronics once a sourcing of spin-polarized current in superconductor is established by chiral superconductors.

(BEDT-TTF = bis(ethylenedithio)tetrathiafulvalene)

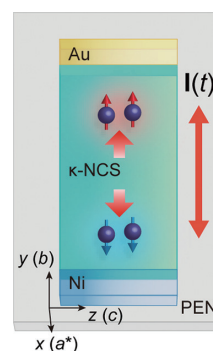


Figure 2. Device schematic for the detection of spin polarization in a chiral superconductor κ -NCS. By applying electrical current, electron spins are polarized along the current direction by CISS-like effect which can be detected as voltage across the κ -NCS/Ni interface. The amplitude of the signal is proportional to the accumulated spins at the interface.

References

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