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Single-molecule spectroscopy using a gap plasmon

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When irradiated onto a nanoscale metal structure, light can be squeezed into an extremely small region of a few nm, far beyond the diffraction limit (several 100 nm) of visible light, due to the localized surface plasmon. The scanning tunneling microscope (STM) is a versatile and powerful tool for studying and controlling the chemistry of single molecules on solid surfaces. We have made spectroscopic measurements and controlled photochemical reactions of single molecules spatially fixed on solid surfaces at low temperatures using the near-field light localized in the tiny gap between a metal tip of an STM and a conducting substrate. The gap plasmon has a characteristic interaction with matter, especially with a single molecule. We have developed an original optical STM that combines the STM with light irradiation and detection technologies, allowing us to use the gap plasmon to explore novel chemical reactions and spectroscopy based on the interaction between the NFL and electronic/vibrational quantum states of a single molecule at the STM junction. In this talk, I will discuss recent issues focusing on single-molecule spectroscopy based on the excitation of molecular quantum states by the gap plasmon and future prospects.

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