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Nickel Catalyzed Cross-coupling of Diarylborinic Acids with Aryl Chlorides

Xiaofeng Chen, Haihua Ke, and Gang Zou

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13	Xiaofeng Chen, Haihua Ke and Gang Zou*
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10	Department of Fine Chemicals
20	Department of Thic Chemicals
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22	East China University of Science & Technology
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24	130 Meilong Rd, Shanghai, China
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28	Email: gangzou@ecust.edu.cn
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ABSTRACT

A highly efficient nickel/triarylphosphine catalyst system, Ni[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂Cl₂/2P(4-MeOPh)₃, has been developed for cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with a wide range of aryl chlorides. A variety of unsymmetrical biaryl and heterobiaryl compounds with various functional groups and steric hindrance could be obtained in good to excellent yields by using 0.5-2 mol% catalyst loadings in the presence of K_3PO_4 ·3H₂O in toluene. The high atom economy of diarylborinic acids and cost-effectiveness of the nickel/phosphine catalyst system make the cross-coupling truly practical in production of biaryl fine chemicals. Usefulness of the nickel/phosphine catalyzed cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl chlorides has been demonstrated in development of a scalable and economical process for synthesis of 4'-methyl-2-cyanobiphenyl, Sartan biphenyl.

KEYWORDS Nickel, Phosphine, Cross coupling, Diarylborinic acid, Aryl chloride

The Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling is more attractive than the other transition metal catalyzed cross-coupling reactions in modern organic synthesis because of the friendly properties of organoboronic acids, e.g. non-toxicity, air/moisture-stability and tolerance of a variety of functional groups.¹ In the evolution of this synthetic methodology, introduction of nickel-based catalysts by Percec *et al* in 1995^2 has proven to be another milestone as important as the conquest of aryl chlorides³ and making use of organotrifluoroborates.⁴ The replacement of palladium catalysts with nickel ones in Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling not only promises a great potential for its applications in industry but also remarkably extends its scope with respect to electrophile counterparts.⁵ For example, aryl chlorides, the most practical aryl halides, have represented a big challenge in palladium catalyzed Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling unless using a few privileged phosphines^{3a-e} or N-heterocyclic carbene ligands.^{3f-j} However, aryl chlorides, including the electron-rich thus deactivated ones, could be cross-coupled by using common nickel catalysts, such as NiCl₂(PPh₃)₂ under appropriate conditions. The Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling of a variety of aryl C-O based electrophiles, e.g. sulfonates,^{2, 5d, 6} esters,^{5d, 6d, 7} sulfamates,^{5d, 6h-j, 8} carbamates,^{5d, 8, 9} phosphates,¹⁰ ethers,^{5d, 11} and even phenolates,¹² has been effected in the last decade by using nickel-based catalysts while palladium catalysts have been rarely applied to these sorts of substrates.¹³ Recently, a long-standing problem, coupling of alkyl electrophiles with organoborons, has been more elegantly solved by Fu group et al. by taking advantage of nickel-based catalysts.¹⁴

In sharp contrast to the greatly extended scope of electrophiles, arylboronic acids and derivatives are still the overwhelming aryl nucleophile counterparts in Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling, including the nickel-catalyzed one. Although high-order arylborons, *e.g.* diarylborinic acids, triarylboranes and tetraarylborates, have higher atom-economy as arylation reagents than arylboronic acids, they have been rarely applied in cross-coupling,¹⁵ especially Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling with aryl chlorides. In fact, highly active aryl halides (I and Br) or/and nontraditional reaction conditions had to be used in the scatteredly reported Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling of high-order arylborons.¹⁶ We have recently reported an efficient cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl halides by using a

palladium catalyst system co-supported by sterically demanding N-heterocyclic carbene (NHC) and phosphite P(OR)₃.¹⁷ Diarylborinic acids (Ar₂B(OH)) not only have comparable properties to arylboronic acids but also possess higher atom economy and could be more economically prepared from arylhalides, boronates and magnesium under non-cryogenic conditions if no hampered by sensitive functional groups.¹⁸ However, high cost of the palladium/NHC/phosphite catalyst still remains an obstacle in application of the cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids in large scale production. Compared with palladium(II) species, the divalent nickel (II) ones are not only much cheaper but also more compatible with the high reducing ability of high-order arylborons.¹⁹ Therefore, nickel-based catalysts should be more suitable for a highly efficient and practical cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl chlorides.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Establishment of Catalyst System. For the convenience of stoichiometry and monitoring, cross-coupling of dehydration-resisting bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid **1a** with representative deactivated aryl chloride, 4-(benzyloxy)phenyl chloride **2a**, was chosen as the model reaction to screen reaction conditions (Table 1). It was reported that simple NiCl₂ without any supporting ligand could catalyze the Suzuki-Miyaura coupling of arylboronic acids to some extent.²⁰ However, no reaction was detected using 3 mol% NiCl₂ as catalyst for the model reaction. A nickel/NHC/phosphite system, NiCl₂/IPr/P(OPh)₃ (IPr=*N*,*N*'-bis(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)imidazol-2-ylidene) also failed although the corresponding palladium system, PdCl₂/IPr/P(OPh)₃, had worked well in cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl halides.¹⁷ However, when 3 mol% Ni(Py)₂Cl₂ or Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ was used as catalyst the cross-coupling product **3aa** was obtained in 30% and 62% yields, respectively, with a boron (**1a**) /chloride (**2a**) molar ratio of 0.65:1 (1.3 equiv. *p*-tolyl group relative to C_{Ar}-Cl) in the presence of 2.6 equiv. K₃PO₄·3H₂O in toluene (Table 1, entries 3 and 4). The **3aa** yields further increased to 83% and 90%, respectively, when two more equivalent PPh₃ with respect to nickel was used along with Ni(Py)₂Cl₂ and Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ although addition of two more equivalent pyridine (Py) did not improve the catalytic performance of Ni(Py)₂Cl₂ (Table 1, entries 5-7).

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Table 1. Condition Screening for Nickel Catalyzed Cross-coupling of Diarylborinic Acids with Aryl Chlorides^{*a*}

	1a	2a	3aa			
Entry	$NiCl_2(L)_2 (mol\%)$	Extra L (mol%)	Base	Sol.	T(°C)	Yield(%)
1	$NiCl_2(3)$	/	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	/
2	$NiCl_{2}(3)$	$NHC/P(OPh)_3(3/3)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	t-BuOH	80	trace
3	$NiCl_2(Py)_2(3)$	/	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	Tol.	110	30
4	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	/	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	Tol.	110	62
5	$NiCl_2(Py)_2(3)$	Ру (6)	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	Tol.	110	35
6	$NiCl_2(Py)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	Tol.	110	83
7	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	Tol.	110	90
8	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	dioxane	100	63
9	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	DME	80	10
10	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	THF	70	77
11	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	CH ₃ CN	70	19
12	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	$K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$	DMF	110	26
13	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	PPh_3 (6)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	<i>i</i> -PrOH	80	trace
14	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	K_2CO_3	Tol.	110	trace
15	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	Cs_2CO_3	Tol.	110	trace
16	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	КОН	Tol.	110	15
17	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	NaOH	Tol.	110	46
18	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$PPh_3(6)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	82 ^c
19	$NiCl_2(PCy_3)_2(3)$	PCy ₃ (6)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	trace
20	NiCl ₂ (dppm) (3)	dppm (3)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	6
21	NiCl ₂ (dppe) (3)	dppe (3)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	27
22	$NiCl_2(dppp)(3)$	dppp (3)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	33
23	$NiCl_2(dppb)(3)$	dppb (3)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	86
24	NiCl ₂ (dppf) (3)	dppf(3)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	66
25	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$(C_6F_5)_3P(6)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	56
26	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	(4-MeOPh) ₃ P (6)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	98
27	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(3)$	$(4-MeOPh)_{3}P(3)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	85
28	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(2)$	$(4-MeOPh)_{3}P(4)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	93
29	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(2)$	(4-MeOPh) ₃ P (2)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	77
30	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(2)$	$(2-MeOPh)_{3}P(4)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	62
31	$NiCl_2(PPh_3)_2(2)$	$(m-trimethoxylPh)_3P(4)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	67
32	$NiCl_2[(4-MeOPh)_3P]_2(2)$	/	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	79
33	$NiCl_2[(4-MeOPh)_3P]_2(2)$	(4-MeOPh) ₃ P (4)	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	97
34	$NiCl_2[(4-MeOPh)_3P]_2(1)$	$(4-MeOPh)_{3}P(2)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	66
35	$NiCl_2[(4-MeOPh)_3P]_2(2)$	$(4-MeOPh)_{3}P(2)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	88
36	$NiCl_{2}[(4-MeOPh)_{3}P]_{2}(2)$	$Ph_3P(4)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	92
37	$NiCl_{2}[(4-MeOPh)_{3}P]_{2}(2)$	$(4-MeOPh)_3P(4)$	K ₃ PO ₄ ·3H ₂ O	Tol.	110	69 ^{<i>d</i>}

^{*a*}Reaction conditions: **1a** (0.65 mmol), **2a** (1.0 mmol), base (2.60 mmol), solvent (4 mL), N₂, 10 h. ^{*b*}Isolated yields. ^{*c*}0.55 mmol of **1a** was used. ^{*d*}Run in the presence of 100 mg mercury.

Screening of several common solvents (dioxane, DME, THF, CH₃CN, *i*-PrOH and DMF) and bases ($C_{2}CO_{3}$, $K_{2}CO_{3}$, NaOH and KOH) provided no better results than those with the combination of toluene and $K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O_2$. A slight excess of bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid **1a** (1.3 equiv. *p*-tolyl) appeared to be necessary since the **3aa** yield decreased from 90% to 82% with the molar ratios of **1a** to 2a decreased from 0.65 to 0.55 (1.1 equiv. p-tolyl) (Table 1, entries 7 and 18). Surprisingly, no reaction was detected using NiCl₂(PCy₃)₂/2PCy₃ as catalyst under otherwise identical conditions since tricyclohexylphosphine (PCy_3) has been often reported to be a good supporting ligand in Suzuki-Miyaura coupling of arylboronic acids. It was reported that some nickel complexes supported by bidentate phosphine ligands, such as Ni(dppe)Cl₂²¹ Ni(dppf)Cl₂²² or Ni(dppp)Cl₂²³ displayed high catalytic activities in the related cross-coupling of arylboronic acids with aryl chlorides. Therefore, we investigated the performance of the most common bidentate phosphines, e.g. 1,1-bis(diphenylphosphino)methane 1,2-bis(diphenylphosphino)ethane (dppm), (dppe), 1,3-bis(diphenylphosphino)propane (dppp), 1,4-bis(diphenylphosphino)butane (dppb) and 1,1'bis(diphenylphosphino)ferrocene (dppf), in the nickel/phosphine catalyst system. Generally, the bidentate phosphines with a large bite angle,²⁴ dppb (86%) and dppf (66%), gave the cross-coupling product **3aa** in higher yields than those with a small one, dppm (6%), dppe (27%) and dppp (33%) (Table 1, entries 20-24). However, the highest yield (86%, with Ni(dppb)Cl₂/dppb) was just comparable to that (90%) with Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂/2PPh₃ (Table 1, entries 7 and 23).

According to the mostly accepted mechanism for Ni-catalyzed cross-coupling processes, only low valent nickel (Ni(0) or Ni(I)) species are truly catalytically active.⁵ Divalent nickel catalyst precursors have to be reduced at first in the catalytic cycle. In fact, strong reducing agents, such as DIBAL-H, BuLi^{3k, 31} or Zn powder^{5b, 25} etc. had to be used to generate catalytically active species from nickel(II) precursors in early reported Suzuki-Miyaura coupling of arylboronic acids using Ni(II)-based catalysts. It has been found later that the Ni(II)-based catalyst systems with extra free phosphine ligands could performed well without additional reductants.^{5b, 5f, 26} Therefore, to elucidate the role of extra phosphine ligands in the nickel/phophine-catalyzed cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl halides, a couple of phosphine ligands with various electronic and steric properties were investigated as extra ligands to catalyst precursor Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ in the model reaction.

Electron-rich P(4-MeOPh)₃ performed better than PPh₃ with the yield of **3aa** increasing from 90% to 98% while no effect was observed for the extremely electron-poor $P(C_6F_5)_3$. The yield of **3aa** significantly decreased to 85% with lowering the ratio of P(4-MeOPh)₃ to Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ to 1:1 (mole/mole) at 3 mol% loading, which was even lower than that (93%) obtained with 2 mol% Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ loading along with 2 equiv. (4 mol%) P(4-MeOPh)₃, confirming the importance of the extra phosphine ligand. However, when the electron richer but sterically demanding tris(2,4,6-trimethoxyphenyl)phosphine, [*m*-(MeO)₃Ph]₃P, was used as extra ligand the **3aa** yield (67%) was just comparable to that (62%) with Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ alone. A similar result was also obtained with P(2-MeOPh)₃ as extra phosphine. That is to say the positive effect of extra phosphines on the catalytic activity of Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂ disappeared completely with sterically demanding P(2-MeOPh)₃ and [*m*-(MeO)₃Ph]₃P although they have compatible or even stronger reducing abilities than PPh₃. The divalent nickel catalyst precursor may be reduced by diarylborinic acids to initiate the catalysis, which is consistent with the high reducing ability and requirement of an excess amount of diarylborinic acids.

Since P(4-MeOPh)₃, as extra phosphine ligand, could improve the catalytic performance of Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂, we anticipated the nickel precursor supported by P(4-MeOPh)₃, Ni[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂Cl₂, should be more efficient than Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂. In fact, the model reaction catalyzed by 2 mol% Ni[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂Cl₂ alone could give **3aa** in a significantly higher yield (79%) than that with 3 mol% Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂. (62%) under otherwise identical conditions (Table 1, entries 4 and 32). The **3aa** yields further increased to 88% and 97% when 2 mol% Ni[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂Cl₂ was used along with 1.0 equiv. (2 mol%) and 2.0 equiv. (4 mol%) extra P(4-MeOPh)₃, respectively, while the reaction could not complete with 1 mol% catalyst loading (Table 1, entries 32-35). Based on these results, the optimal catalyst system for the model reaction was set as 2 mol% NiCl₂[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂/ 4 mol% P(4-MeOPh)₃ with 2.6 equiv. K₃PO₄·3H₂O in toluene. When the reaction was run in the presence of mercury (mercury poisoning test) a modest yield (69%) of **3aa** could still be obtained, supporting a homogeneous catalyst system (Table 1, entry 37).

Scope and Limitation. Scope of the nickel catalyzed cross-coupling of aryl chlorides with diarylborinic acids was explored by using the established catalyst system (Table 2).

		NiCl ₂ [((4-N	4-MeOPh) ₃ P] ₂ /leOPh) ₃ P		r(Hot)
	R B OH	R + (Het)Ar-Cl —— K ₃ F Tolu	PO₄• 3H₂O R [×] ene, 110ºC		i (i iet)
	1a-1h	2a-2v	3al	b-3he	
Entry	$R_{1}(1)$	(Het)ArCl (2)	Cat. (mol%)	T (h)	Yield $(\%)^b$
1	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-MeC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(\mathbf{2b}\right)$	2	6	97 (3ab)
2	4-Me (1a)	$2-\mathrm{MeC}_{6}\mathrm{H}_{4}\mathrm{Cl}\left(\mathbf{2c}\right)$	2	8	91 (3ac)
3	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-}MeOC_{6}H_{4}Cl\left(\mathbf{2d}\right)$	2	10	93 (3ad)
4	4-Me (1a)	$2\text{-}MeOC_6H_4Cl\left(2e\right)$	2	10	89 (3ae)
5	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-}Me_2NC_6H_4Cl\left(2f\right)$	2	10	91 (3af)
6	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-}H_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}\left(2\mathbf{g}\right)$	2	10	78 (3ag)
7	4-Me (1a)	$2\text{-}H_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}\left(2\mathbf{h}\right)$	2	10	73 (3ah)
8	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-}\mathrm{CNC}_{6}\mathrm{H}_{4}\mathrm{Cl}\left(2\mathbf{i}\right)$	1	5	94 (3ai)
9	4-Me (1a)	$3-CNC_6H_4Cl(2j)$	1	5	98 (3aj)
10	4-Me (1a)	$2\text{-}\mathrm{CNC}_{6}\mathrm{H}_{4}\mathrm{Cl}\left(\mathbf{2k}\right)$	1	5	89 (3ak)
11	4-Me (1a)	$2\text{-}\mathrm{CNC}_{6}\mathrm{H}_{4}\mathrm{Cl}\left(\mathbf{2k}\right)$	1.5	5	98 (3ak)
12	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-}\mathrm{AcC}_{6}\mathrm{H}_{4}\mathrm{Cl}\left(\mathbf{2l}\right)$	0.5	6	98 (3al)
13	4-Me (1a)	$2-AcC_{6}H_{4}Cl(2m)$	1	10	63 (3am)
14	4-Me (1a)	$4-(CO_2Me)C_6H_4Cl(2n)$	0.5	8	95 (3an)
15	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-CHOC}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}(20)$	0.5	8	87 (3ao)
16	4-Me (1a)	$4\text{-NO}_2C_6H_4Cl\left(\mathbf{2p}\right)$	0.5	10	trace
17	4-Me (1a)	3-ClC ₅ H ₄ N (2q)	0.5	8	93 (3aq)
18	4-Me (1a)	$2-Cl-3-(CO_2Me)C_5H_3N$ (2r) 2	10	74 (3ar)
19 ^c	H (1b)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	95 (3ba)
20	4-MeO (1c)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	97 (3ca)
21	4-F (1d)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	89 (3da)
22	2-Me (1e)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	91 (3ea)
23	2-Me (1e)	$2\text{-}\text{MeOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2e\right)$	2	10	94 (3ee)
24	2-Et (1f)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	78 (3fa)
25	2-Et (1f)	$2\text{-}MeOC_{6}H_{4}Cl\left(2e\right)$	2	10	73 (3fe)
26	2-MeO (1g)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	92 (3ga)
27	2- ^{<i>i</i>} PrO (1h)	$4\text{-BnOC}_{6}\text{H}_{4}\text{Cl}\left(2a\right)$	2	10	93 (3ha)
28	2- ^{<i>i</i>} PrO (1h)	$2\text{-}MeOC_6H_4Cl\left(2e\right)$	2	10	64 (3he)

Table 2. Scope of the Cross-coupling of Aryl Chlorides with Diarylborinic Acids^a

^{*a*}Reaction conditions: diarylborinic acid (0.65 mmol), aryl chloride (1.0 mmol), K₃PO₄ · 3H₂O (2.60 mmol), Tol. (4 mL), N₂, 110 °C. ^{*b*}Isolated yields. ^{*c*}0.33 mmol of diphenyllborinic anhydride was used.

Similar to 2a, 4-chlorotoluene (2b), 4-chloroanisole (2d) and *N*,*N*-dimethyl-4-chloroaniline (2f) reacted with bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid (1a) smoothly to give the corresponding products 3ab (97%), 3ad (93%) and 3af (91%) in excellent yields using 2 mol% catalyst loading (Table 2, entries 1, 3 and 5). Aryl chlorides bearing a small ortho-substituent like methyl (2c) or methoxyl (2e) still gave

cross-coupling products **3ac** (91%) or **3ae** (89%) in good yields (Table 2, entries 2 and 4). A free amino group (NH₂) on aryl chlorides appeared to be tolerable although the yields decreased significantly for both 4-chloroaniline (**2g**, 78%) and its ortho-isomer (**2h**, 73%) (Table 2, entries 6 and 7). Electron-deficient aryl chlorides with an electron-withdrawing group, *e.g.* CN, CH₃CO, CHO and CO₂Me, displayed higher reactivity in reaction with **1a** than the above electron-neutral and -rich ones. Excellent yields of the desired cross-coupling products could be obtained for these activated substrates even with lower catalyst loadings (0.5-1.5 mol%) and in shorter reaction time (5-8 h) except for 2-chloroacetophone, for which the cross-coupling product **3am** was obtained in a modest yield (63%) due to dechlorination and steric hindrance as well (Table 2, entries 8-15).^{26, 27} A nitro group (NO₂) proved deleterious to the nickel/phosphine catalyst system since no reaction was observed for 4-chloronitrobenzene (**2p**). 3-Chloropyridine reacted smoothly with 0.5 mol% catalyst loading to give cross-coupling product (**3aq**) in 93% yield while methyl-2-chloronicotinate required 2 mol% catalyst loading to achieve a modest yield (**3ar**) (Table 2, entries 17 and 18).

Structural effects of diarylborinic acids on the nickel/phosphine catalyzed cross-coupling reaction were also investigated. Electron-donating (MeO, 1c), neutral (H, 1b), and withdrawing (F, 1d) groups on the aromatic ring of diarylborinic acids appeared to have negligible influence on the reaction, providing the corresponding products in excellent yields (Table 2, entries 19-21). However, an obvious steric effect was observed (Table 2, entries 22-25). For example, the reactions of bis(2-ethylphenyl)borinic acid (1f) with 4-(benzyloxy)phenyl chloride (2a) and 2-chloroanisole (2e) gave 3fa (78%) and 3fe (73%) in significantly lower yields than those of 1a. Surprisingly, the corresponding reaction of bis(2-methoxyphenyl)borinic acid (1g) with 2a proceeded more efficiently to afford 3ga in 92% yield. Even an ortho-isopropoxy group appeared not to hamper the cross-coupling. The reaction of bis(2-isopropoxyphenyl)borinic acid (1h) with 2a afforded 3ha in 93% yield and a modest yield (64%) of 3he could still be obtained for the reaction of (1h) and 2-chloroanisole (2e) (Table 2, entries 26-28). The exact reason is not clear for the smaller steric effect of ortho-alkoxy groups than alkyl ones in the diarylborinic acids on the nickel/phosphine catalyzed cross-coupling reaction. One possibility lies in an intramolecular coordination between the oxygen and boron atoms,²⁸ which could facilitate the transmetallation between diarylborinic acids and

intermediate nickel species in the catalytic cycle.

Considering the significant steric effects observed in the reactions of 2-chloroacetophone (2m) and methyl-2-chloronicotinate (2r), it had appeared that there could be a possibility in monoarylation of ortho-polychloroarenes since the second arylation should experience a much larger steric hindrance than the first one. Therefore, the coupling of bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid (1a) with 2,3-dichlorobenzonitrile (2s) was investigated (Scheme 1). However, a mixture consisting of substrate 2s, diarylation product 4as and a small amount of monoarylation (inseparable 3as and isomer 3'as) was obtained with 0.65:1 molar ratio of 1a/2s. When the 1a/2s molar ratio was increased to 1.3:1 diarylation product 4as was isolated in 72% yield along with monoarylation isomers 3as and 3'as (together in 20% yield).



Scheme 1. Selectivity in Arylation of Dichloroarenes

The relative ease in overcoming the sequentially increasing steric hindrance in the double arylation of ortho-dihaloarenes could be attributed to a preference of intramolecular sequential oxidative addition of the C-X bond of dihaloarenes in transition metal catalyzed cross-coupling, which was firstly observed by Hu *et al.*²⁹ Not surprisingly, an excellent yield (97%) of the

double-arylation product **4at** was obtained in the cross-coupling of **1a** and 2,4-dichlorobenzonitrile (**2t**) because of the absence of the sequentially increasing steric hindrance.

In general, the aryl C_{Ar} -O based electrophiles, except for triflates, are more inert than C_{Ar} -Cl in palladium-catalyzed cross-couplings. However, nickel-based catalysts have proven efficient in Suzuki-Miyaura coupling of arylboronic acids with a variety of phenol derivatives. Aryl tosylates are the most commonly used phenol derivative in cross-coupling because of their ready availability, low cost, high stability and good crystallization property. Therefore, it is interesting to explore the intramolecular chemical selectivity between C_{Ar} -Cl and C_{Ar} -OTs. The cross-coupling of bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid (1a) with 2-chlorophenol tosylate (2u) was investigated (Scheme 2).



Scheme 2. Chemical Selectivity in the Cross-coupling of Chlorophenol Tosylates

Surprisingly, only the C_{Ar} -Cl cross-coupling product **3au**, one of the two possible monoarylation products, was isolated along with a small amount of diarylation product (**5au**). Use of 1.0 equiv. (0.5 molar ratio to C_{Ar} -Cl) bis(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid (**1a**) increased the selectivity of mono- to di-arylation to 75:6 from 74:21. A similar result was obtained for 4-chlorophenol tosylate (**2v**). Similar to the diarylation of dihaloarenes (*vide supra*), the bias reactivity of C_{Ar} -OTs in the intermediate monoarylation products (**3au** and **3av**) to that in the initial chlorophenol tosylates (**2u** and **2v**) could be attributed to the preferable oxidation addition of intramolecular C_{Ar} -OTs over the intermolecular one to the regenerated active nickel species in the catalytic cycle.

Application Exploration. Application of the nickel/phosphine catalyzed cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl chlorides in production of fine chemicals was demonstrated in synthesis of 4'-methyl-2-cyanobiphenyl (Sartan biphenyl), a key intermediate for synthesis of a family of angiotensin II receptor antagonists. Sartans, for treatment of hypertension³⁰. Sartan biphenyl has been commercially produced by nickel-catalyzed Kumada coupling of 2-chlorobenzonitrile with *p*-tolylmagnesium chloride instead of Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling due to the high cost of *p*-tolyl boronic acid. We have recently developed a scalable process for Sartan biphenyl via cross-coupling of di(p-tolyl)borinic acid with 2-chlorobenzonitrile catalyzed by 0.2 mol% Pd(OAc)₂/NHC/P(OPh)₃. However, the expensive palladium catalyst system still hampered the process in practical applications. Therefore, to develop a more cost-effective and practical process for production of Sartan biphenyl, we conducted the nickel/phosphine catalyzed cross-coupling of di(*p*-tolyl)borinic acid (1a) with 2-chlorobenzonitrile (2k) in dozen gram scale. Under the above optimized conditions, 95-97% Sartan biphenyl could be isolated vields 1.5 mol% in using $Ni[P(4-MeOPh)_3]_2Cl_2/2P(4-MeOPh)_3$ catalyst loading in experiments in 0.2 mole scale (Scheme 3).





The cost of nickel-based catalyst was only about 10% of that using 0.2 mol% $Pd(OAc)_2/NHC/P(OPh)_3$.³¹ Attempt to further decrease the catalyst cost, the synthesis was also carried out by using the triphenylphosphine based catalyst, Ni(PPh₃)₂Cl₂/2PPh₃, which has also showed a good activity in the model reaction during catalyst screening (Table 1, entry 7). However, owing to the lower catalytic activity, higher catalyst loadings (3-5 mol% nickel) had to be used to obtain satisfactory yields (92-95%) under similar conditions.

CONCLUSION

In summary, a highly efficient and practical nickel/triarylphosphine catalyst system, Ni[P(4-MeOPh)₃]₂Cl₂/2P(4-MeOPh)₃, has been developed for cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with a wide range of aryl chlorides in the presence of $K_3PO_4 \cdot 3H_2O$ in toluene. Electron-rich and sterically undemanding tri(4-methoxylphenyl)phosphine, P(4-MeOPh)₃, proven to be the most efficient supporting ligand in the nickel/phosphine catalyst system for both activated and deactivated aryl chlorides while tricyclohexylphosphine showed a poor performance. At least 4 equivalent triarylphosphine relative to nickel was found to be necessary to coordinatively stabilize the catalytically active Ni(0) or Ni(I) species as supporting ligand. As low as 0.5 mol% catalyst loading (based on nickel) appeared to be enough for the cross-coupling of activated aryl chlorides without steric hindrance to provide products in good to excellent yields. The aryl chlorides deactivated by either electron-donating groups or steric hindrance could also be coupled efficiently by simply increasing the catalyst loading to 1-2 mol% under otherwise identical conditions. Modest steric hindrance in diarylborinic acids, especially that from a coordinative ortho-substituent, could be overcome successfully. The high atom economy of diarylborinic acids and cost-effectiveness of nickel/phosphine catalyst system make the cross-coupling truly practical in production of biaryl fine chemicals. As an application demonstration of the nickel-catalyzed cross-coupling of diarylborinic acids with aryl chlorides, a scalable and economical process has been developed from bis(tolyl)borinic acid and 2-chlorobenzonitrile for synthesis of Sartan biphenyl, a key intermediate of a family of angiotensin II receptor antagonists.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

gangzou@ecust.edu.cn

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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Supporting Information Available. Detailed experimental procedures, characterization data and ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of all new and known compounds. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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