## Unbinding and preunbinding in binary surfactant solutions

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Based on the model by Milner and Roux [1], we propose a model for the first-order unbinding transition of lyotropic lamellae in binary surfactant solutions. The phase diagram of the C<sub>16</sub>E<sub>7</sub>/water binary system is shown in Fig. 1. The coupling between the surfactant volume fraction and the nematic order parameter is taken into account so that the orientational order enhances the net attractive interaction between the surfactant molecules. Such a coupling effect leads to a phase separation between bound and unbound phases, and the model exhibits a rich phase behavior depending on the coupling strength. When the coupling is strong enough, the unbinding transition becomes first-order. We determine the associated preunbinding line which separates two lamellar phases having different repeat distances. We further discuss the coexistence between the lamellar phase and the network micellar phase. Our results explains the experimentally observed unbinding behavior of the lamellar phases in binary mixtures of nonionic surfactant and water. The obtained phase diagram agrees well with that from the experiment [2].

## References

- [1] S. T. Milner and D. Roux, J. Phys. (France) I 2 (1992), 1741.
- [2] R. Strey, R. Schomäcker, D. Roux, F. Frederic, and U. Olsson, J. Chem. Soc. Faraday Trans. 86 (1990), 2253.

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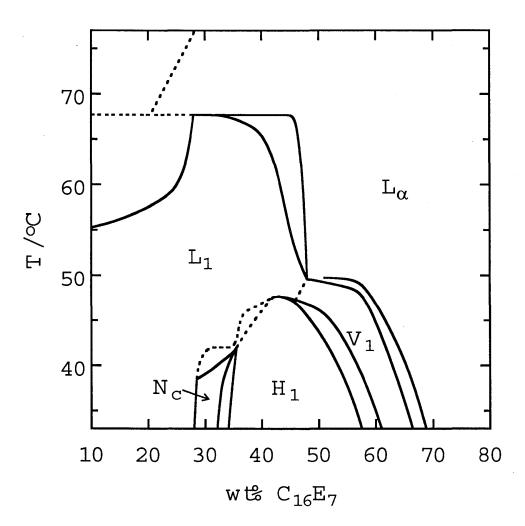


Figure 1: Phase diagram of the  $C_{16}E_7/water$  system.  $L_{\alpha}$ , lamellar phase;  $L_1$ , isotropic micellar phase;  $L_3$ , sponge phase;  $V_1$ , cubic phase;  $H_1$ , hexagonal phase.