Supporting Information

Nickel(II) $PE^{1}CE^{2}P$ pincer complexes (E = O, S) for electrocatalytic proton reduction

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Figure S1. CVs (under argon) for complexes 1 (1 mM) (black), 2 (1.47 mM) (blue) and 3 (1.43 mM) (red) in the absence of acid in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at a scan rate of 0.1 V /s.



Figure S2. CVs (under argon) for complexes 4 (1.15 mM) (black), 5 (0.93 mM) (blue) and 6 (1 mM) (red) in the absence of acid in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at a scan rate of 0.1 V /s.



Figure S3. Plot of current (i_p) vs. (scan rate (v))^{1/2} (0.025-1 Vs⁻¹) for the reduction peaks of (a) complexes **1** (black) (0.5 mM), **2** (red) (1.11 mM) and **3** (blue) (1.07 mM) and (b) complexes **4** (black) (1.15 mM), **5** (red) (0.93 mM) and **6** (blue) (1 mM). Lines are best fit lines to the data. Linear plot of i_p vs square root of the scan rate suggests no deposition of the catalyst on the electrode surface.



Figure S4. (a) CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (1 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0.97, 2.90, 4.82, 6.75, 10.58, 18.20, 25.74, 40.64 mM) (—) acetic acid with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. The reverse scans have been omitted for clarity. (b) CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (0.46 mM) in MeCN in the absence (—) and presence (---) of AgNO₃ at 0.1 V/s. (c) CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (0.46 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0-82 mM) (—) acetic acid with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. CVs with acetic acid were measured after addition of AgNO₃ to the MeCN solution of the sample.



Figure S5. (a) CVs for [^{iPr}PSCSP^{iPr}]NiCl (3) (1.43 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (1.35, 2.71, 5.40, 8.09, 13.44, 18.76, 29.31, 39.72, 50 mM) (—) of acetic acid at 0.1 V /s. (b) CVs (under argon) for complex 3 (0.43 mM) in MeCN in the absence (—) and presence (---) of AgNO₃ at 0.1 V/s. (c) CVs (under argon) for complex 3 (0.43 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0-28 mM) (—) acetic acid with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. CVs with acetic acid were measured after addition of AgNO₃ to the MeCN solution of the sample.



Figure S6. Top: CVs for $[i^{Pr}POCOP^{iPr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (4) (1.15 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (2.61, 6.076, 9.53, 16.39, 23.2, 36.66, 49.92 mM) (—) of acetic acid at 0.1 V /s. Bottom: CVs for $[i^{Pr}POCSP^{iPr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (5) (0.93 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (2.61, 6.075, 9.53, 16.39, 23.203, 36.66 mM) (—) of acetic acid at 0.1 V /s.



Figure S7. CVs for 1 mM (a) complex **1**, (b) complex **2** and (c) complex **3** in MeCN before and after bulk electrolysis experiment with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. Bulk electrolysis was carried out at the first reduction potential of the complexes.



Figure S8. CVs for 0.5 mM (a) complex **4** and (b) complex **5** in MeCN before and after bulk electrolysis experiment with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. Bulk electrolysis was carried out at the first reduction potential of the complexes.



Figure S9. (a) CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (1.02 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0.66, 1.33, 1.99, 3.97, 5.94, 9.84 mM) (--) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. (b) CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (0.46 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0-5 mM) (--) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s. CVs with TFA were measured after addition of AgNO₃ to the MeCN solution of the sample.



Figure S10. CVs (under argon) for complex 2 (1.11 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0.60, 1.19, 2.39, 3.58 mM) (—) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s.



Figure S11. CVs (under argon) for complex 3 (1.87 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (0.75, 1.50, 2.99, 4.47, 5.94 mM) (—) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s.



Figure S12. CVs (under argon) for $[{}^{Pr}POCOP{}^{Pr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (**4**) (0.85 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (6.59, 11.76, 14.32, 24.31, 33.96, 47.85, 61.08 mM) (—) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s.



Figure S13. CVs (under argon) for complex 5 (1.24 mM) in MeCN in the absence (---) and presence of (1.99, 3.97, 5.94, 9.84, 13.68 mM) (—) of TFA with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V /s.



Figure S14. CVs (under argon) for complex 1 (0.5 mM) in MeCN in the presence of AA at different scan rates.



Figure S15.(a) CVs (0.1 Vs⁻¹) of CH₃CN (—), of CH₃CN and 63 mM acetic acid (- - -), of [^{iPr}POCOP^{iPr}]NiCl (1) (1 mM) (—) in the presence of 40.64 mM of acetic acid, of [^{iPr}POCSP^{iPr}]NiCl (2) (1.47 mM) (—) in the presence of 45.2 mM of acetic acid and of [^{iPr}PSCSP^{iPr}]NiCl (3) (1.43 mM) (—) in the presence of 50 mM of acetic acid in CH₃CN. (b) CVs (0.1 Vs⁻¹) of CH₃CN (—), of CH₃CN and 63 mM acetic acid (- - -), of [^{iPr}POCOP^{iPr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) (1.15 mM) (—) in the presence of 50 mM of acetic acid and of [^{iPr}POCSP^{iPr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) (1.15 mM) (—) in the presence of 36.7 mM of acetic acid in CH₃CN.



Figure S16. CVs (0.1 Vs⁻¹) of CH₃CN (——), of CH₃CN and 5.94 mM TFA (- - -), of [^{*i*P}^rPOCOP^{*i*P}^r]NiCl (1) (1.02 mM) (—) in the presence of 5.94 mM of TFA, of [^{*i*P}^{*i*}POCSP^{*i*P}^{*i*}]NiCl (2) (1.11 mM) (—) in the presence of 3.58 mM of TFA and of [^{*i*P}^{*i*}PSCSP^{*i*P}^{*i*}]NiCl (3) (1.87 mM) (——) in the presence of 5.94 mM of TFA in CH₃CN.



Figure S17. CVs (0.1 Vs⁻¹) of CH₃CN (——), of CH₃CN and 23.08 mM TFA (- - -), of [${}^{Pr}POCOP {}^{Pr}$]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4**) (0.85 mM) (——) in the presence of 14.32 mM of TFA and of [${}^{Pr}POCSP {}^{Pr}$]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**5**) (1.24 mM) (——) in the presence of 13.68 mM of TFA in CH₃CN.



Figure S18. Plot of charge *vs.* time for controlled-potential electrolysis of 1 mM complexes **1** and **4** (a) with AA (- 2.4/-2.5 V) and (b) with TFA at -1.9/-1.8 V in CH₃CN / 0.1 M [N(n-Bu₄)][PF₆].



Figure S19. Rinse test was performed with the [^{*i*Pr}PE¹CE²P^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**1-3**) and [^{*i*Pr}PE¹CE²P^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4** and **5**) complexes. The solid black line is for catalysis in the presence of the catalysts with acetic acid at 0.1 Vs⁻¹. The working electrode (GCE) was then dipped into the solution having the same amount of acetic acid but without the catalyst after gently rinsing with acetonitrile (black dashed line) at 0.1 Vs⁻¹. The Pt counter and Ag/AgCl reference electrodes were also cleaned thoroughly before the rinse test.



Figure S20. Rinse test was performed with the [^{*i*Pr}PE¹CE²P^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**1-3**) and the [^{*i*Pr}PE¹CE²P^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4** and **5**) complexes. The solid black line is for catalysis in the presence of the catalysts with TFA at 0.1 Vs⁻¹. The working electrode (GCE) was then dipped into the solution having the same amount of TFA but without the catalyst after gently rinsing with acetonitrile (black dashed line) at 0.1 Vs⁻¹. The Pt counter and Ag/AgCl reference electrodes were also cleaned thoroughly before the rinse test.



Figure S21. *i*_{cat} vs catalyst concentration plots for (a) [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (1) with acetic acid (26 mM), (b) for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (2) with acetic acid (6.17 mM), (c) for [^{*i*Pr}PSCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (3) with acetic acid (6.51 mM), (d) for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) with acetic acid (4.34 mM) and (e) for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) with acetic acid (23.2 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s. Lines are the best-linear fit to the data.



Figure S22. i_{cat} vs catalyst concentration plots for (a) for [${}^{iPr}POCOP^{iPr}$]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4**) with TFA (14.32 mM) and (b) for [${}^{iPr}POCSP^{iPr}$]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**5**) with TFA (9.84 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s. Lines are the best-linear fit to the data.

Proton reduction kinetics:

For a diffusion limited catalytic process that occurs at high enough [H⁺] that the concentration remains unchanged, the observed current obeys the following equation:

$$i_{\text{cat}} = nFA \, [\text{cat}] \, \sqrt{Dk[H^+]^2} \tag{1}$$

The peak current observed in the absence of acid for the complex, can be written as:

$$i_{\rm p} = 0.443FA \,[\text{cat}] \sqrt{\frac{F_V D}{RT}}$$
 (2)

Dividing (1) by (2), results in the following expression:

$$\frac{i_{cat}}{i_p} = \frac{n}{0.4463} \sqrt{\frac{RT}{F}} \sqrt{\frac{k[H^+]^2}{v}} = 0.72 \sqrt{\frac{k[H^+]^2}{v}}$$
(3)

A = area of the electrode, D is the diffusion coefficient of the catalyst (D for the oxidised and reduced forms are assumed equal), n = 2 for H₂ production, R = 8.314 J/(mol K), F = 96485 C/mol, v scan rate in V/s, k is the third order rate constant. Linearity of:

1. plots of i_{cat} , i_p vs acid concentration confirms that the electrocatalytic process is second order with respect to acid concentration

2. plots of icat vs [catalyst] confirms that the process is first order with respect to catalyst concentration

The rate law for the thirdorder process can be written as: $rate = k [H^+]^2 [cat]$



Figure S23. (a) *i*_{cat} vs acid concentration plot (negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored) and (b) *k*_{obs} (*TOF*, s⁻¹) vs acid concentration plot, (with acetic acid) for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (1) (1 mM), for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (2) (1.47 mM) and for [^{*i*Pr}PSCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (3) (1.43 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s.



Figure S24. (a) *i*_{cat} vs acid concentration plot (negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored), (b) *i*_{cat} / *i*_p vs acid concentration (M) plots for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) (1.15 mM) and for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) (0.93 mM) (with acetic acid) and(c) *k*_{obs} (*TOF*, s⁻¹) vs acid concentration plot, (with acetic acid) for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) (1.15 mM) and for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) (0.93 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s.



Figure S25. Top: *i*_{cat} vs acid concentration plot (with TFA) for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4**) (0.85 mM) and for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**5**) (1.24 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s (negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored). Bottom: *i*_{cat} / *i*_p vs acid concentration (M) plot for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4**) (0.85 mM) and for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**5**) (1.24 mM) in MeCN with 0.1 M TBAP at 0.1 V/s.



Figure S26. Plot of i_{cat} (μ A) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**1**) (0.5 mM) with 2.61 mM (**■**) and 9.53 mM (**●**) acetic acid in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored.



Figure S27. Plot of i_{cat} (μ A) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**2**) (1.11 mM) with 1.74 mM (**■**) and 4.52 mM (**●**) acetic acid in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored.



Figure S28. Plot of (a) i_{cat} (μ A) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [iPr PSCSP iPr]NiCl (**3**) (1.07 mM) with 3.48 mM (**■**) acetic acid in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored.



Figure S29. Plot of *i*_{cat} (μA) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) (1.15 mM) with 2.61 mM (■) and 9.53 mM (●) acetic acid in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored.



Figure S30. Plot of *i*_{cat} (μA) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) (0.93 mM) with 2.61 mM (■) and 9.53 mM (●) acetic acid in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored.



Figure S31. Plot of *i*_{cat} (μA) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (4) (1.5 mM) with 4.17 mM (■) and 13.5 mM (●) TFA in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored. No kinetic information can be extracted in these experiments since a region independent of scan rate was not fully reached.



Figure 32. Plot of *i*_{cat} (μA) vs. scan rate (Vs⁻¹) for complex [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (5) (1.24 mM) with 3.97 mM
(■) TFA in 0.1 M [NBu₄][PF₆] / MeCN. Negative sign for catalytic current has been ignored. No kinetic information can be extracted in these experiments since a region independent of scan rate was not fully reached.



Figure S33. UV-Vis absorption spectroscopy (I = 1 mm) of (a) complex [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**2**) (0.18 mM) and (b) complex [^{*i*Pr}PSCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**3**) (0.09 mM) recorded in acetonitrile under different concentrations of TFA (0-93 mM). The spectral changes upon addition of increasing amounts of acid are indicated by arrows.



Figure S34. UV-Vis experiments in acetonitrile for [^{/Pr}PSCSP^{/Pr}]NiCl (**3**) in the absence and presence of TFA and after addition of NaHCO₃.



Figure S35. UV-Vis absorption spectroscopy (I = 1 mm) recorded in acetonitrile for complexes (a) $[{}^{iPr}POCOP^{iPr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (**4**) (0.25 mM) under different concentrations of acetic acid (0-580 mM) and (b) $[{}^{iPr}POCSP^{iPr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (**5**) (0.15 mM) under different concentrations of acetic acid (0-1160 mM). The dotted lines represent the UV-Vis measurements after addition of NaHCO₃ to the acetonitrile solution and (c) $[{}^{iPr}POCSP^{iPr}]NiSC_6H_4CH_3$ (**5**) (0.10 mM) under different concentrations of TFA (0-5 mM). The spectral changes upon addition of increasing amounts of acid are indicated by arrows.





Figure S37. ³¹P{¹H}NMR spectra for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (**1**) in CD₃CN without (red) and with (green) TFA.





Figure S39. ³¹P{¹H} NMR spectra for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (2) in CD₃CN without (red) and with (green) TFA.





Figure S41. ³¹P{¹H} NMR spectra for [^{*i*Pr}PSCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiCl (3) in CD₃CN without (red) and with (green) TFA.







Figure S43. ³¹P{¹H} NMR spectra for [^{*i*Pr}POCOP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**4**) in CD₃CN without (red) and with (green) TFA.





Figure S45. ³¹P{¹H} NMR spectra for [^{*i*Pr}POCSP^{*i*Pr}]NiSC₆H₄CH₃ (**5**) in CD₃CN without (red) and with (green) TFA.

Table S1.Crystallographic parameters for complex 6.		
	[^{/₱} ′PSCSP ^{/₱} ′]NiSC ₆ H₄CH₃ (6)	
Chemical formula	$C_{25}H_{38}NiP_2S_3$	
Formula weight	555.38 g/mol	
Colour	red	
Crystal system	monoclinic	
Space group	C2/c	
Unit cell dimensions		
a, b, c	30.1685(9) Å 9.1638(3) Å 20.4900(6) Å	
α, β, γ	90° 105.7342(11)° 90°	
Cell volume	5452.4(3) Å ³	
Z	8	
Temperature	150(2) K	
Wavelength	0.7107 Å (Mo-K _α)	
Reflections collected	63008	
Independent reflections	6581	
Observed reflections (I > $2\sigma(I)$)	5819	
Parameters	289	
GOF (<i>F</i> ²)	1.038	
R_1 (I > 2 σ (I))	0.0266	
wR_2 (all data)	0.0698	

Qualitative Analysis Report



User Spectra





Figure S46. LC-MS spectra (low resolution) for complex 1 in MeCN with 10 equiv. of TFA added.

Elemental Composition Report

Hasche PH 159





Figure S47. LC-MS spectrum (high resolution) for complex 2 with 10 equiv. of TFA added.

Qualitative Analysis Report



Figure S48. LC-MS spectra (low resolution) for complex 4 with 10 equiv. of TFA added.