Influences of Zn Concentration on Dielectric Properties of ZnxNi1-xFe2O4 Magnetic Nanoparticles

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Influences of Zn Concentration on Dielectric Properties of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ Magnetic Nanoparticles

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Abstract

Dielectric properties of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ magnetic nanoparticles (MNPs) with various Zn concentration ($x = 0.2-0.8$) have been investigated over a wide frequency range 5–120 kHz. Zn-Ni ferrite MNPs have spinel cubic structure. The crystallite size of the sample for $x = 0.2$ was about 21.5 nm and then decreases by increasing Zn concentration. For sample with $x = 0.4$ at frequency 20 kHz, the real dielectric constant ($\varepsilon'$) was 35.9, imaginary dielectric constant ($\varepsilon''$) was 20.4 and loss tangent (tan $\delta$) was 0.6. Zn concentration would affect to availability of ferrous and ferric ions in the octahedral site which are preferentially occupied by Zn$^{2+}$ ion. The dielectric constants decrease with increasing frequency. The sample with at $x = 0.6$ has the highest dielectric on frequency 5 kHz. The maximum AC conductivity ($\sigma_{ac}$) was $1.7 \times 10^4 \Omega^{-1}$ at 65 kHz observed for concentration $x = 0.3$. The dielectric constants and conductivity at low frequency are due to the existence of grains boundary while the dispersion in the high frequency region are due to the conducting grains.

Introduction

Magnetic nanoparticles (MNPs) still have a great interest in fundamental science, due to their different performance compared with its bulk size. At the nanoscale, properties like electrical conductivity and mechanical strength are not the same as they are at bulk size [1]. The electronic structure of MNPs changes dramatically by the modification of particles size. Spinel ferrites MNPs are good dielectric materials and they have wide applications ranging from microwave frequency to radio frequency [2]. Zn-Ni ferrite is the most interesting one of spinel ferrites. Zn-Ni ferrite is a combination of Zn ferrite which belongs to normal spinel and Ni ferrite which belongs to inverse spinel. Based on their soft magnetic characteristics, Zn-Ni ferrite has low coercivity, high permeability, high electrical resistance and low eddy current losses [2,3]. It is found to be very useful in technological applications, such as microwave absorber which needs those characteristics. Moreover, the Zn-substitution will affect the chemical composition and different distribution of cation. Zn-substitution improves the chemical stability, corrosion resistivity, magneto-crystalline anisotropy as well magneto-optical property of Zn-Ni ferrite [3].
Dielectric properties of ferrite MNPs are dependent on preparation method, grain size, cation distribution and chemical composition [4,5]. As reported by Moradmand et al. [4] that dielectric and electrical properties of Ni$_{1-x}$Mg$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs which made by co-precipitation changed due to preparation method and chemical composition. Crystal structures show how the chemical composition and physical properties of materials are linked together. Istikhamoh et al. [6] reported that Zn concentration could give an influence in structure and magnetic properties of Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs which made by co-precipitation method. Atiq et al. [3] investigated the dielectric properties of Ni$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ in the frequency range from 100 Hz to 20 MHz which made by sol gel combustion method. The sol gel combustion method needs very long time and high temperature in preparation of Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs while the co-precipitation method is simpler, easier and only need low temperature [7]. Study of effects of Zn on dielectric properties of Mn-Zn spinel ferrite recently has been reported [8]. Many methods have been developed to synthesize Mn$_{1-x}$Zn$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ nanoparticles, such as sol-gel, solid state reaction, ceramic method, sol-gel auto combustion, and co-precipitation. Among those methods, coprecipitation is considered the most effective because it can result from a small crystallite size, high purity product, not time-consuming [9,10].

Complex dielectric constant does not decrease continuously with frequency increases due to interface polarization which is dominant at frequencies below 30 kHz [11]. In this frequency region, behavior of these materials is analogous with Debye type of relaxation process. Electronic and ionic polarization have negligible influence to the value of complex dielectric constant. That is due to the fact that those polarization only can occur in microwave region. However, the dielectric properties of Zn-Ni ferrite MNPs which made by simpler method and range measurement of frequencies which caused interface polarization have not yet been investigated in detail.

In this paper, the influence of Zn concentration on dielectric properties of Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs prepared through co-precipitation method is investigated. The complex dielectric constant, loss tangent and AC conductivity in the frequency range from 5 to 120 kHz at room temperature are studied in detail using homemade impedance spectroscopy.

**Experiment Details**

Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs ($x = 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7$, and $0.8$) have been synthesized by using co-precipitation method with FeCl$_3$.6H$_2$O (Merek, Germany), ZnSO$_4$.7H$_2$O (Merek, Germany) and NiCl$_2$.6H$_2$O (Merek, Germany) as precursors. Mass composition in detail is shown in Table 1. The synthesis was started by mixing $3.37$ ml of HCl ($37\%$) with ZnSO$_4$.7H$_2$O and NiCl$_2$.6H$_2$O for certain ratio of mol which were dissolved into 20 ml of distilled water then stirred with 500 rpm for 2 minutes. The solution was dropped to NaOH $1.5$ M and stirred with 1000 rpm for 60 minutes at a certain temperature. Furthermore, the solution was precipitated by external field (permanent magnet). The precipitation was washed in seven times by using distilled water to obtain a pure Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$. Samples were dried in a furnace at $90^\circ$C for 4 hours. The crystal structure of samples were analyzed by using X-Ray Diffactometer (XRD) Shimadzu model XD-3H (Cu-Kα = 1.5406 Å), and Transmission Electron Microscope (TEM) Jeol Jem-1400. The dielectric properties were measured by using computerized impedance spectroscopy on a circuit of AC in the frequency range from 5 to 120 kHz. Powder samples were firstly changed into pellets of 1.23 cm in diameter at the compressive force of 50,000 N. The dielectric properties measured such as complex dielectric, loss tangent and AC conductivity as a function of frequency.

### Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the X-ray diffraction spectra of the samples. All of the main diffraction peaks confirmed that Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs have spinel cubic structure with impurity phase. Diffraction peaks which indicated samples of Zn-Ni ferrite indexed to (220), (311), (400), (511), and (440) planes matched with JCPDS card No. 08-0234 [3]. The impurity phase FeO(OH) indexed to (221) plane matched with standard JCPDS card No. 220353 [6]. All diffraction peaks of MNPs shifted to lower angle by increasing Zn concentration indicated that lattice parameter were expanded. Lattice parameter increased from $8.599$ Å ($x=0.2$) to $8.650$ Å ($x=0.8$) due to the replacement of smaller Ni$^{2+}$ ionic radii by larger Zn$^{2+}$ ionic radii. Crystallite size decreased from $21.5$ nm to $11.2$ nm by increasing Zn concentration. This was due to the lower bond energy of Zn$^{2+}$-O$^2-$ than Ni$^{2+}$-O$^2-$ [12]. Figure 2 shows the dependence of crystallite size in Zn concentration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$x$</th>
<th>Zn$_{1-x}$Ni$_x$Fe$_2$O$_4$</th>
<th>ZnSO$_4$.7H$_2$O (gram)</th>
<th>NiCl$_2$.6H$_2$O (gram)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.2}$Ni$</em>{0.8}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.2}$Ni$</em>{0.8}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.4}$Ni$</em>{0.6}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.5}$Ni$</em>{0.5}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.6}$Ni$</em>{0.4}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>0.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.7}$Ni$</em>{0.3}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Zn$<em>{0.8}$Ni$</em>{0.2}$Fe$_2$O$_4$</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Influence of Zn Concentration on Dielectric Properties

Makara J. Sci.

December 2018 | Vol. 22 | No. 4

The X-ray Diffraction Spectra of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs (a) $x=0.2$, (b) $x=0.3$, (c) $x=0.4$, (d) $x=0.5$, (e) $x=0.6$, (f) $x=0.7$, and (g) $x=0.8$

Figure 1. The X-ray Diffraction Spectra of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs

The X-ray diffraction spectra of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ nanoparticles exhibit peaks at 2θ = 30°, 40°, 50°, and 70°, indicating a polycrystalline structure of nanoparticles and high value of grain size. Morphology of sample with same ratio of Zn-Ni is shown in Figure 3, particles tend to agglomerate with non-uniform size. This is due to small particle size producing high surface energy and surface tension of nanoparticles. High surface energy of MNPs provide unstable surface, so agglomeration occurred to minimize their excess surface energy [13].

The dielectric properties have been measured by computerized impedance spectroscopy. Figure 4 shows the variation of dielectric constants as a function of frequency for the samples at room temperature in the frequency range from 5 to 120 kHz. For all samples, the value of real and imaginary dielectric constants is high at low frequency and then they decrease with the increases of frequency and saturated at high frequency. Those results are correspond with Maxwell-Wagner type of interfacial polarization in agreement with the Koop's phenomenological theory [14].

Based on these theories, the dielectric structure of ferrite NPs is consists of two layers: grains and grain boundaries. Grains can be considered as areas having low electrical resistance due to perfect crystalline characteristics, while on the grain boundaries are the regions having high resistance. Maxwell-Wagner interfacial polarization occurs in the grain boundaries due to the charge accumulation in these higher resistive boundaries. Furthermore, the electronic exchange between the substituted ions has an important role in the dielectric and conduction properties of the ferrites. Since the substitution is occurring at tetrahedral sites, so the phenomenon of electronic exchange due to Ni and Zn ions rise the local displacement in the direction of the external electric field. These local displacements determine the mechanism of polarization. Beyond a certain frequency of the external electric field, these local displacements cannot follow the alternating field so the dielectric constants become saturate. By increasing Zn concentration, the mobility of the charge carriers decreases which causes the local displacements of charges to decrease even further at lower frequencies [15]. Table 2 describes the value of complex dielectric constant based on Zn concentration at some frequencies.

The exchange of Fe$^{2+}$ and Fe$^{3+}$ ions in spinel structure will result in local displacement caused by an external electric field, so more and more sites in spinel structure can increase the polarization because of increasing the number of Fe ions. Furthermore, this composition dependent behavior of Zn-Ni ferrites can also be explained on the basis of inverse spinel structure. For the samples under study, the presence of Ni$^{2+}$/Ni$^{3+}$ ions lead to the formation of p-type charge carriers (holes), while n-type charge carriers (electrons) are also present due to the presence of Fe$^{3+}$/Fe$^{2+}$ ions. The local displacements of these carriers in the direction of the external field contribute to the polarization mechanism. The maximum value of dielectric constant is obtained because maximum number of Fe$^{3+}$ ions are present at octahedral site, thus showing high hopping rates as the contribution from these n-type carriers is high as compared to p-type carriers. With the Zn substitution, Fe$^{3+}$ ions are replaced which depletes the number of Fe ions available for the conduction process, resulting a decrease in the probability of the following exchange mechanism Ni$^{2+} + $Fe$^{3+}$ $\leftrightarrow$ Ni$^{3+} + $Fe$^{2+}$ [3].

Figure 5 shows the loss tangent (tan δ) and AC conductivity ($\sigma_{AC}$) as a function of frequency for the samples at room temperature in the frequency range from 5 to 120 kHz. The behavior of loss tangent can be observed from the graph that loss tangent have high values at low frequencies while decrease with the increment in frequency and becomes independent at high frequencies.
Figure 3. Morphology (a) and Diffraction Patterns (b) of Zn$_{0.5}$Ni$_{0.5}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs

Figure 4. (a) Real and (b) Imaginary Dielectric Constants of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs as a Function of Frequency

Table 2. The Value of Complex Dielectric Constant of Zn$_x$Ni$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ MNPs based on Zn Concentration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zn concentration (x)</th>
<th>Real dielectric constant</th>
<th>Imaginary dielectric constant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 kHz</td>
<td>60 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Loss tangent is the measure of energy absorption in the dielectric medium. These results are in accordance with the Koop's phenomenological theory and therefore, it is expected that the energy losses are high at low frequency while they are low at high frequency region. The behavior of these losses can be understood on the basis of polarization resonance with applied external field. Electrical conduction mechanism is related to the electron and polaron hopping mechanism which acts as hopping channels. An increase in frequency facilitates the conductive channels to become more active by promoting the hopping of charge carriers.

Summary

ZnNi$_{1-x}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ nanoparticles were successfully prepared by co-precipitation method. The increasing of Zn concentration is causing lattice parameter increases and crystallite size decreases. The crystallite size of the sample for x = 0.2 was about 21.5 nm and then decreases by increasing Zn concentration. The real and the imaginary dielectric constants and also loss tangent were increase with the increase of Zn concentration. The dielectric properties and AC conductivity were depend on frequency. Real and imaginary dielectric constants decreased with increasing frequency. The maximum AC electrical conductivity was $1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ $\Omega^{-1}$ at 65 kHz observed for concentration $x = 0.3$.

Acknowledgment

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References


