

Structure and Electrical Properties of Oxide Doped Rhombohedral Pb(Ni_{1/3}Nb_{2/3})O₃-PbTiO₃ Ferroelectric Ceramics

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ABSTRACT

0.7Pb(Ni_{1/3}Nb_{2/3})O₃-0.3PbTiO₃ (0.7PNN-0.3PT) and 1 mol% La₂O₃-, Y₂O₃-, ZnO-, MnO₂- and Nb₂O₅-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ferroelectric ceramics were prepared by the conventional solid-state reaction method via the columbite precursor route. The ceramics sintered at 1180 °C exhibit pure rhombohedral perovskite structure except the Y₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. The oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit rather homogeneous microstructure and improved densification, especially for the MnO₂-and La₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics whose relative density is larger than 96%. All the above dopants decrease the dielectric loss of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics, whereas the values of the dielectric maximum (ε_m) and the temperature of ε_m (T_m), and the character of dielectric response vary differently. ZnO and Nb₂O₅ doping increase remanent polarization P_r, and La₂O₃, ZnO, MnO₂ and Nb₂O₅ doping decrease coercive field E_c of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. Piezoelectric property is greatly improved by Y₂O₃, MnO₂, Nb₂O₅ and ZnO doping, where the MnO₂-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit the largest value of piezoelectric constant d₃₃, which reaches 191 pC/N.

Keywords: Lead Nickel Niobate-Lead Titanate, Perovskite, Dielectric Property, Ferroelectric Property, Piezoelectricity Property

1. Introduction

Relaxor-based ferroelectric ceramics have arisen extensive research due to their high and nearly temperature insensitive dielectric constant, electromechanical constant and electro-optical performance, which make them potential revolution in electromechanical transducer and actuator applications and promising candidates for optical devices [1,2]. To meet the requirements of these applications, ideal materials should possess high relative dielectric constant and low dielectric loss. Recently, a novel methodology is devised to stabilize perovskite phase and develop piezoelectric materials by adding stable perovskite normal ferroelectrics to relaxor ferroelectrics. The formation of solid solutions increases the tolerance factor and electronegativity difference, leading to the stabilization of the perovskite structure [3,4].

Among relaxor ferroelectrics, $Pb(Ni_{1/3}Nb_{2/3})O_3$ (PNN) is a typical relaxor ferroelectric with perovskite structure, which exhibits broad and diffused dielectric response peaks accompanied by apparent dielectric frequency dis-

persion. PbTiO₃ (PT) is a typical normal ferroelectric sharing perovskite structure, which exhibits sharp and frequency independent dielectric response peaks at Curie temperature (T_C) 490°C. Since the arrangement of heterovalent cations in the perovskite structure, their electrostatic interactions and the morphotropic phase boundary (MPB) effects affect electrical properties of ferroelectrics greatly, the development of perovskite structure and the MPB composition of the solid solution (1-x)-Pb(Ni_{1/3}Nb_{2/3})O₃-xPbTiO₃ (PNN-PT) have arisen great research attention [5,6].

In this paper $0.7Pb(Ni_{1/3}Nb_{2/3})O_3-0.3PbTiO_3$ (0.7PNN-0.3PT) ferroelectric ceramics were prepared by the columbite precursor method. This composition was chosen since 0.7PNN-0.3PT locates around the MPB composition and exhibits typical rhombohedral structure, which reveals enhanced microstructure and electrical properties, and was easy to research the effects of che- mical doping on structure and performance of the ferroelectric solid solution. La₂O₃, Y₂O₃, ZnO, MnO₂ and Nb₂O₅ were used as dopants to investigate the influence on stabilization of the perovskite structure, electrical properties and MPB effects of the PNN-PT system. By the way, special efforts should be undertaken on ceramic processing and sintering profile for the preparation of the lead-containing ferro-electric ceramics in order to suppress the evaporation of lead during sintering [7].

2. Experimental Procedure

0.7PNN-0.3PT and 1 mol% La₂O₃-, Y₂O₃-, ZnO-, MnO₂and Nb₂O₅-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ferroelectric ceramics were prepared by the conventional solid-state reaction method via the columbite precursor route. The chemical compositions were designed as below:

To maintain stoichiometry, the analytical-purity raw oxides were dried separately before weighing and the synthesized columbite precursors were weighed and introduced into the batch calculation. The columbite precursors, NiNb₂O₆, ZnNb₂O₆ and MnNb₂O₆, were synthesized by calcining of a mixture of stoichiometric NiO, ZnO and MnO₂ with Nb₂O₅, respectively, at 1000°C for 4 h. Stoichiometric PbO, TiO₂ and chemical dopants (zinc and manganese were introduced in the form of ZnNb₂O₆ and MnNb₂O₆ columbite precursors) were added to NiNb₂O₆, and the well-mixed powders were calcined at 900°C for 2 h. The calcined powders were then drypressed into pellets with the addition of 1 wt% polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) binder and sintered at different temperatures. Detailed preparation of the ceramics was described elsewhere [8].

The sintered ceramics were ground and polished to obtain flat and parallel surfaces. For electrical property measurement, silver paste was coated on both surfaces of the well-polished pellets and fired at 550° C for 30 min to provide robust electrodes. Detailed phase structure characterization, micromorphology observation and electrical properties measurement procedures were described elsewhere [7-8].

3. Results and Discussion

For the preparation of lead-containing PNN-PT ferroelectric ceramics, special attention should be paid for the control of the evaporation of lead during sintering, which helps to determine the appropriate sintering conditions combined with the collective assessments of fabrication cost and electrical properties. The 0.7PNN-0.3PT and 1mol% oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics were sintered at 1100-1220 °C. The columbite precursor method exhibits superiority and feasibility in synthesizing complex relaxor-based ferroelectric ceramics since the weight loss during sintering is relatively low and phase-pure perovskite structure can be obtained. Based on the results of preliminary experiments, the appropriate sintering condition for 0.7PNN-0.3PT is 1180°C for 2 h.

XRD patterns of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT and 1 mol% oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics sintered at the optimized conditions are shown in **Figure 1**. All the sintered ceramics exhibit pure rhombohedral perovskite structure except for Y₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT, where slight content of Pb₃Nb₄O₁₃-type pyrochlore phase appears. The appearance of pyrochlore phase can be attributed to the ionic radius difference between Pb²⁺ and Y³⁺, and the evaporation of lead during sintering and the deterioration of the stabilization of perovskite structure induced by Y₂O₃ doping. The content of pyrochlore phase of the Y₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics can be determined by an approximate method %*pyrochlore* = $I_{pyro} \times 100/$

 $(I_{perov} + I_{Pyro})$, where I_{perov} and I_{pyro} are the relative intensity of the (110) perovskite diffraction peak and the (222) pyrochlore diffraction peak, respectively, being 4.59%.

Cell parameters and density of the pure and oxidedoped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics are shown in **Table 1** based on XRD results and density measurement by Archimedes water-immersed method. Since pure rhombohedral perovskite structure forms in the oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics except Y_2O_3 -doped one, the doped cations tend to occupy A- or B-site of the perovskite structure. However, due to the difference of the ionic radius between the doping and the replaced cations, the perovskite structure distorts, leading to the variation of cell parameters and cell volume of the perovskite structure. The relative density of 0.7PNN-0.3PT is not high enough at this experimental conditions, which confirms again the difficulty of the preparation of complex perovskite ferroelectric ceramics [9]. Therefore, the ceramic processing



Figure 1. XRD patterns of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics sintered at 1180°C for 2 h

Table 1. Cell parameters and density of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics

Composition	a = b = c (Å)	$\alpha = \beta = \gamma (^{\circ})$	Cell volume (Å ³)	Theoretical density (g/cm ³)	Bulk density (g/cm ³)	Relative density (%)
0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.0039(8)	90.012(81)	64.187	8.4497	7.520	88.99
La2O3-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.0057(9)	90.037(137)	64.271	8.4179	7.398	87.88
La ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect)	4.0028(13)	89.991(137)	64.135	8.4389	8.424	99.82
Y ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	~4.0082(16)	~90.022(165)	~64.395	~8.3888	7.073	~84.31
ZnO-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.0054(41)	90.091(428)	64.256	8.4410	7.692	91.13
MnO ₂ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.0035(27)	90.064(280)	64.166	8.4522	8.140	96.31
Nb ₂ O ₅ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.0039(26)	90.070(265)	64.187	8.4532	7.347	86.91

should be tailored further. Small content of oxide doping exhibits great effect on the densification of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. Among which, the MnO₂- and La₂O₃doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics exhibit the largest relative density, being more than 96% of the theoretical density, which is especially suitable for the electronic industry applications. Above results indicate that chemical doping is an efficient way to improve densification of ferroelectric ceramics.

The improved densification of the sintered MnO_2 - and La_2O_3 -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics is further confirmed by SEM observation, which is shown in **Figure 2**. The both oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit rather homogeneous microstructure morphology, where almost no gas pores exist and exaggerated growth of abnormal grains are few. Such results conform well to the

density measurement, where the bulk density of the MnO_2 - and La_2O_3 -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics is 8.140 and 8.424g/cm³, which reaches 96.31% and 99.82% of the theoretical density, respectively. Liquid-phase sintering mechanism inevitably takes partial effect in the densification of the oxide-doped lead-containing ferroelectric ceramics since most grains exhibit round morphology [10].

Temperature dependence of dielectric constant of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics is shown in **Figure 3**. The dielectric anomalies appeared at different temperatures are generally ascribed to the ferroelectric phase transition (FPT) from rhombohedral ferroelectric phase to cubic paraelectric phase with the increase of temperature [11]. Due to the oxide doping, the temperature of dielectric maximum (T_m) varies accompanied by



Figure 2. SEM images of free surface of the MnO_{2} - (a) and La_2O_3 -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) (b) ceramics sintered at 1180°C for 2 h after thermal etching at 825°C for 30 min



Figure 3. Temperature dependence of dielectric constant of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics measured at 0.5 kHz upon heating



Figure 4. Temperature dependence of dielectric constant of the pure, ZnO- and MnO₂-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics measured at several frequencies upon heating

the variation of the value of dielectric constant maximum (ε_m) . The variation of the values of T_m and ε_m can be attributed to the distortion of the perovskite structure, which is induced by oxide doping.

Detailed dielectric properties are shown in **Figure 4** using the pure, ZnO- and MnO₂-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics as examples. The dielectric response peaks of



Figure 5. P-E dielectric hysteresis loops of the pure and doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics measured at room temperature

the both oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics are broadened. However, the dielectric peaks of the ZnO-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit more diffused and much apparent dielectric frequency dispersion character as compared to that of the pure 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. The enhanced diffused phase transition occurs mainly due to compositional fluctuation and/or substitutional disorder in the arrangement of the B sites of the perovskite structure induced by oxide doping. As a comparison, the dielectric peaks of the MnO₂-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics are just broadened, whereas the frequency dispersion of the dielectric behavior becomes almost vanish. The additional dielectric anomalies appearing at elevated temperature cannot be interpreted now, which maybe correlate with relaxation polarization or thermal activated conduction mechanism.

P-E dielectric hysteresis loops of the pure and oxidedoped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics are shown in Figure 5. All the ceramics exhibit symmetric and fully saturated P-E loops, where no apparent evidence of pinning effect is observed [12]. The narrow character of the hysteresis loops accompanied by small value of coercive field (E_c) is characteristic of rhombohedral ferroelectrics. From the fully saturated hysteresis loops, the values of the saturation polarization (P_s), remanent polarization (P_r) and E_c can be determined, which is shown in Table 2. The values of P_s , P_r and E_c varies slightly due to the oxide doping. E_c of the La₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics is the smallest, being 1.23 kV/cm and Pr of the Nb₂O₅-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics is the largest, being 8.96 μ C/cm². Therefore, ferroelectric properties of 0.7PNN-0.3PT can be tailored by oxide doping.

Polarization conditions and piezoelectric property of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics are shown in **Table 3**. Y_2O_3 , ZnO, MnO₂ and Nb₂O₅ doping increases piezoelectric constant d₃₃ of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics, among which the MnO₂-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit the largest value of d₃₃, being 191 pC/N, as compared to 65 pC/N of the pure 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. Therefore, dopant doping can improve piezoelectric property of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics, which can be attributed to the variation of composition, microstructure, domain and crystal defect configuration.

4. Conclusions

0.7PNN-0.3PT and 1 mol% oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ferroelectric ceramics were prepared by the conventional

 Table 2. Ferroelectric properties of the pure and oxidedoped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics measured at room temperature

	Ps	Pr	Ec
Composition	$(\mu C/cm^2)$	$(\mu C/cm^2)$	(kV/cm)
0.7PNN-0.3PT	23.2	6.33	1.58
La ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	20.9	4.70	1.68
La ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect)	19.7	2.17	1.23
Y ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	22.4	5.57	1.24
ZnO-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	22.5	6.40	1.66
MnO ₂ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	23.1	6.19	1.64
Nb ₂ O ₅ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	21.7	8.96	2.84

Composition	Polarization electric field (kV/mm)	Leakage current (mA)	d ₃₃ (mean value, pC/N)
0.7PNN-0.3PT	2.83	0.003	65
La ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	3.03	0.001-0.002	21
La ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect)	4.33	0.003	44
Y ₂ O ₃ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	3.14	0.002	79
ZnO-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	4.20	0.001	87
MnO ₂ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	3.29	0.001-0.002	191
Nb ₂ O ₅ -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT	2.08	0.003	89

Table 3. Polarization conditions and piezoelectric property

of the pure and oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics

ceramic processing via the columbite precursor method. Phase pure rhombohedral perovskite structure can be obtained for the ceramics sintered at 1180°C except the Y_2O_3 -doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics. The oxide-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics exhibit rather homogeneous microstructure and improved densification, where the relative density of the MnO₂- and La₂O₃-doped 0.7PNN-0.3PT (defect) ceramics reaches 96.31% and 99.82% of the theoretical density, respectively. Oxide doping decreases dielectric loss of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics accompanied by the variation of the value of dielectric constant and T_m , and the character of dielectric frequency dispersion. Ferroelectric and piezoelectric properties of the 0.7PNN-0.3PT ceramics can also be tailored by oxide doping.

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