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Names and affiliations of applicants (* indicates experimentalists):

Giorgio Spinolo*, Paolo Ghigna* and Umber-to Anselmi Tamburini Dip. Chimica Fisica, Universita di Pavia, Viale Taramelli 16, I-27 100, Pavia, ITALY

Report:

The local structure around Fe doping atoms in several samples of Fe doped cubic ZrO_2 has been studied by means of Fe-K XAS (EXAFS and XANES). Samples have been prepared by different synthetic routes and can be classified in 4 groups [1-2]:

1) Samples prepared by Combustion Synthesis starting from Zr and Fe₂O₃ (monoclinic ZrO₂ and Fe metal have been added as diluters in order to prevent explosions) and rapidly quenched immediately after the end of the combustion reaction. Iron was found to be in its II oxidation state and to occupy two different sites of the fluorite ZrO₂ structure, both associated with some amount of disorder, in nearly equal amounts. One of the site has been identified with the regular Zr position in 0, 0, 0, thus giving rise to substitutional $Fe_{Zr}^{"}$ defects, while the other site has been identified with the normally empty position at $\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}$, thus giving rise to interstitial Fe^{*} defects. For this last site there is a short Fe-Zr distance (2.64 A).

This result, coupled to the quite small value of the Debye-Waller factor for this distance, gives evidence of a direct Zr-Fe metal to metal bond [I].

- 2) Samples prepared by Combustion Synthesis according to the above method, but slowly allowed to cool down to room temperature. Iron was found to be in an oxidation state intermediate between II and III. Only the Fe-O first shell could be detected, with both Fe(II) and Fe(III) in a distorted cubic environment. The bond lengths as measured by EXAFS are 2.32(2) Å for Fe(II) and 2.018(9) Å for Fe(III).
- 3) Samples prepared by solid state reaction starting from cubic (Zr,Y)O₂ and Fe₂O₃. Iron was found to be in the III oxidation state. As for the previous case, only the Fe-O first shell could be detected (bond length 1.993(6) Å), with Fe in a distorted cubic environment.
- 4) Samples prepared by solid state route as in the previous case, but then treated in flowing Ar/7%H₂ at 600 °C. This selectively reduces Fe in the II oxidation state, as confirmed by the XANES analysis. For these samples the same complex defect structure was found as for samples of group 1, but with only a 20% of Fe in the interstitial ¹/₂, ¹/₂, ¹/₂ position. In addition, for these samples a smaller amounts of disorder is present around the doping Fe atoms.

All the samples have been analyzed by means of X-ray powder diffraction in Pavia prior to the EXAFS measurements in Grenoble. Accordingly, all the samples have been found to be almost monophasic, the main impurity (monoclinic ZrO₂) being present in amounts of c.a. 1%. For some of the samples, the XAS results have been confirmed by means of Mossbauer spectroscopy.

References

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