Simulation of the temperature-dependent resistivity of La$_{1-x}$Te$_x$MnO$_3$

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Received 22 March 2005, revised 29 July 2005, accepted 22 August 2005
Published online 20 October 2005

PACS 72.10.Bg, 72.80.Ga, 75.47.Lx

The resistivity $\rho$ of La$_{1-x}$Te$_x$MnO$_3$ ($x = 0.1, 0.14$) is studied using a random resistor network, based on phase separation between ferromagnetic (FM) and paramagnetic (PM) domains. By considering the irregular shape of the domains, a revised method, which is used to find the shortest paths across the sample, leads to a good agreement between the simulated results and experiment data. Moreover, it is found that FM components increase with Te doping, leading to a reduction of the resistivity and a shift of the transition temperature. This method is proved to be valid and the phase separation scenario is shown theoretically to be good enough in describing the electrical conductivity of the doped manganese perovskites.

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1 Introduction

Considerable work is currently being focused on the study of doped manganese perovskites [1, 2]. These materials have unexplained transport properties. They are insulators at room temperature, changing into conductors at low temperature. A sharp peak in the resistivity $\rho$ appears at the ferromagnetic (FM)-paramagnetic (PM) transition. The transition temperature is denoted $T_{MI}$. The phase separation phenomenon has been observed in many doped manganese perovskites, such as La$_{1-x}$Ca$_x$MnO$_3$ [3], (La,Pr,Ca)MnO$_3$ [4], and La$_{1-x}$Te$_x$MnO$_3$ [5].

In the present paper, we present a new calculation method to simulate the relation between $\rho$ and temperature $T$ of La$_{1-x}$Te$_x$MnO$_3$ by introducing the breadth-first traversal (BFT) algorithm based on the phase-separated framework and the random resistor network model. This method can give good results with much less calculation effort so that it is much more convenient than the traditional method of solving the Kirchhoff equations for the resistor network, as reported in the early literature [6–8].

2 Model and method

The main concept in the random resistor network model is summarized in Fig. 1. We assume the sample to be mixed by FM and PM domains, which are regarded as squares. The FM and PM squares have metallic and insulating properties, respectively (Fig. 1a). Each FM or PM square is assumed to have a resistance of $r_m$ or $r_i$ and then the sample can be considered as a network of resistors. In our network, there are connected insulating or metallic paths across the sample. The resistance of the whole insulating ($R_i$) or...
metallic \( (R_m) \) regions is assumed to be proportional to the length of the shortest insulating or metallic path. The total resistance of the sample \( R_{\text{eff}} \) can be characterized by a simple two parallel resistances description (Fig. 1b). As the temperature varies, the fraction of the insulating or metallic regions changes, and then the relation between \( R_{\text{eff}} \) and \( T \) is obtained.

Breadth-first search \([9]\) is a traversal through a graph that touches all of the nodes reachable from a particular source node. A BFT visits nodes that are closer to the source before visiting nodes that are further away. The distance is defined as the number of edges in the shortest path from the source node. This algorithm, which explores all nodes adjacent to the current node before moving on, can be used to compute the shortest path from the source to all reachable nodes and the shortest-path distances. When properly implemented, all nodes in a given connected component are explored. Using the BFT algorithm, the path lengths of the metallic and insulating domains are found. The resistances \( R_m \) and \( R_i \) are then calculated. Finally, according to the size of the sample and the effective resistance \( R_{\text{eff}} \), the effective resistivity \( \rho \) can be obtained. It is noticeable that this method is much more convenient than the traditional method of solving the Kirchhoff equations for the resistor network.

The resistivities of the metallic \( (\rho_m) \) and insulating \( (\rho_i) \) domains are dependent on temperature. It is reasonable to assume that they have the forms

\[
\rho_m = \rho_m^0 + \rho_m^1 T + \rho_m^2 T^2
\]

and

\[
\rho_i = \rho_i^0 \exp \left( \frac{E_0}{k_B T} \right)
\]

where \( \rho_m^0, \rho_m^1, \rho_m^2, \rho_i^0, \) and \( E_0 \) are parameters fitted from the experimental data, and \( E_0 \) denotes the activation energy. In order to represent the indications of temperature-induced percolation, a temperature-dependent metallic fraction \( p(T) \) is needed. The parameter \( p \) must decrease as \( T \) increases, and should vary rapidly near the Curie temperature \( T_C \) as does the magnetization \([8]\).

3 Experiments and simulation

We fabricated La\(_{1-x}\)Te\(_x\)MnO\(_3\) (\( x = 0.1, 0.14 \)) using pulsed laser deposition (PLD) on (100) SrTiO\(_3\) (STO) substrates. After deposition, the films were held at 780 °C for 30 min in high-purity oxygen at a pressure of 50 Pa, and were then postannealed at 760 °C for 8 h in flowing oxygen in order to improve the oxygen content of the thin films. The magnetic measurement was carried out using a superconducting quantum interference device magnetometer (MPMS-7) in the temperature range 5–300 K. We then measured the resistivities of La\(_{0.9}\)Te\(_{0.1}\)MnO\(_3\) films in zero magnetic fields from 5 to 325 K.

In our simulation, the metallic and insulating domains are all assumed to be squares, and a 100 × 100 matrix is used. To simplify the problem, we first assume that two squares are connected only when they have a common edge, that is, we search a path in four directions for each square. Figure 2 shows the result of the simulation for La\(_{0.9}\)Te\(_{0.1}\)MnO\(_3\) with \( T_C \) at 261 K. At low temperature the resistivity of the sample is small, as it is at room temperature. A large peak tending toward infinity appears in the intermediate temperature range from 220 to 275 K. We assume that the relation between the fraction of metallic regions and \( T \) can be described by a Fermi distribution function, which has a form similar to the magnetization–temperature relation. The relation of \( p - T \) is also shown by curve a in Fig. 3. At low temperature, there are many metallic paths across the sample for the high fraction of metallic domains, so \( R_m \) is very small. \( R_{\text{eff}} \) is mainly determined by \( R_m \) because \( R_m \) and \( R_i \) are parallel connected so that \( R_{\text{eff}} \) is also very small. It is obvious as shown by curve a in Fig. 3 that the fraction of metallic domains decreases...
rapidly from 150 K and is less than 0.6 at 220 K. Thus there are so few metallic paths across the sample that $R_m$ increases rapidly and $R_{\text{eff}}$ also increases rapidly. So a peak of $\rho$ appears near $T_c$. However, when the temperature increases continuously, $\rho_i$ is smaller than $\rho_m$ due to the exponential decay of $\rho_i$ with increasing temperature. Therefore $R_{\text{eff}}$ is mainly determined by $R_i$, and $R_{\text{eff}}$ decreases again.

It is noted that the peak value of the resistivity tends to infinity and does not fit the experimental data. In the method to obtain Fig. 2, we only search paths in four adjacent directions for each square in the above simulation, that is, we assume that the current cannot flow through two diagonal adjacent squares. When the temperature is near $T_c$, the fractions of the insulating and metallic regions are almost same, and there is no path of either metallic or insulating regions across the sample, so both $R_m$ and $R_i$ tend to infinity. This is not realistic. In fact, the current can pass when two squares are diagonally adjacent due to percolation. It is reasonable to assume that two diagonal adjacent squares are connected as well as two exactly adjacent squares, that is, to search paths in eight directions for each square. This improvement makes the simulated results fit the experimental data better, as shown in Fig. 4. In our calculation, the activation energy $E_\alpha$ is 43 meV, and the simulated $\rho$–$T$ curve is plotted together with the corresponding experimental data (Fig. 4a). It can be seen that the result not only yields the M–I transition at $T_c$, but also fits the experimental data well over the whole temperature range studied.

The simulated results and experimental data for La$_{0.86}$Te$_{0.14}$MnO$_3$ films are shown in Fig. 4b. We find that the activation energy $E_\alpha$ is 8.6 meV. It is worth noting that Te doping decreases the activation energy. The relevant $\rho$–$T$ relation is shown as curve b in Fig. 3. By comparing curves a and b in Fig. 3, we find that the metallic fraction in La$_{0.86}$Te$_{0.14}$MnO$_3$ is larger than that in La$_{0.9}$Te$_{0.1}$MnO$_3$. The difference of

![Fig. 2: Resistivity $\rho$ vs. $T$, assuming that two domains are connected only when they have a common edge. A peak tending to infinity appears near $T_c$.](image1)

![Fig. 3: Metallic fraction $p$ vs. $T$: a) La$_{0.9}$Te$_{0.1}$MnO$_3$, b) La$_{0.86}$Te$_{0.14}$MnO$_3$.](image2)
$p(T)$ between the two curves increases with temperature, and almost reaches a constant value when the temperature is larger than $T_C$. The possible reason is that the amount of free electrons in the sample increases with an increase of Te doping. At low temperature, the majority of electrons are difficult to move, so the metallic fraction increases very little. As the temperature increases, more and more electrons can move easily, so the metallic fraction increases obviously. The increase of the metallic fraction shifts $T_{MI}$ to a higher temperature and decreases the peak value of the resistivity.

4 Conclusion

The BFT algorithm is introduced to describe the transport problem and is found to be a valid algorithm from the work presented. We have simulated the temperature dependence of the resistivity in La$_{1-x}$Te$_x$MnO$_3$ ($x = 0.1, 0.14$) based on the random resistor network model. The simulated results give quantitative fits to the experimental data over the whole temperature range. The results also indicate that the activation energy in La$_{0.9}$Te$_{0.1}$MnO$_3$ is lower than that in La$_{0.9}$Te$_{0.1}$MnO$_3$ and the metallic fraction in La$_{0.86}$Te$_{0.14}$MnO$_3$ is larger than that in La$_{0.86}$Te$_{0.14}$MnO$_3$. Therefore, the resistivity of the sample is reduced and the transition temperature increases as the amount of Te increases. Furthermore, we believe that this model is also useful for further simulation work on other perovskite materials. Work to simulate the conductivity of doped manganese perovskites in applied magnetic fields is ongoing.

Acknowledgement The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China.
References