

***In situ* Negative Cs HRTEM Imaging of Topotactic Phase Transformation from Perovskite SrFeO₃ to Brownmillerite SrFeO_{2.5}**

Yao Long Xing¹, Bumsu Park¹, Zhen Wang¹, Kyeong Tae Kang², Jinsol Seo¹, Jong Chan Kim³, Hu Young Jeong³, Woo Seok Choi² and Sang Ho Oh^{1*}

¹Department of Energy Science, Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, Korea.

²Department of Physics, Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, Korea.

³School of Materials Science and Engineering, Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology, Ulsan, Korea.

* Corresponding author: sanghooh@skku.edu

SrFeO₃, a candidate electrode material for solid oxide fuel cell, undergoes topotactic phase transition reversibly to SrFeO_{2.5} brownmillerite at relatively low temperatures. It has been known that during the topotactic phase transition the cation sub-lattice remains almost unchanged while oxygen ions (or vacancies) diffuses through the lattice along the specific crystallographic channels to modify the local coordination and valence states of cations. Previous x-ray diffraction [1] and sequential STEM HAADF imaging have been used to characterize the phase transition of this type of materials. However, neither of these methods can directly observe the channeling of oxygen vacancies, which is challenging due to the low scattering power of oxygen ions.

Here we report *in situ* HRTEM observation of the phase transition of a SrFeO₃ epitaxial thin film to SrFeO_{2.5} brownmillerite phase in a Cs-corrected TEM (Grand ARM300F) operated at 300 kV. The TEM samples were prepared by focused ion beam milling and attached on a Si MEMS chip for heating using a TEM holder (DENSsolutions Wildfire). By using negative spherical aberration imaging (NCSI) technique, we successfully imaged all types of atomic columns in SrFeO₃ over large field of view, which enables direct observation of oxygen vacancy channeling, formation and growth of SrFeO_{2.5} brownmillerite phase. The obtained real-time HRTEM movies were further processed to enhance the precision of the position and intensity measurement of atomic columns.

The cation (Sr) sub-lattice parameter map was used to differentiate SrFeO_{2.5} phase from SrFeO₃ matrix as SrFeO_{2.5} is comprised of alternating stack of contracted and expanded layers compared with that of SrFeO₃ (Fig. 1). In addition, the intensity of oxygen columns was quantified to access the local occupancy and therefore the formation of oxygen vacancy (data not shown). The Sr sub-lattice parameter and the oxygen intensity maps showed that the topotactic phase transition first occurs by forming brownmillerite lattice framework and then gradual increase of oxygen vacancies without formation of intermediate phases [2]. The results also showed that the formation of FeO₄ tetrahedron from FeO₆ octahedron by oxygen vacancy formation occurs directionally along easy oxygen vacancy channeling path in a zigzag pattern, probably to minimize the associated strain energy. In addition, the change of local coordination of Fe associated with the formation and ordering of oxygen vacancy accompanies the change of valence state from Fe⁺⁴ in FeO₆ octahedron to Fe⁺² in FeO₄ tetrahedron. The STEM EELS O K-edge and Fe L_{2,3}-edge of SrFeO_{2.5} show that the electron energy-loss near edge structures (ELNES) of both FeO₆ and FeO₄ in SrFeO_{2.5} are different from those of FeO₆ in SrFeO₃ and thus used to determine the local valence state of Fe. We have carried out in-situ STEM EELS during the phase transformation to monitor the local

valence change of Fe ions associated with oxygen vacancy ordering and compared with the structural change assessed by in-situ HRTEM results.

References:

- [1] A. Khare, et al., *Advanced Materials* **29** (2017), p. 1606566.
 [2] J. P. Hodges, et al., *Journal of Solid State Chemistry* **151** (2000), p. 190.
 [3] This work was supported by Samsung Research Funding & Incubation Center of Samsung Electronics under Project Number SRFC-MA1702-01.

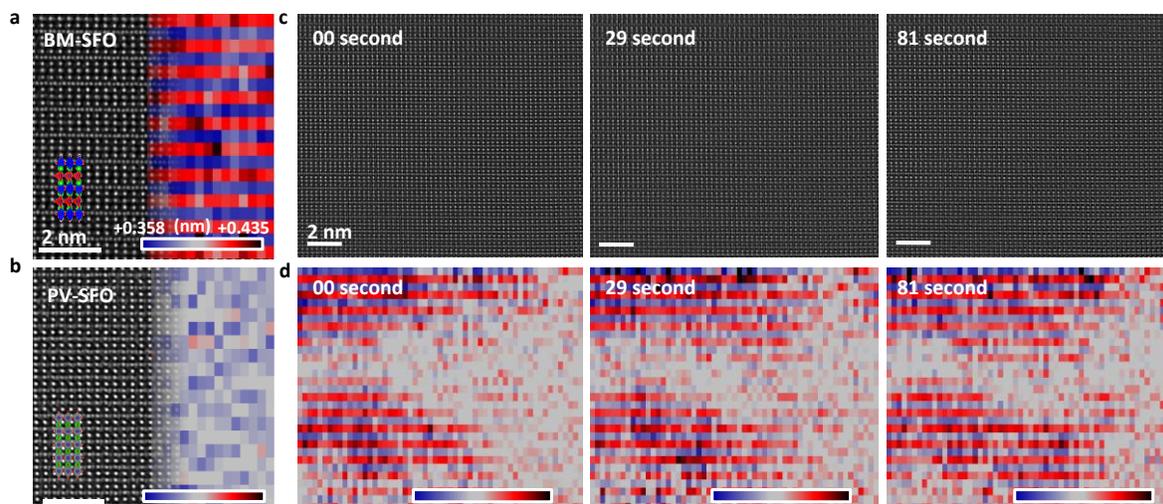


Figure 1. In-situ HRTEM images taken at a NCSI condition of (a) SrFeO_{2.5} (b) SrFeO₃. The Sr sub-lattice parameter map is overlaid. (c) Selected images from a real-time HRTEM movie recorded at 300 °C for 81 s. (d) Sr sub-lattice parameter maps obtained after image processing of the HRTEM images shown in (c), which distinguish SrFeO₃ (gray colored pixels) from SrFeO_{2.5} (red/blue colored pixels).

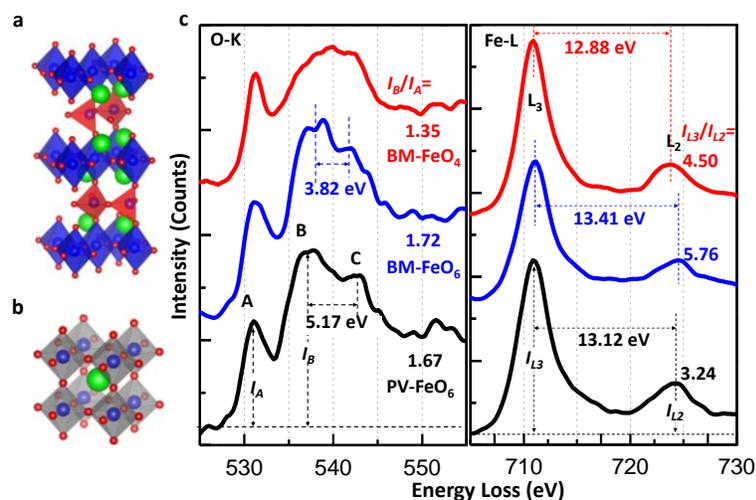


Figure 2. Atomic model of (a) SrFeO_{2.5} and (b) SrFeO₃. (c) STEM EELS O K-edge and Fe L_{2,3}-edge obtained from FeO₆ (black) in SrFeO₃ and FeO₆ (blue) and FeO₄ (red) in SrFeO_{2.5}. The energy difference between peaks and their intensity ratio are noted.