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Published in:
MC 2011 Kiel

Publication date:
2011

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):

Damsgaard, C. D., Duchstein, L. D. L., Elkjær, C. F., Sharafutdinov, I., Dahl, S., & Wagner, J. B. (2011). In situ environmental transmission electron microscope investigation of NiGa nanoparticle synthesis. In MC 2011 Kiel: Microscopy Conference 2011 (pp. IM6-CDD). DGE – German Society for Electron Microscopy.

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***In situ* environmental transmission electron microscope investigation of NiGa nanoparticle synthesis**

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Keywords: ETEM, NiGa alloys, *in situ* XRD

In an energy system based around decentralized hydrogen production, methanol synthesis under lower pressure conditions could be a way to store hydrogen on location. In the search of catalysts that might open up new process, conditions studies based on density functional theory (DFT) calculations have predicted a nickel gallium alloy to be active for this reaction [1]. NiGa catalysts prepared by incipient wetness impregnation on a high surface area silica support (Saint-Gobain NorPro), using a solution of nickel and gallium nitrates have shown very promising results [2]. This work presents detailed Environmental Transmission Electron Microscope (ETEM) investigations of synthesis of NiGa nanoparticles on a thin film support.

Samples were prepared by dissolving $\text{Ni}(\text{NO}_3)_2$ and $\text{Ga}(\text{NO}_3)_3$ in a Ni:Ga ratio of 5:3 in millipore water. The solution was subsequently dispersed on transmission electron microscope (TEM) sample grids. The sample grid was then mounted in a TEM heating holder and inserted in a FEI Titan ETEM with imaging C_s corrector as well as facilities for *in situ* gas reactions [3]. The ETEM was operated at 300 kV. The synthesis was performed *in situ* in a H_2 flow of 2 Nml/min at a pressure of 130 Pa. The reaction was investigated from room temperature (RT) to 660°C by subsequently obtaining bright field TEM images, diffraction patterns (DP), High Resolution TEM (HRTEM) images, and Electron Energy Loss Spectroscopy (EELS) data.

Figure 1 shows bright field images of the sample during synthesis. The dispersed nitrate salts (A) starts to decompose around 300 °C (B). From 400 °C to 660°C (C) NiGa nanoparticles are formed. The particle diameter at 660°C was between 5 nm and 20 nm. From HRTEM and DP it is observed that the nanoparticles are crystalline.

Figure 2(A) shows a particle at 660°C with two overlapping crystal domains. The insets show the fast fourier transform (FFT) of the overlapping crystals (FFT1) and single crystal area (FFT2), respectively. The FFT2 resembles the orthorhombic Ni_5Ga_3 viewed along the [1 1 -4] zone axis [4]. Figure 2(B) shows EELS of a single particle at 660°C. Both Ni and Ga edges are observed in the spectra. Quantification of Ni:Ga ratio is hampered by the presence of the Ni L_1 edge.

The ETEM experiments have been supported by complementary *in situ* X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) measurements on synthesis of Ni_5Ga_3 catalyst on a high surface area silica support prepared by wet impregnation [2]. Although the *in situ* XRD was performed at significantly higher H_2 flow (40 Nml/min) and pressure (100 kPa) the complimentary data correlates with the main temperature dependence of phase and structure and shows formation of the Ni_5Ga_3 phase for temperatures higher than 300°C.

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5. We kindly acknowledge the support from the Danish Ministry of Science and Innovation through the Catalysis for Sustainable Energy Initiative (CASE) at DTU and by The Danish National Research Foundation through CINF DTU. Furthermore, the A. P. Møller and Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller Foundation is gratefully acknowledged for its contribution towards the establishment of the Center for Electron Nanoscopy in the Technical University of Denmark.

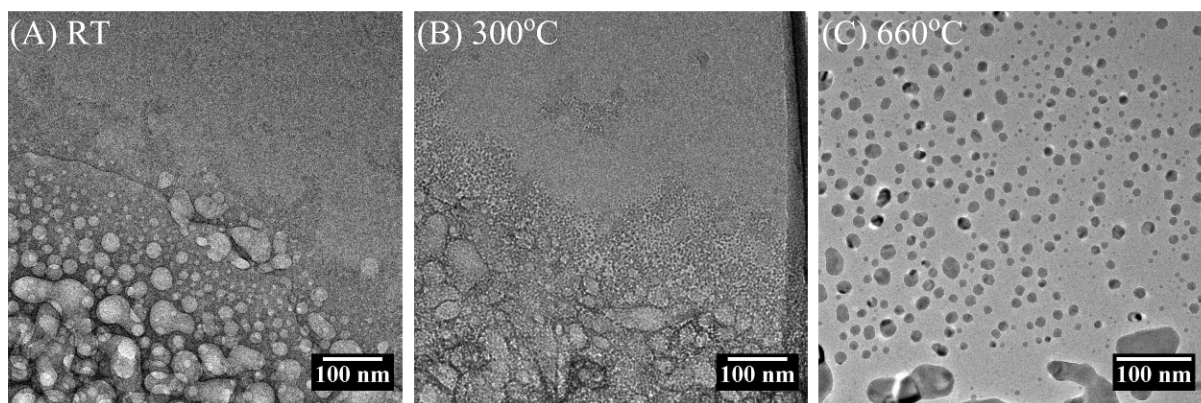


Figure 1. Bright field images of the sample during *in situ* synthesis in a H₂ flow of 2 Nml/min at a pressure of 130 Pa.

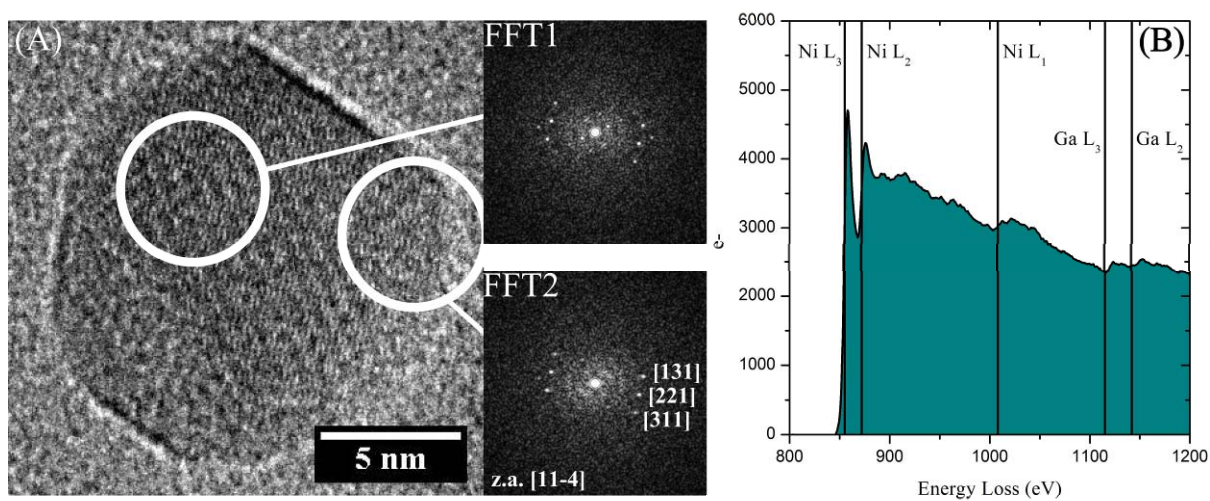


Figure 2. shows HRTEM image (A) and EELS (B) of a NiGa nanoparticle at 660°C in a H₂ flow of 2 Nml/min and at a pressure of 130 Pa. The insets in (A) show the FFT of two different parts of the particle (FFT2 zone axis [11-4]). The lines in (B) indicate Ni and Ga energy-loss edges.