



Title	Giant electrocaloric effect in the thin film relaxor ferroelectric 0.9 PbMg(1/3)Nb(2/3)O(3)-0.1 PbTiO(3) near room temperature
Author(s)	Mischenko, A. S.; Zhang, Q.; Whatmore, Roger W.; Scott, J. F.; Mathur, N. D.
Publication date	2006
Original citation	Mischenko, A. S., Zhang, Q., Whatmore, R. W., Scott, J. F. and Mathur, N. D. (2006) 'Giant electrocaloric effect in the thin film relaxor ferroelectric 0.9PbMg ₁₃ Nb ₂₃ O ₃ -0.1PbTiO ₃ near room temperature', Applied Physics Letters, 89(24), pp. 242912. doi: 10.1063/1.2405889
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://aip.scitation.org/doi/abs/10.1063/1.2405889 http://dx.doi.org/10.1063/1.2405889 Access to the full text of the published version may require a subscription.
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Citation: *Appl. Phys. Lett.* **89**, 242912 (2006); doi: 10.1063/1.2405889

View online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1063/1.2405889>

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Giant electrocaloric effect in the thin film relaxor ferroelectric 0.9 PbMg_{1/3}Nb_{2/3}O₃–0.1 PbTiO₃ near room temperature

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(Received 15 October 2006; accepted 9 November 2006; published online 13 December 2006)

The authors have recently observed a giant electrocaloric effect (12 K in 25 V) in 350 nm sol-gel PbZr_{0.95}Ti_{0.05}O₃ films near the ferroelectric Curie temperature of 242 °C. Here the authors demonstrate a giant electrocaloric effect (5 K in 25 V) in 260 nm sol-gel films of the relaxor ferroelectric 0.9 PbMg_{1/3}Nb_{2/3}O₃–0.1 PbTiO₃ near the Curie temperature of 60 °C. This reduction in operating temperature widens the potential for applications in cooling systems. © 2006 American Institute of Physics. [DOI: 10.1063/1.2405889]

We have recently demonstrated¹ a giant electrocaloric (EC) effect in thin film PbZr_{0.95}Ti_{0.05}O₃ (PZT),² with a peak $\Delta T=12$ K at 226 °C. This high working temperature could permit cooling applications in the automotive, aerospace, or food industries, but a lower working temperature would open up many more possibilities, e.g., on-chip refrigeration. Lower temperatures are also attractive because thin films fatigue less quickly and possess higher breakdown fields. Here we demonstrate an EC effect in 0.9 PbMg_{1/3}Nb_{2/3}O₃–0.1 PbTiO₃ (0.9 PMN–0.1 PT) (Ref. 3) films that peaks at the significantly lower temperature of 75 °C.

Relaxor ferroelectrics could be attractive for cooling applications. Indeed, many relaxor films such as 0.9 PMN–0.1 PT show pronounced pyroelectricity,^{4–6} suggesting that the converse EC effect is strong. Moreover, phase transitions in relaxors are broad so the range of operating temperatures is wide. However, the potential for relaxor ferroelectric films in cooling applications has not been considered.

The PMN–PT family, based on the relaxor PMN,³ has already been proposed for many applications.^{4,5,7,8} The PMN-rich relaxors, and compositions near the morphotropic phase boundary at 0.65 PMN–0.35 PT, are promising for capacitors due to their large dielectric constant, and also for high-strain actuators/transducers and prototype microelectromechanical systems due to their piezoelectric properties.⁷

Bulk 0.9 PMN–0.1 PT is a rhombohedral (pseudocubic) relaxor ferroelectric at room temperature.^{7,9} On heating above $T_C\sim 60$ °C, this structure transforms to a cubic paraelectric phase.^{3,7,9} Because the material is a relaxor,

the corresponding peak in the dielectric constant is frequency dependent,³ and broad due to microscopic inhomogeneities.^{3,4,10} The pyroelectric properties of PMN ceramics under high dc bias fields up to 100 kV cm⁻¹ have been studied for thermal IR detector applications.⁶ As there are no data for PMN–PT thin films at the temperatures and high electric fields of interest, the EC effect could not be predicted from the literature.

0.9 PMN–0.1 PT sols were prepared from Sigma-Aldrich precursors. A mixture of Pb(OAc)₂·3H₂O and Mg(OAc)₂ was dissolved in acetic acid and distilled at 100 °C for 30 min. 20% excess Pb and 5% excess Mg were added to compensate for losses during sintering. Separately, acetic acid and 2-methoxyethanol were added to a mixture of Nb(OEt)₅ and Ti(O–Bu)₄ and the resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 30 min. The Pb/Mg and Nb/Ti based solutions were mixed and stirred at room temperature. Formamide was added to the final solution to prevent cracking during sintering.

Sols were passed through a 0.2 μm filter for spin coating at 3000 rpm for 30 s onto Pt(111)/Ti/SiO₂/Si(100) substrates that had been rinsed with acetone and propanol. Layers of ~50 nm were obtained by prefiring in air on a hotplate at 350 °C for 30 s, and then further annealing in a tube furnace at 750 °C for 3 min. This procedure was repeated five times to obtain ~260 nm films.

Film structure was determined by x-ray diffraction on a Philips diffractometer using Cu Kα radiation. θ -2 θ scans corresponded to a polycrystalline perovskite phase with no preferred orientations. The amount of pyrochlore phase was ~8%. Pt top electrodes of 0.2 mm diameter were sputter deposited through a mechanical mask, and the bottom Pt electrode was contacted with silver dag at a substrate edge.

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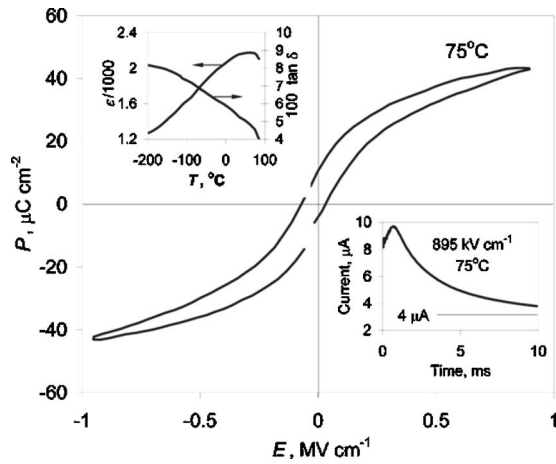


FIG. 1. Electrical measurements of $0.9\text{PbMg}_{1/3}\text{Nb}_{2/3}\text{O}_3-0.1\text{PbTiO}_3$ thin films. Polarization P vs applied electric field E at 10 kHz showing evidence of ferroelectricity in the temperature range studied (from 80 to -150°C). Upper inset: the real part of the effective dielectric constant measured at 100 kHz shows a single broad peak at the bulk transition temperature $T_C = 60^\circ\text{C}$. Loss tangent $\tan \delta = 5\%$ at 60°C . Lower inset: leakage current measurements at the peak working temperature $T_{\text{Peak}} = 75^\circ\text{C}$.

The dielectric constant and loss tangent were measured using an HP 4192A impedance analyzer at 100 kHz and 100 mV ac amplitude. Hysteresis measurements were carried out at 10 kHz using a Radiant Technologies Precision Premier workstation and a low temperature (from 80 to -200°C) probe station. The temperature of the sample was controlled via feedback from a thermocouple, accurate to 0.3°C , in contact with the sample.

Electrical hysteresis measurements were made roughly every $T = 10^\circ\text{C}$ in the range from 80 to -200°C on cooling to minimize reductions in P due to fatigue. Figure 1 shows the expected³ ferroelectric $P(E)$ at 75°C , where the EC effect peaks as shown later. Only one loop is shown because our measurements of $P(E)$ from 80°C to -200°C varied by just a few percent and are therefore visually similar. However, we show below that this is sufficient to produce a giant EC effect. The real part of the dielectric constant ϵ measured on cooling has a broad peak at $T_C = 60^\circ\text{C}$ associated with the ferroelectric-paraelectric transition (Fig. 1, upper inset). This broadness is typical of relaxors due to microscopic inhomogeneity. It is also typical of thin films due to interfacial strain, scalar concentration gradients, or other forms of microscopic variability.^{3,10}

Reversible adiabatic temperature changes ΔT due to an applied electric field E , for a material of density ρ with heat capacity C , are given¹¹ by

$$\Delta T = -\frac{1}{\rho} \int_0^E \frac{T}{C} \left(\frac{\partial P}{\partial T} \right)_E dE, \quad (1)$$

assuming the Maxwell relation $(\partial P / \partial T)_E = (\partial S / \partial E)_T$. Values of $(\partial P / \partial T)_E$ were obtained from sixth order polynomial fits to $P(T)$ data (Fig. 2, inset). Fatigue may only reduce our values of $|\partial P / \partial T|_E$ since the data were taken on cooling such that P increased in successive hysteresis measurements. In the temperature range of interest, the heat capacity $C = 120\text{ J mol}^{-1}\text{ K}^{-1}$ remains sensibly constant or even decreases at low temperatures.¹² We note that assuming a constant value of C despite an $\sim 50\%$ peak¹¹ resulted in excellent agreement with direct EC measurements of ΔT in bulk

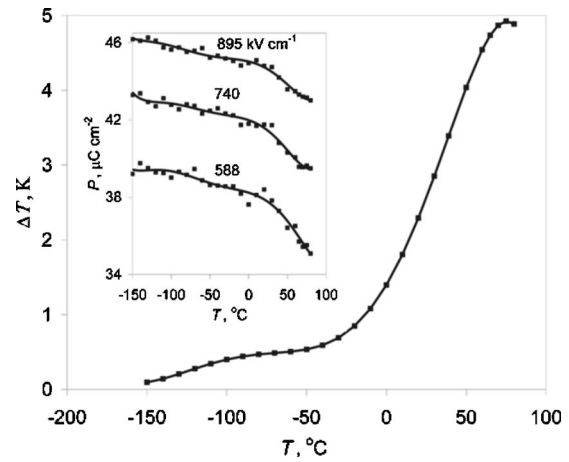


FIG. 2. Electrocaloric temperature changes. ΔT was calculated from Eq. (1) with applied field $E = 895\text{ kV cm}^{-1}$. The peak value of 5 K occurs at $T_{\text{peak}} = 75^\circ\text{C}$. Inset: the temperature dependence of polarization P at selected E . Data extracted for $E > 0$ from the upper branches of 26 hysteresis loops measured at 10 kHz in $150^\circ\text{C} \leq T \leq 80^\circ\text{C}$. The EC effect is largest when $|\partial P / \partial T|_E$ is maximized at the broad paraelectric to ferroelectric transition. The lines represent sixth order polynomial fits to the data.

$\text{Pb}_{0.99}\text{Nb}_{0.02}(\text{Zr}_{0.75}\text{Sn}_{0.20}\text{Ti}_{0.05})_{0.98}\text{O}_3$.¹¹ We assume the bulk value of $\rho = 8.08\text{ g cm}^{-3}$.¹³

EC temperature changes obtained with (1) are presented in Fig. 2. The largest change at $T_{\text{peak}} = 75^\circ\text{C}$ (5 K in 25 V, i.e., 0.2 K V^{-1}) exceeds the previous best results at these temperatures obtained in bulk PMN-PT at 14°C (1 K in 160 V, i.e., 0.006 K V^{-1}) (Ref. 14) and bulk $\text{PbSc}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{0.5}\text{O}_3$ at 20°C (1.5 K in 1500 V, i.e., 0.001 K V^{-1}).¹⁵

Our peak EC temperature change of $\Delta T = 5\text{ K}$, determined with $E = 895\text{ kV cm}^{-1}$, represents a peak energy change $C\Delta T = 1.86\text{ kJ kg}^{-1}$. The corresponding hysteresis loss was 24% of this figure, as determined from the area of the 75°C hysteresis loop in $E > 0$. Hysteresis losses may be reduced⁸ by (i) reducing the measurement frequency, (ii) introducing chemical substituents, and (iii) process control to modify microstructure.

Leakage current was measured at $T_{\text{peak}} = 75^\circ\text{C}$ under our maximum value of $E = 895\text{ kV cm}^{-1}$ (Fig. 1, lower inset). Reliable measurements were not possible beyond 10 ms, at which time the leakage current has fallen to $4\text{ }\mu\text{A}$. However, the graph shows that transient currents continue to fall at this measurement time. Therefore $4\text{ }\mu\text{A}$ represents an upper bound on the steady-state leakage current. A current of this magnitude generates a Joule heating of 0.1 K over one-quarter of a cycle. This is negligible compared with the peak EC effect of 5 K.

We have demonstrated here a giant EC effect in the relaxor ferroelectric 0.9 PMN-0.1 PT. The effect peaks at 75°C , which is nearer to room temperature than the giant peak found for PZT at 226°C .¹ Reducing the PT content in PMN-PT is known to reduce the ferroelectric transition temperature to $\sim 0^\circ\text{C}$ in pure PMN.³ This suggests a means by which to achieve significant EC effects at even lower temperatures.

One of the authors (A.M.) was supported by Churchill College, Cambridge, an honorary Kapitza Scholarship from the Cambridge Overseas Trust, and an Overseas Research Scholarship award from Universities UK. Cranfield University gratefully acknowledges financial support from the UK

EPSRC under the Platform Grant GR/R92448/01. The authors thank the UK EPSRC for additional funding and F.D. Morrison, G. Catalan, and P. Zubko for discussions.

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