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Charge-changing interactions probing point-proton radii of nuclei

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Abstract. The question of whether charge-changing interactions can be used to probe point-proton radii of nuclei remains unanswered. Charge-changing cross sections, σ_{cc} , were systematically investigated using stable and unstable nuclear beams of intermediate-energy. The ratios of the experimental σ_{cc} values to the calculated ones obtained from a phenomenological Glauber-type model analysis are found to be nearly constant in a broad range of Z/N for light neutron-rich nuclei. This enables the determination of density distributions, i.e., the radii of protons tightly bound in nuclei. To test the applicability of the present method to all nuclei in the nuclear chart, extensive measurements were performed for medium-mass nuclei ranging from $Z = 18$ to 32. The present study suggests the potential capability of a new experimental approach for exploring exotic nuclei.

1 Nuclear radii – introduction

Charge radii are the basic ground-state properties of nuclides, reflecting a variety of structures of point-proton distributions in nuclei. Today, nuclear shell evolution far from the stability line is considered an intriguing and challenging topic in radioactive-isotope (RI) beam science. Protons and neutrons develop differently in a neutron-rich region, resulting in a large difference between the proton-distribution and neutron-distribution radii, also known as the neutron skin [1]. Such studies have so

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far been performed on the interaction (σ_I) and/or reaction (σ_R) cross sections using relativistic-energy RI beams, owing to the development of radioactive nuclear beam facilities worldwide. Nuclear matter radii have been determined through the Glauber model analysis of the measured cross sections, while charge radii have predominantly been obtained from precision isotope-shift measurements. The systematics of matter radii has led to, for example, the discovery of a typical neutron-halo nucleus ^{11}Li [2] and a new magic number $N = 16$ in light neutron-rich nuclei [3]. Recent highlights of σ_I measurements can be found in Ref. [4].

In order to experimentally determine the neutron skin of exotic nuclei, a new methodology to distinguish point-proton and neutron radii is required. Isotope-shift and electron-scattering experiments have so far provided the highest precision in charge radius measurements; however, they suffer from a certain limitation with regard to the luminosity of rare species close to the drip line. Since the charge-changing cross sections, σ_{cc} , of intermediate-energy heavy ions are sensitive to their proton distributions, the point-proton radii could feasibly be extracted [5], facilitating the fastest access to the drip line. Thus, point-proton radii are determined from σ_{cc} measurements, whereas matter radii are determined from σ_R measurements. Both measurements can be simultaneously performed in a single experiment, and the same theoretical framework, namely, the Glauber-type model analysis, can be reliably employed for both reaction channels.

2 Charge-changing cross sections – a new approach

To describe charge-changing cross sections using the Glauber-type approach, we modified the zero-range optical-limit Glauber model formula (see Ref. [5] in detail). Figures 1(a–f) show the applicability of the present method for stable nuclei with known charge radii. The experimental data for ^{12}C , ^{20}Ne , ^{27}Al , ^{24}Mg , $^{36,40}\text{Ar}$, and ^{56}Fe on C were taken from Refs. [6–10], and the curves were calculated with the developed formula. The calculated cross sections are mostly greater than the experimental

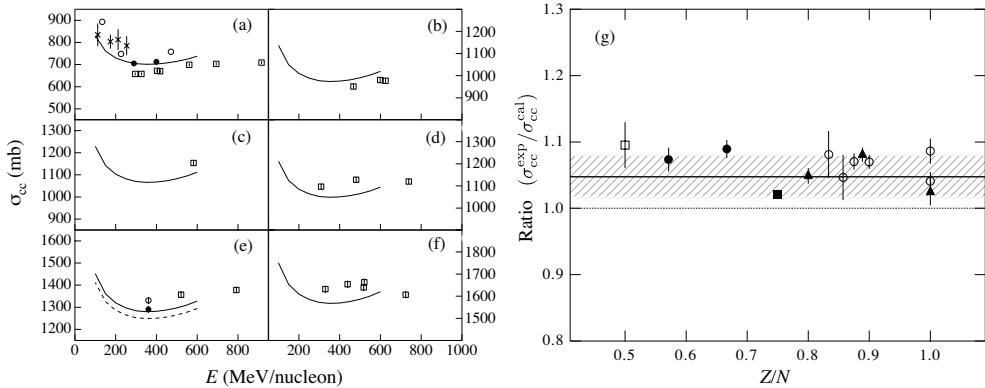


Figure 1. Left panel: Comparison of the calculated and experimental values of σ_{cc} taken from [5]: (a) ^{12}C on C (open squares [6], crosses [7], open circles [8], and solid circles [9]); (b) ^{20}Ne on C [6]; (c) ^{27}Al on C [6]; (d) ^{24}Mg on C [6]; (e) ^{36}Ar (solid circle [10]) and ^{40}Ar (open circle [10] and open squares [6]) on C, where corresponding calculations are indicated by the dashed and solid curves, respectively; and (f) ^{56}Fe on C [6]. Right panel: (g) The ratios of experimental to calculated values of σ_{cc} as a function of Z/N for stable and unstable light nuclei with known charge radii. The solid line and the shaded band show the results of the least-squares fitting of the experimental data and the corresponding standard deviations, respectively (taken from [11]).

σ_{cc} obtained for ^{12}C and ^{20}Ne in the present energy range, but the calculations underestimate the data for ^{27}Al , ^{24}Mg , $^{36,40}\text{Ar}$, and ^{56}Fe . A typical difference between the experimental and predicted σ_{cc} values is $\sim 4\%$.

To extend the present method to unstable nuclei, σ_{cc} values of neutron-rich Be, C, and O isotopes on a carbon target were measured at 300 MeV/nucleon [11]. A series of experiments were carried out using the fragment separator at the Heavy Ion Medical Accelerator in Chiba (HIMAC) synchrotron facility at the National Institute of Radiological Sciences (NIRS) [12]. Since the charge radii of some of these unstable nuclei are precisely known already, the ratios of the experimental σ_{cc} values to the calculated ones are obtained as a function of Z/N , as shown in Fig. 1(g) (see also Fig. 2 of Ref. [11]) in which the data measured at high energies are also included [13]. We find that the ratios are nearly constant, over a broad range of Z/N , with a standard deviation of $\pm 3\%$, as shown by the shaded area in Fig. 1(g). The constant ratio suggests that the direct proton removal channel dominates the charge-changing process at intermediate energies. This fact enables the determination of the density distributions, i.e., the radii of protons bound in neutron-rich nuclei. A successful application is seen in $^{15,16}\text{C}$ [11].

3 Towards medium-mass nuclei

As an extension of previous studies on light nuclei, we systematically measured σ_{cc} of medium-mass nuclei on a carbon target at 300 MeV/nucleon. The measured nuclei ranged from $Z = 18$ to 32, and their partial charge-changing cross sections were also measured [14]. Figure 2 shows preliminary results for the measurements of the σ_{cc} values of Ca, Ti, Cr, and Fe isotopes as a function of the neutron number N . For comparison, σ_{cc} values of light neutron-rich nuclei, B, C, N, O, and F isotopes measured at approximately 1 GeV/nucleon are plotted as well [13].

In general, the charge-changing cross section is, by definition, sensitive to the Z number of the projectile. Figure 2 clearly shows that the measured σ_{cc} values increase with Z but are less sensitive to N . The data stay constant within a relative variance of approximately $\pm 5\%$. A careful observation of the variance of the present data reveals that the σ_{cc} values often increase toward the neutron-deficient side. Here, it should be noted that the high-energy data lie in the neutron-rich unstable region, whereas the present data, some of which are even located at the neutron-deficient side, lie in the stable region. For such nuclei, there might be a correlation between the σ_{cc} values and the proton separation energies, S_p , which monotonically decrease toward the neutron-deficient side.

Figure 3 shows correlations between the values of σ_{cc} and S_p for (a) Ca, Ti, (b) Cr, and Fe isotopes. The σ_{cc} values of Ca and Ti isotopes mostly increase as S_p decreases, as shown in Fig. 3(a), while σ_{cc}

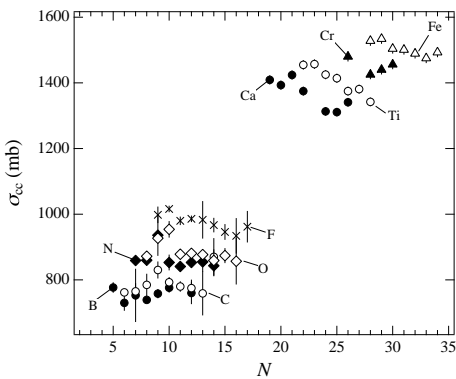


Figure 2. Preliminary results for the σ_{cc} values of Ca (solid circles), Ti (open circles), Cr (solid triangles), and Fe (open triangles) isotopes as a function of N . The data for B, C, N, O, and F isotopes measured at high energies are taken from Ref. [13].

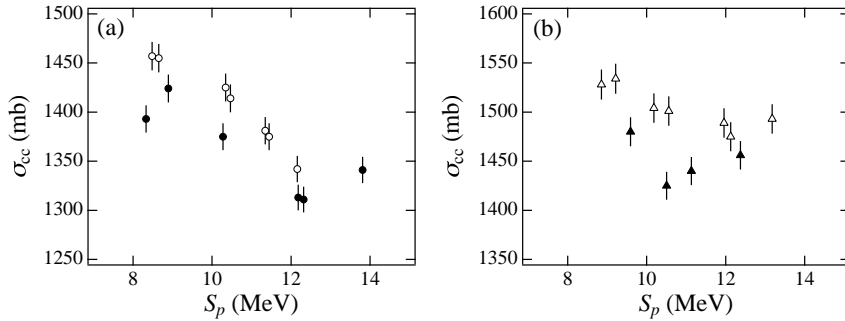


Figure 3. Correlations of preliminary σ_{cc} versus proton separation energy, S_p , for (a) Ca (solid circles), Ti (open circles), (b) Cr (solid triangles), and Fe isotopes (open triangles).

of Cr and Fe isotopes stay nearly constant as shown in Fig. 3(b). The present behavior in the stable and neutron-deficient region is apparently different from that in the light neutron-rich region. Using nuclei with known charge radii, the systematic behavior of the ratios of the experimental σ_{cc} values to the calculated ones should be carefully calibrated. The modified Glauber-type approach would then provide the point-proton radii of medium-mass unstable nuclei for which charge radii are yet to be determined. The results will be presented in a forthcoming publication.

Acknowledgments

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