Abstract

Electron Localizations in Alloy Exhibiting Nanotwinning †

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† Presented at the 37th International Symposium on Dynamical Properties of Solids (DyProSo 2019), Ferrara, Italy, 8-12 September 2019.
Published: 5 September 2019

Ni2MnGa is a ferromagnetic shape memory alloy in which a large spontaneous deformation up to 12% has been observed after application of an external magnetic field [1]. The key to such material functionality is the ferroelastic microstructure of martensite with deep hierarchical twinning up to nanoscale [2]. However, the microscopic origin of the martensitic transformation between the high temperature austenitic and low temperature martensitic phases is not fully understood to date as well as exact origin of nanotwinning in martensitic phases. In present work we have used first-principles calculations based on density functional theory (DFT) to simulate magneto-optical (MO) Kerr spectra for different phases of Ni2MnGa alloy: austenite, nonmodulated martensite without nanotwinning and nanotwined martensite represented by 4O structure [3]. The MO spectra provide a valuable insight into the mutual dependence of the the structure of the material and electronic structure and magnetic ordering.

The work of Himmetoglu et al. [4] suggests that the Hubbard treatment of the on-site Coulomb interaction of d-electrons localized on Mn sites (DFT+U) is required to describe correctly the electronic structure of Ni2MnGa alloy. A comparison of the calculated and measured spectra allowed us to estimate the proper value of Coulomb interaction parameter U, which we found significantly smaller than the value proposed in previous works [4,5]. Using smaller U, we obtain a better quantitative agreement with experiment at least in case of elastic constants and lattice parameters in Ni2MnGa. Comparison of the newly calculated densities of states covering the electron localization then provides a better insight into the origins of martensitic transformation and nanotwinning.

Funding: This work was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic within the program OP VVV “Excellent Research Teams” under Project CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/15_003/0000487-MATFUN, by the Large Infrastructures for Research, ExperimentalDevelopment and Innovations project “IT4Innovations National Supercomputing Center-LM2015070” and by the Czech Science Foundation under project no. 19-22016S.

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