CURRENT FLOW AT THE INTERFACE OF COPPER AND POLYETHYLENE IN HIGH-VOLTAGE APPARATUS

By

Eng. Mohammed Ahmed El-Shahat Abo-Saleh

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
In
Electrical Power and Machines Engineering

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FACULTY OF ENGINEERING, CAIRO UNIVERSITY
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2018
Title of Thesis:
Current flow at the interface of copper and polyethylene in high-voltage apparatus.

Key Words:

Summary:
Computational quantum mechanics in the framework of density functional theory (DFT) is used to develop the interface model between Cu (111) and PE (001). The “bulk plus band line up” method and the projected density of states (PDOS) analysis are combined to calculate the actual barrier to charge injection. This combination of methods lead to finding new states appearing between the Fermi level of Cu and the conduction band of PE, which lowered the barrier to electrons injection. These states are due to morphological deformation that takes place in both the metal and the polymer at the interface. The most common chemical impurities that are normally found in PE are studied in this thesis to understand their impact on conduction mechanism. These impurities, such as carbonyl, vinyl, and conjugated double bond, produce trap states between the conduction and valence bands of PE, which reduce the barrier height to around the experimental value of 1 eV. The lowered barrier height increases the charge injection, which then facilitates the conduction mechanism. Variations in the dielectric constant at the interface are also a significant factor. The present study investigates the change in dielectric constant of PE at the interface with Cu using the microscopic polarization theory. It is concluded that the calculated current density using Schottky injection mechanism under a certain electric field and temperature does not only depend on the barrier height, but also on the relative dielectric constant at the interface, which in turn changed the current density and the conduction process.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS................................................................................................................. I
TABLE OF CONTENTS..................................................................................................................... II
LIST OF FIGURES.......................................................................................................................... II
LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................................ VII
LIST OF SYMBOLS.......................................................................................................................... VIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS................................................................................................................. X
ABSTRACT......................................................................................................................................... XI

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION....................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Objectives of the thesis................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Contents of thesis............................................................................................................................ 2

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW........................................................................................................... 4
  2.1 High Field Conduction in Polymers............................................................................................... 4
    2.1.1 Electric Breakdown and Degradation in Polymeric Insulators................................................. 5
  2.2 Current Injection at the Interface................................................................................................. 5
    2.2.1 Conduction Mechanisms........................................................................................................... 5
      2.2.1.1 Schottky Injection Mechanism............................................................................................. 6
      2.2.1.2 Fowler-Nordheim Tunneling............................................................................................... 7
    2.2.2 Experimental Data about Injection............................................................................................ 7
    2.2.3 Role of Impurities....................................................................................................................... 8
  2.3 Electronic (Atomistic) Structure of Polyethylene............................................................................ 8
  2.4 Quantum Mechanics of Previous Work in Polymer and Interfaces................................................... 9
    2.4.1 Previous Studies on Polyethylene and Chemical Impurities.................................................... 9
    2.4.2 Previous Studies on the Interface between Metals and Polyethylene........................................ 10
    2.4.3 Previous Studies on Changes in Dielectric Constant.................................................................. 11

## CHAPTER III: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COMPUTATIONAL QUANTUM MECHANICS
(DENSITY FUNCTIONAL THEORY)........................................................................................................ 12
  3.1 Basics of Computational Quantum Mechanics............................................................................. 12
  3.2 Solving the Many-body Problem................................................................................................. 13
    3.2.1 Hartree-Fock method................................................................................................................. 13
    3.2.2 Post Hartree-Fock methods....................................................................................................... 15
  3.3 Basis of Density Function Theory (DFT)....................................................................................... 15
    3.3.1 Hohenberg and Kohn Theorems............................................................................................... 15
    3.3.2 Kohn and Sham method............................................................................................................. 16
  3.4 Implementation of DFT.................................................................................................................. 17
    3.4.1 Basic Algorithm......................................................................................................................... 17
    3.4.2 Exchange-Correlation Approximation....................................................................................... 19
    3.4.3 Basis sets approximation............................................................................................................. 20
    3.4.4 Pseudopotential approximation................................................................................................. 20
    3.4.5 Structure relaxation.................................................................................................................... 21
    3.4.6 Boundary Conditions................................................................................................................ 22
    3.4.7 Density of states....................................................................................................................... 24
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure (3-1): Flow chart for the numerical implementation of the SCF algorithm..............18
Figure (3-2): The pseudopotentials versus atomic radius (r).........................................21
Figure (3-3): Simplified flow chart of structure relaxation computation procedure..........22
Figure (3-4): A variety of systems is created by boundary conditions for a unit cell....23
Figure (4-1): Electronic band structure for (metal, semiconductor, and conductor)......27
Figure (4-2): Primitive unit cell in different planes....................................................28
Figure (4-3): Orthorhombic structure of the crystalline PE with calculated lattice constant...29
Figure (4-4): The infinite bulk PE..................................................................................29
Figure (4-5): PDOS for bulk PE.....................................................................................30
Figure (4-6): Slab PE (001) with vacuum thickness.....................................................31
Figure (4-7): Planar average potential for bulk and slab PE.........................................31
Figure (4-8): The primitive FCC unit cell and Bulk Copper model.............................32
Figure (4-9): Plane (111) for Cu's FCC structure..........................................................33
Figure (4-10): Slab Cu (111) in all dimensions with vacuum thickness in finite cells direction........................................................................................................................................33
Figure (4-11): Planar average potential for bulk and slab Cu........................................34
Figure (5-1): Heterostructure of Cu (111) and PE (001) in different planes...............36
Figure (5-2): The heterostructure of Cu (111) and PE (001)...........................................36
Figure (5-3): The planar average potential for Cu (111) and PE (001).........................38
Figure (5-4): PDOS for PE atoms in Cu (111) and PE (001) compared with Slab PE....39
Figure (5-5): Heterostructure of Cu/PE interface showing dislocation in copper surface atoms facing the polymer chains which leads to deformation states in the band gap – the location of atoms in the z-direction is shown in Å..............................................................40
Figure (6-1): Carbonyl and terminal carbonyl impurities in PE chain..........................44
Figure (6-2): Vinyl and conjugated double bond impurities in PE chain.....................44
Figure (6-3): Heterostructure of carbonyl impurity in Cu/PE model.........................45
Figure (6-4): PDOS of carbonyl impurity in PE/Cu model...........................................46
Figure (6-5): Heterostructure of terminal carbonyl impurity in Cu/PE model..............47
Figure (6-6): PDOS of terminal carbonyl impurity in PE/Cu model.............................47
Figure (6-7): The terminal carbonyl locations on a PE chains.....................................48
Figure (6-8): Heterostructure of two terminal carbonyl impurities in Cu/PE model.......49
Figure (6-9): PDOS of two terminal carbonyl impurities in PE/Cu model....................50
Figure (6-10): Heterostructure of vinyl impurity in Cu/PE model...............................51
Figure (6-11): PDOS of vinyl impurity in PE/Cu model..............................................51
Figure (6-12): Heterostructure of conjugated double bond impurity in Cu/PE model....52
Figure (6-13): PDOS of conjugated double bond impurity in PE/Cu model...............53
Figure (6-14): Bulk plus band line up procedure for all impurities model are compared with pure model for Cu/PE. The circle in figure makes zoom in vacuum levels for different labeled cases.

Figure (6-15): PDOS for all impurities in interface model of Cu/PE.

Figure (6-16): Energy diagram for all impurity states between CBM and VBM.

Figure (7-1): Heterostructure of slab PE (001) with applying external field.

Figure (7-2): The difference charge density of the slab PE (001).

Figure (7-3): The polarization of slab PE (001).

Figure (7-4): The relative dielectric constant for slab PE (001) as a position dependent.

Figure (7-5): Heterostructure of PE (001) and Cu (111) with the external field.

Figure (7-6): Charge density distribution for Cu/PE interface model at different external field.

Figure (7-7): The difference charge density of PE (001)/Cu (111) along the interface direction.

Figure (7-8): The polarization of PE (001)/Cu (111) along the interface direction.

Figure (7-9): The position dependent relative dielectric constant for PE (001)/Cu (111).

Figure (7-10): (J-E) characteristic for Cu/PE interface model using Schottky injection at different relative dielectric constant.

Figure (7-11): Log scale of the current density at different relative dielectric constant.

Figure (7-12): Log scale of the current density at different electric field.

Figure (7-13): (I-V) characteristic for Cu/PE interface model at different relative dielectric constant.
LIST OF TABLES

Table (5-1): Barriers injection for different metals.........................................................38
Table (6-1): The energy levels for different Cu/PE models..............................................54
Table (6-2): The calculated barrier height for electrons and holes..................................55
LIST OF SYMBOLS

\( \lambda \)  
Trap separation

\( q \)  
Electronic charge

\( E \)  
Electric field

\( J \)  
Current density

\( A \)  
Richardson constant

\( T \)  
Temperature

\( V_b \)  
Barrier to charge injection height

\( K \)  
Boltzmann’s constant

\( \varepsilon \)  
Dielectric constant

\( \varepsilon_0 \)  
Free space dielectric constant

\( \varepsilon_r \)  
Relative dielectric constant

\( h \)  
Planck’s constant

\( m_T \)  
Tunneling effective mass

\( E_a \)  
Electron affinity

\( a, b, c \)  
Lattice constant

\( E_g \)  
Band gap

\( V_e \)  
Electrons barrier height

\( V_h \)  
Holes barrier height

\( WF \)  
Work function

\( m \)  
Particle mass

\( \nabla^2 \)  
Laplacian operator

\( \Psi \)  
Wavefunction

\( E_T \)  
Total energy

\( E_p \)  
Potential energy

\( \hat{H} \)  
Hamiltonian operator

\( E_k \)  
kinetic energy

\( Z \)  
Charge number

\( r_i \)  
Locations of electron \( i \)

\( R_j \)  
Locations of nucleus \( j \)

\( \delta(\sigma_i, \sigma_j) \)  
Kronecker-Delta function

\( H_{HF} \)  
Hartree-Fock Hamiltonian

\( E_{P_X} \)  
Exchange potential

\( E_{P_{Hartree}} \)  
Hartree potential

\( E_{P_C} \)  
Correlation potential

\( n(r) \)  
Electron density

\( E_{P_{ext}} \)  
External potential energy

\( F[n] \)  
Global functional

\( E_{xc} \)  
Exchange-correlation energy

\( H_{KS} \)  
Khon and Sham Hamiltonian

\( E_{P_{KS}} \)  
Effective potential of KS

\( \varnothing_k \)  
Basis set functions

\( C_k \)  
Constant coefficients

\( L \)  
Size of a basis sets

\( r_c \)  
Cutoff radius
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$E_{\text{vac}}$</td>
<td>Vacuum level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_{f}$</td>
<td>Fermi level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P$</td>
<td>Polarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\rho_{\text{ind}}$</td>
<td>Induced charge density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_{\text{loc}}$</td>
<td>Localized field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_{\text{ext}}$</td>
<td>External field</td>
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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDOS</td>
<td>Projected density of states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFT</td>
<td>Density Functional Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBM</td>
<td>Conduction band minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBM</td>
<td>Valence band maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QE</td>
<td>Quantum Espresso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Polyethylene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag</td>
<td>Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al</td>
<td>Aluminum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt</td>
<td>Platinum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pd</td>
<td>Palladium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si</td>
<td>Silicon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiO$_2$</td>
<td>Silicon oxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCLC</td>
<td>Space-Charge-Limited Conduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XPS</td>
<td>X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EELS</td>
<td>Electron Energy Loss Spectroscope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDA</td>
<td>Local density approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGA</td>
<td>Generalized gradient approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>Heyd-Scuseria-Ernzerhof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>Hybrid functionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCSCF</td>
<td>Multi configuration self-consistent field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Configuration interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Coupled cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Perturbation theory by Møller and Plesset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK</td>
<td>Hohenberg and Kohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>Kohn and Sham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCF</td>
<td>Self-consistent field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCAO</td>
<td>Linear Combination of Atomic Orbitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PW</td>
<td>Plane Waves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Atomic Sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Conjugate gradient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFGS</td>
<td>Broyden- Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Molecular Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOS</td>
<td>Density of states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDIIS</td>
<td>Geometric direct inversion in the iterative subspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Car-Parrinello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWSCF</td>
<td>Plane-Wave Self-Consistent Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAW</td>
<td>Projector Augmented Waves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBE</td>
<td>Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Face centered cubic</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEA</td>
<td>Pulsed electro-acoustic</td>
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ABSTRACT

Polymers are increasingly becoming the insulator of choice in various high voltage power apparatus, such as capacitors and cables. Under high operating fields conduction (leakage) currents in polymers contribute to the eventual breakdown of the insulator, thus determining its active life time. A barrier to charge injection at polymer/metal interface is a key to understanding the high field conduction in cables and supercapacitors. The conduction mechanism of injected currents is influenced by barriers to charge injection and also by possible variations in the dielectric constant at the interface. The present work investigates barriers to charge injection at the atomic level at the interface of copper and polyethylene (PE), one of the most dominant material combinations in the power industry. Emphasis is carried out in this work on morphological deformation.

Computational quantum mechanics in the framework of density functional theory (DFT) is used to develop the interface model between Cu (111) and PE (001) in the light of previous DFT studies on the interface of PE with Pt, Au, and Ag in terms of the absolute barriers to holes and electrons injection. The “bulk plus band line up” method and the projected density of states (PDOS) analysis are combined to calculate the actual barrier to charge injection, which was not well identified in similar studies. This combination of methods lead to finding new states appearing between the Fermi level of Cu and the conduction band of PE, which lowered the barrier to electrons injection. These states are due to morphological deformation that takes place in both the metal and the polymer at the interface. The present work stresses the importance of considering morphological deformation in lowering the barriers to charge injection in soft metal which is less considered as compared to chemical impurities.

The most common chemical impurities that are normally found in PE are studied in this thesis to understand their impact on conduction mechanism. These impurities, such as carbonyl, vinyl, and conjugated double bond, produce trap states between the conduction and valence bands of PE, which reduce the barrier height to around the experimental value of 1 eV. The lowered barrier height increases the charge injection, which then facilitates the conduction mechanism. This work recognizes the fact that the barrier height is not the sole factor affecting conduction. Variations in the dielectric constant at the interface are also a significant factor. The present study investigates the change in dielectric constant of PE at the interface with Cu using the microscopic polarization theory. It is concluded that the calculated current density using Schottky injection mechanism under a certain electric field and temperature does not only depend on the barrier height, but also on the relative dielectric constant at the interface, which in turn changed the current density and the conduction process.