Shape-Selective Dependence of Room Temperature Ferromagnetism Induced by Hierarchical ZnO Nanostructures


†DST/CSIR Nanotechnology Innovation Centre, National Centre for Nano-Structured Materials, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, P.O. Box 395, Pretoria 0001, South Africa
‡CSIR-National Laser Centre, 626 Meiring Naude Rd., Brummeria, Pretoria 0001, South Africa
§Department of Physics, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
‖Department of Physics, University of the Free State, P.O. Box 339, Bloemfontein ZA9300, South Africa
⊥School of Chemistry and Physics, Westville Campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa

Abstract

We report on the room temperature ferromagnetism of various highly crystalline zinc oxide (ZnO) nanostructures, such as hexagonally shaped nanorods, nanocups, nanosamoosas, nanoplatelets, and hierarchical nano “flower-like” structures. These materials were synthesized in a shape-selective manner using simple microwave assisted hydrothermal synthesis. Thermogravimetric analyses demonstrated the as-synthesized ZnO nanostructures to be stable and of high purity. Structural analyses showed that the ZnO nanostructures are polycrystalline and wurtzite in structure, without any secondary phases. Combination of electron paramagnetic resonance, photoluminescence, and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy studies revealed that the zinc vacancies (V_{Zn}) and singly ionized oxygen vacancies (V_{O}^+) located mainly on the ZnO surface are the primary defects in ZnO structures. A direct link between ferromagnetism and the relative occupancy of the V_{Zn} and V_{O}^+ was established, suggesting that both V_{Zn} and V_{O}^+ on the ZnO surface plays a vital role in modulating ferromagnetic behavior. An intense structure- and shape-dependent ferromagnetic signal with an effective g-value of >2.0 and a sextet hyperfine structure was shown. Moreover, a novel low field microwave absorption signal was observed and found to increase with an increase in microwave power and temperature.