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*Published in:*  
The 24th International Congress on Glass - Abstracts

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Unspecified

*Publication date:*  
2016

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Yang, G., Cheng, S., Zhao, Y., Peng, M. Y., Skibsted, J., & Yue, Y. (2016). The boron speciation quantification in alkali borosilicate glasses by electron energy loss spectroscopy. In *The 24th International Congress on Glass - Abstracts* (pp. 183). International Commission on Glass (ICG).

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# The boron speciation quantification in alkali borosilicate glasses by electron energy loss spectroscopy

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Transmission electron microscopy and related analytical techniques have been widely used to study the microstructure of different materials. However, few research works have been performed in the field of glasses, possibly due to the electron-beam irradiation damage<sup>(1)</sup>. In this study, based on our previous research, we have developed a method based on electron energy loss spectroscopy (EELS) data acquisition and analysis, which enables determination of the boron speciation in a series of ternary alkali borosilicate glasses with constant molar ratios. A script for the fast acquisition of EELS has been designed and a new fitting criterion was developed, from which the fraction of BO<sub>4</sub> tetrahedra can be obtained by fitting the experimental data with linear combinations of reference spectra. Figure 1 illustrates the boron K-edge spectra (strictly speaking energy loss near edge structure, “ELNES”) of three glasses (LBS, NBS and KBS are lithium-, sodium- and potassium borosilicate glass) with different fitting methods<sup>(2)</sup>. The peak A was solely from trigonal BO<sub>3</sub> and peak B was mainly attributed by tetrahedral BO<sub>4</sub>, while peak C contains signals from both configurations. The measured BO<sub>4</sub> fractions (N<sub>4</sub>) obtained by the new fitting method are consistent with those from <sup>11</sup>B MAS NMR data, suggesting that EELS be an alternative and convenient way to determine the N<sub>4</sub> fraction in glasses.

In addition, in order to investigate the effect of cerium oxide on the glass microstructure, 5 mol% CeO<sub>2</sub> was added to the KBS glass (Ce-KBS). The BO<sub>4</sub> fraction in the Ce-KBS glass was found to be lower than that in the KBS glass and the Ce oxidation state was quantified to be close to 4<sup>+</sup>. The boron time-resolved EELS spectra were recorded to quantify the electron beam irradiation effect to the glass network. The results clearly demonstrate that the transformation from BO<sub>4</sub> to BO<sub>3</sub> units can be efficiently suppressed by adding CeO<sub>2</sub> to the borosilicate glasses. Meanwhile, Ce oxidation state was found to decrease during the electron beam irradiation, which indicates that Ce ions act as a buffer to retard the damage of the glass network during TEM observation. More details about the EELS analysis of the borosilicate glasses will be discussed.

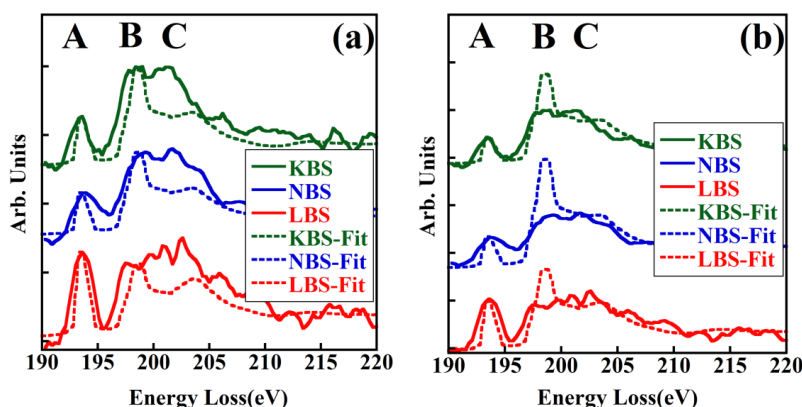


Figure 1: Experimental boron K-edge EELS spectra of the lithium-, sodium- and potassium borosilicate glasses (solid lines) along with the fitted spectra (dashed lines) by (a) the previously reported method and (b) the fitting method developed in this work

## Acknowledgements

This work was financially supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (No. 51202180) and the authors thank the Danish Strategic Research Council for financial support to the LowE-CEM project.

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