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Spin-charge-lattice coupling through resonant multimagnon excitations in multiferroic BiFeO$_3$


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Spin-charge-lattice coupling mediated by multimagnon processes is demonstrated in multiferroic BiFeO$_3$. Experimental evidence of two- and three-magnon excitations as well as multimagnon coupling at electronic energy scales and high temperatures are reported. Temperature dependent Raman experiments show up to five resonant enhancements of the two-magnon excitation below the Néel temperature. These are shown to be collective interactions between on-site Fe d-d electronic resonance, phonons, and multimagnons. © 2009 American Institute of Physics.

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Spin-charge-lattice coupling is central to the current interest in multiferroic materials. In particular, the coupling between magnetization and polarization can lead to cross-coupled phenomena such as magnetic control of polarization and electrical control of magnetism. Multiferroic materials with both polar and magnetic order parameters usually show a relatively low-symmetry crystal structure due to the absence of both time and space inversion symmetries; hence, a strong interaction between the low-lying magnetic and lattice excitations can occur, leading to rich new physics phenomena. One widely studied mechanism for spin-charge coupling is through electromagnons, which are single-magnon spin excitations. An unexplored mechanism in multiferroics is through multimagnon excitations, which are known to be very sensitive to temperature effects and phase transitions.

Bismuth ferrite, BiFeO$_3$, the focus of this study, has a robust ferroelectric polarization (~100 μC/cm$^2$) at room temperature (RT), that is the largest among known ferroelectrics. At RT, BiFeO$_3$ is a rhombohedrally distorted ferroelectric perovskite with space group $R3c$ and a Curie temperature, $T_C < 1100$ K. It also shows a $G$-type canted antiferromagnetic order below Néel temperature, $T_N < 640$ K, and, in the bulk, an incommensurate space-modulated spin structure along (110)$_p$. During the past few years, various physical properties of BiFeO$_3$ have been reported to show anomalies across $T_N$. However, with the exception of neutron diffraction, none of these properties have clean distinguished the magnetism from the polar contribution in this material. This makes the study of coupled phenomena challenging. Here we show that combining Raman scattering and linear optical spectroscopy of multimagnons, phonons, and electronic energy levels can reveal spin-charge-lattice coupling in this system.

For our experiments, 4.5 μm BiFeO$_3$ film on (110) DyScO$_3$ and BiFeO$_3$ single crystal were grown according to Refs. 12 and 14. The thick films were relaxed and had (001)$_p$ pseudocube-on-pseudocube epitaxial geometry, with trigonal $C_3v$ crystal structure. Raman spectra were recorded under excitation at 488 nm in a backscattering geometry by using a WITec alpha 300 S confocal Raman microscope equipped with a Linkam heating stage. Raman spectra were collected in unpolarized geometry. Optical transmittance measurements were performed using a Perkin Elmer Lambda-900 spectrometer between 4 and 730 K.

Though magnons energy are typically small (<100 cm$^{-1}$), Raman scattering for spin wave optical branches at higher energies have been previously reported in iron oxides due to their large unit cell, their corresponding multimagnon excitations located at energies larger than 1000 cm$^{-1}$. Figures 1(a) and 1(b) depict the high frequency unpolarized Raman spectra for a 4.5 μm thick epitaxial film of BiFeO$_3$ collected at different temperatures. Further details on the temperature dependent Raman spectra under 1300 cm$^{-1}$ can be found in Refs. 11, 14, and 16. Evidence for two- and three-magnon scattering at the shoulder of a previously reported two-phonon overtone can be observed, their energy values peaking at ~1530 and 2350 cm$^{-1}$, respectively. The two- and three-magnon excitations were identified by using the striking spectral similarity between BiFeO$_3$ and $\alpha$-Fe$_2$O$_3$, the simplest case of an iron oxide containing only FeO$_6$ octahedra, where not only two-magnon scattering but also two-phonon overtones at very similar energies have been reported. (Our films and crystals were grown according to Refs. 12 and 14.)
Experiments were performed in the same spectral range using synchrotron x-ray diffraction, transmission electron microscopy, and scanning probe microscopy. RT midinfrared absorption measurements but also point out strong coupling interactions between the spin system and electric dipole active excitations in BiFeO$_3$. The two magnon absorption band can be seen around 1550 cm$^{-1}$ and two-phonon (<1260 cm$^{-1}$) excitations as a function of temperature, a clear plot of the temperature driven multimagnon enhancement can be obtained [Fig. 1(e)]. Since anomalies in the measured resistivity and induced magnetization were observed only at $T_N$, and not at any of $T_1^a$ to $T_4^a$, it rules out spin reorientation transitions except at $T_N$. Also, a lack of any anomalous lattice parameter changes at these temperatures suggests that these are not structural phase transitions. We note that the two-phonon overtone—strongly enhanced due to the resonance with the intrinsic absorption edge—also couples strongly to $T_N$ as shown previously. Hence, since the excitation energy ($E_{\text{exc}} < 2.54$ eV) is close to the band edge, these anomalies appear to be (multi)magnon/phonon-assisted electronic resonances driven by temperature shifts. To further explore this possibility, we first probed the electronic structure of BiFeO$_3$ at high energies, i.e., close to the band edge.

Temperature dependent linear absorption measurements (from $T=5$ to 730 K) and parameterization analysis were performed on a BiFeO$_3$ film on DyScO$_3$ (110). For the series of temperature dependent measurements, the complex index of refraction ($N=n+i\kappa$) were extracted by fitting the experimental ellipsometric spectra to an optical model consisting of a semi-infinite DyScO$_3$ substrate/100 nm BiFeO$_3$ film/air ambient structure. Free parameters correspond to the parameterization of the BiFeO$_3$ dielectric function represented by this film by a Lorentz oscillator, three Tauc–Lorentz oscillators sharing a common Tauc gap, and a constant additive term to $e_1$ represented by $e_{\text{osc}}$.

Figure 2(a) shows an example of experimental transmittance spectra at $T=5$ K for the 100 nm BiFeO$_3$/DyScO$_3$ substrate stack and fit to the corresponding model. It displays an absorption onset at $\sim 2.2$ eV, a small shoulder centered at $E_{\text{TL}} \sim 2.5$ eV, deriving from onsite $d$-to-$d$ excitations of the Fe$^{3+}$ ions and two larger features near 3.2 and 4.5 eV that are assigned as charge transfer excitations. All temperature dependent experimental spectra and fits are in good agreement. Figure 2(b) shows the position of the $E_{\text{TL}} \sim 2.5$ eV shoulder extracted from a parameterization of the absorption spectrum as a function of temperature. As observed, it shows singularities at $T_1^a \sim 380$ K, $T_5^a \sim 580$ K, and $T_N$, consistent with the previously reported band gap temperature dependence, and the current Raman results. Furthermore, from the results displayed in Fig. 2(b), it can be seen that all the singularities observed in the magnetic Raman response [Fig. 1(e)] occur within the
FIG. 2. (Color online) (a) Absorption spectrum obtained for a 100 nm BiFeO$_3$ film on DyScO$_3$(110). Solid lines are fits to the parameterized di-electric function at 5 K. (b) (Left axis) Energy position, $E_{\text{TL}}$. Also shown are resonance conditions at $T_1^\text{e}$ (i=1–5) and $T_N$ involving the Raman excitation wavelength $E_{\text{exc}}$, Tauc–Lorentz energy, $E_{\text{TL}}$, one- and two-magnon and phonons $\Omega_1$, $\Omega_2$, and $\Omega_3$. (Right axis) Integrated intensity ratio between the two-magnon and two-phonon Raman overtones as a function of temperature.

In summary, we have shown experimental evidence for spin-charge-lattice coupling in multiferroic BiFeO$_3$. Using a near resonant excitation wavelength (2.54 eV), six Raman enhancements of two-magnon excitations are observed with temperature: one at $T_N$ arising from the antiferromagnetic phase transition and five new ones below $T_N$, which are shown to be combined resonances involving electronic levels, phonons, and magnon states. The work highlights the sensitivity of multimagnon spectroscopy to spin-charge coupling in multiferroics that has been minimally explored so far and appears to be broadly applicable to other multiferroics and magnetoelectrics.

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18 The lattice parameters change with temperature, $T$ linearly as $a(X) = 6.73 + 8.7 \times 10^{-3} T(K)$ and $c(X) = 13.81 + 2.21 \times 10^{-3} T(K)$.