Luminescence properties of Tb$^{3+}$ doped Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphor prepared by hydrothermal method

Zhengyang Zhang †*, Jinkai Li†, Wenzhi Wang, Weilin Zhao, Zongming Liu∗

College of Materials Science and Engineering, University of Jinan, China
† The two authors contributed equally to this paper.
*Corresponding author

Abstract. The Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$:Tb$^{3+}$ phosphors have been successfully prepared using the hydrothermal method calcined at 900℃ in this work. The crystal structure, PLE/PL and fluorescence decay behavior of samples were investigated in detail. Under the 270 nm excitation (4f$^8$$\rightarrow$4f$^7$5d$^1$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$), the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ (x=0.01-0.15) phosphors emit the strong green emission at 547 nm ($^5$D$_{4}$$\rightarrow$F$_{5}$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$). The quenching concentration was found to be ~10% owing to the exchange reaction between Tb$^{3+}$. The Tb$^{3+}$ addition did not influence the CIE chromaticity coordinates (~0.33±0.02, ~0.60±0.02) and color temperatures (~5542 K) of the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors. However, due to the energy transfer between Tb$^{3+}$, the fluorescence lifetime for 547 nm emission decreased with the Tb$^{3+}$ content increasing. The Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$:Tb$^{3+}$ phosphors with strong green emission are expected to be widely used in white light LED and display areas.

1. Introduce
During the past decades, the rare earth (RE$^{3+}$) doped the glass, ceramics and phosphors has been widely applied in developing the new optical devices, such as displays, biosensors, solid-state lasers and fiber amplifiers [1-3]. The characteristics of the rare earth elements 4f electron layer configuration make the corresponding compounds having various fluorescence characteristics. Due to the Tb$^{3+}$ has 4f$^8$ energy level and it is also sensitive to the surrounding environment, the samples with Tb$^{3+}$ addition has better fluorescence excitation spectrum and emission spectrum [4]. Meanwhile, it has a long lifetime of excited state and simple mode of emission peak splitting. So it has become the focus in the green fluorescent materials research [5]. But (WO$_4$)$_{2^-}$ and Gd$^{3+}$ can sensitization in active ion, thus streng the active ion to excited green light in Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$ matrix .So, the Tb$^{3+}$ doping Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$ is of vital importance in the research. We have synthesized Tb$^{3+}$ doped Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphor by hydrothermal method, and we studied its luminescent properties by means of XRD and PLE/PL and a series of characterization methods in detail. Besides, we studied the material synthesis, phase formation and fluorescence performance.

2. Experiment section
2.1 Materials
The original chemicals which were used in the work mainly contain the Gd$_2$O$_3$ and Tb$_2$O$_3$ (99.99%, Huizhou Ruier Rare Chemical Hi-Tech Co. Ltd., Huizhou, China), Na$_3$WO$_4$·2H$_2$O (99.5%, Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd., Shanghai, China), NaOH, (96%, Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd.,
Shanghai, China) and HNO₃ (AR, Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd., Shanghai, China). All the chemical reagents are required without further purification.

2.2 Preparation procedure
Firstly, we dissolved Gd₂O₃ and Tb₂O₇ in hot nitric acid, processing the RE(NO₃)₃ (RE=Gd and Tb) solutions we needed. Then, in accordance with the chemical formula of (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃, we prepared the mother salt solution with RE(NO₃)₃ and Na₂WO₄·2H₂O.

After the above process was completed, a certain proportion of Na₂WO₄·2H₂O white particles were dissolved in 50 ml water, then dissolve an appropriate amount of nitrate solution in 20ml of water, put in a collector type constant temperature magnetic stirrer, stirring for about 5 min; When the two kinds of raw materials are completely dissolved and stirred in deionized water, the obtained nitrate solution is uniformly dripped into the sodium tungstate solution, and the titration ends at the end of 30 min, add NaOH solution to the mixture and adjust the pH until pH=7. The resulting reaction solution is then moved to a stainless steel autoclave with a capacity of 100 ml; The reaction kettle is placed in the oven, and the oven is set at a temperature of 120°C and the reaction time is 24 h. After the reaction was completed, the reaction kettle was cooled to room temperature to remove the hydrothermal products; The obtained hydrothermal products are cleaned repeatedly through deionized water and cleaned once by anhydrous ethanol, dispersing the product into ethanol (80°C, dried 6 h) and drying the precursor after drying; Finally, the precursor was calcined in high temperature (900°C 2 h) high temperature air and the target phosphor was obtained.

2.3 Characterization
The phase purity were monitored by powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) using nickel-filtered CuKα radiation in the 2θ range 10-50° in the scanning speed of 4.0° 2θ/min (Model D8 ADVANCE, BRUKER Co., Germany). In addition, the PL/PLE spectra of the (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃ phosphors were researched by a fluorescence spectrophotometer (FP-6500, JASCO, Tokyo, Japan) which was equipped with a Φ60-mm integrating sphere (Model ISF-513, JASCO, Tokyo, Japan) and the excitation source we used is the 150-W Xe-lamp.

3. Results and discussion
Fig. 1 shows the XRD patterns of the (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃ (x=0.01-0.15) phosphors composed by different Tb³⁺ contents (the x value) calcined under the condition of 900°C. It can be seen that all the (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃ phosphors can be well indexed to the pure bottom centered monoclinic structure of Gd₂(WO₄)₃, (space group: C2/c, JCPDS: no.23-1076) [6], indicating the formation of pure phase (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃. Meanwhile, the XRD spectra has no other additional diffraction bans, which indicated that the addition of Tb³⁺ does not affect the crystal structure.

![Figure 1. XRD spectra of (Gd₂₋ₓTbx)(WO₄)₃ calcined 900°C at as function of Tb³⁺ content (x value)](image)
Fig. 1 shows the XRD patterns of the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ (x=0.01-0.15) phosphors with different Tb$^{3+}$ contents (the x value) calcined at 900°C. It can be seen that all the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors can be well indexed to the pure bottom centered monoclinic structure of Gd$_2$(WO$_4$)$_3$ (space group: C2/c, JCPDS: no.23-1076) [6], indicating the formation of pure phase (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$. Meanwhile, the XRD spectra has no other additional diffraction bans, which indicated that the addition of Tb$^{3+}$ does not affect the crystal structure.

Fig. 2 shows the PLE spectra of (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors with the different Tb$^{3+}$ content monitoring the 547 nm emission (5D$_4$→7F$_5$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$). From which it can be seen that the PLE spectra mainly contain main four excitation peaks and the strongest excitation bands is located at ~270 nm (4f$^8$-4f$^7$5d$^1$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$). The appearance of the W-O charge transfer band transition at ~245 nm wavelength indicates the energy transfer of WO$_4^{2-}$→Dy$^{3+}$. Meanwhile, the excitation band at ~245 nm which was attributed to the $^8$S$_{7/2}$→$^6$I$_{7/2}$ transition of Gd$^{3+}$ give an evidence that the Gd$^{3+}$→Tb$^{3+}$ energy transfer. The other two bands at ~378nm and ~488nm are corresponded to the $^5$D$_3$→$^7$F$_6$, $^5$D$_4$→$^7$F$_6$,transitions of Tb$^{3+}$, respectively [7, 8].

Fig. 2. PLE spectra of the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors calcined at the condition of 900°C. The PLE spectra were excited at 547 nm

Fig. 3. PL spectra of the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors calcined at the condition of 900°C. The PL spectra were measured under λ$_{ex}$=270 nm. As a function of the Tb$^{3+}$ content, the inset ,normalized to that of the (Gd$_{1.90}$Tb$_{0.10}$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors, is the relative intensity of the 547 nm emission.

Figure 3. PL spectra of the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors calcined at the condition of 900°C. The PL spectra were measured under λ$_{ex}$=270 nm. As a function of the Tb$^{3+}$ content, the inset ,normalized to that of the (Gd$_{1.90}$Tb$_{0.10}$)(WO$_4$)$_3$ phosphors, is the relative intensity of the 547 nm emission.
Fig. 3 shows the PL spectra of the \((\text{Gd}_{2-x}\text{ Tb}_x)(\text{WO}_4)_3\) phosphors calcined at 900°C under 270 nm wavelength excitation. The \((\text{Gd}_{2-x}\text{ Tb}_x)(\text{WO}_4)_3\) phosphors mainly contain four groups of typical Tb\(^{3+}\) emission peaks at ~490 nm (blue), ~547 nm (green, the strongest), ~588 nm (orange-red) and ~621 nm (red), which were correspond to the \(^{5}\text{D}_{4}\rightarrow ^{7}\text{F}_6\), \(^{5}\text{D}_{4}\rightarrow ^{7}\text{F}_5\), \(^{5}\text{D}_{4}\rightarrow ^{7}\text{F}_4\) and \(^{5}\text{D}_{4}\rightarrow ^{7}\text{F}_3\) transitions of Tb\(^{3+}\) marked in the Fig. 3, respectively \cite{9}. Further observation is that the Tb\(^{3+}\) addition does not influence the position and the shape of emission bands, but the intensity varied \cite{11}. The relative intensity of 547 nm emission was shown in Fig. 3 inset. From which it can be seen that the intensity steadily increased with the Tb content increasing up to the 10.0 at\%, and then rapidly decreased owing to concentration quenching. Thus, the optimal Tb\(^{3+}\) content is found to be 10.0 at\% \((x=0.10)\).

![Figure 4. log(I/c) versus log(c) for the \((\text{Gd}_{2-x}\text{ Tb}_x)(\text{WO}_4)_3\) samples calcined at the condition of 900°C](image)

The interaction type of luminescence quenching in phosphors can be obtained via calculating the constant \(s\) through the following given formula\cite{12, 13},

\[
\log(I/c) = (-s/d)\log c + \log f
\]  

(1)

where the \(c\) is the activator concentration, \(I\) is the emission intensity, \(f\) is a constant, \(s\) is the index of electric multipole, and \(d\) is the sample dimension (\(d=3\) for regular sample). The \(s\) values of 6, 8, and 10 in consist with the dipole-quadrupole, dipole-dipole, and quadrupole-quadrupole electric interactions, respectively. Besides, \(s=3\) corresponds to exchange interaction. The relative relationship between \(\log(I/c)\) and \(\log(c)\) at the emission of 547 nm is shown in Fig. 4. The slope \((-s/3)\) was calculated to be -0.81, thus, the \(s\) value of the \(\text{Gd}_2(\text{WO}_4)_3:\text{Tb}^{3+}\) samples is determined to be \(\sim 2.43\) indicating that the concentration quenching is mainly caused by the energy transfer between Tb\(^{3+}\)-Tb\(^{3+}\) \cite{14, 15}.
Figure 5. Fluorescence decay curve of (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 phosphors calcined at 900 ℃ for 2 h in the emission of 547 nm. The inset (a) is the lifetime values as function of Tb3+ content, (b) is the fluorescence decay curve of (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 in the emission of 547 nm at 423 K

Fig. 5 shows the luminescence decay curves of the (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 samples in the emission of 547 nm. The decay curves can be calculated with the following equation:

\[ I = A \exp(-t/\tau_R) + B \]  

(2)

where \( t \) is the decay time, \( I \) is the relative fluorescence intensity, \( \tau_R \) is the fluorescence lifetime. \( A \) and \( B \) are constants [16–18]. The fitting results are \( A=7.97\pm50.20 \) a.u., \( B=-2.67\pm0.85 \) a.u., \( \tau_R=0.84\pm0.006 \) ms. The fluorescence lifetime of the phosphors which are a function of Tb3+ content was shown in Fig. 5 inset (a). With the Tb3+ content increasing from \( x=0.01 \) to \( x=0.15 \), the values of fluorescence lifetime decreased from 0.85 ms to 0.75 ms. The reason for this phenomenon is that the distance between Tb3+ is relatively long when the content of Tb3+ is low, thus, the interaction between luminescent centers can be neglected. However, resonant energy transfer networks can form when the content of Tb3+ is higher, and it can be used as the non-radiative centers of the additional channels to reach the surface. Therefore, the fluorescence lifetime will be shortened. The lifetime of the (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 sample at the used temperature of 423 K was shown in Fig. 5 inset (b). It can be seen that the fitting results are \( A=4.06\pm26.11 \) a.u., \( B=-0.88\pm0.33 \), \( \tau_R=0.82\pm0.005 \) ms, and the lifetime is almost the same as at room temperature. It can be concluded that the fluorescence lifetime is not affected by the used temperature, and the lifetime in the temperature range 298-573 K was similar to be \(-0.80\pm0.05 \) ms.

The CIE chromaticity coordinates of (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 sample for the 574 emission under 270 nm excitation was shown in Fig. 6. The (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 sample is calculated to have the color coordinate \((x, y)\) of \((-0.33, -0.60)\), corresponding to the green colors. The corresponding color temperature can be calculated via the given formulas [19]:

\[ T = -437n^3 + 3601n^2 - 6861n + 5514.31 \]  

(3)

and

\[ n = \left( x - 0.332 \right) / \left( y - 0.1858 \right) \]  

(4)

The color temperature of (Gd1.90Tb0.10)(WO4)3 sample for \((-0.33, -0.60)\) was calculated to be \(-5542 \) K. Meanwhile, all the (Gd2-xTbx)(WO4)3 phosphors has been investigated in present work to have the similar CIE chromaticity coordinate and color temperature of \((0.33\pm0.02, 0.60\pm0.02)\), and \(-5542 \) K, respectively.
4. Conclusion

The (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ (x=0.01-0.15) phosphors have been successfully obtained via the hydrothermal method calcined at 900°C in this work. The phase-pure (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ with needle-like shape and good dispersion can form at 900°C. Under 270 nm UV excitation (4f$^8$→4f$^5$ 5d$^1$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$), the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ phosphors emit the strong green emission at 547 nm (4D$_4$→7F$_5$ transition of Tb$^{3+}$). The appearances of the 8S$_7/2$→6I$_{15/2}$ transition of Gd$^{3+}$ at 270 nm and the W-O charge transfer band transition at ~245 nm wavelength indicate the energy transfer of WO$_4^{2-}$→Dy$^{3+}$ and Gd$^{3+}$→Tb$^{3+}$, respectively. The quenching concentration of (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ samples was found to be ~10% owing to the exchange reaction between Tb$^{3+}$. All the (Gd$_{2-x}$Tb$_x$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ samples have the similar CIE chromaticity coordinates and color temperatures of (~0.3±0.02, ~0.60±0.02), ~5542 K. The fluorescence lifetime of best (Gd$_{1.90}$Tb$_{0.10}$)(WO$_4$)$_2$ sample was calculated to be 0.84±0.006 ms through investigating the fluorescence decay curves, and the lifetime decreased with the Tb$^{3+}$ content increasing, but hardly changes with the increase of used temperature.

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