Magnetic and magnetoelectric excitations in TbMnO$_3$

A. Pimenov, A. Shuvaev, A. Loidl, F. Schrettle, A. A. Mukhin, V.D. Travkin, V.Yu. Ivanov, and A. M. Balbashov

1Experimentelle Physik IV, Universität Würzburg, 97074 Würzburg, Germany
2EP V, Center for Electronic Correlations and Magnetism, University of Augsburg, 86135 Augsburg, Germany
3General Physics Institute of the Russian Acad. of Sciences, 119991 Moscow, Russia
4Moscow Power Engineering Institute, 105835 Moscow, Russia

(Dated: February 25, 2009)

Magnetic and magnetoelectric excitations in the multiferroic TbMnO$_3$ have been investigated at terahertz frequencies. During the last years, materials with magnetoelectric (ME) coupling have attracted much interest especially due to their intriguing physical mechanisms and their potential for applications. ME coupling is especially strong in multiferroics, i.e. materials which are simultaneously ferroelectric and ferromagnetic. The strength of ME effects in multiferroics is due to direct coupling of the magnetic and electric order parameters and partly due to improper character of the ferroelectricity. This coupling allows, for example, switching of electric polarization in the sample in external magnetic fields. One promising class of multiferroics is represented by frustrated magnets in which magnetoelectricity is induced by complex spin arrangements like cycloidal or spiral antiferromagnetic structures.

Given the observation of the static magnetoelectric effects in susceptibilities and polarizations, the existence of the dynamic effects can be expected from the first principles. This follows immediately from the optical response along the c-axis remains purely magnetic in nature. Using different experimental geometries we can clearly separate the electro-active excitations (electromagnons) from the magneto-active modes, i.e. antiferromagnetic resonances (AFMR). Two AFMR resonances were found to coincide with electromagnons. This indicates that both excitations belong to the same mode and the electromagnons can be excited by magnetic ac-field as well. In external magnetic fields and at low temperatures distinct fine structure of the electromagnons appears. In spite of the 90° rotation of the magnetic structure, the electromagnons are observable for electric ac-fields parallel to the a-axis only. Contrary to simple expectations, the response along the c-axis remains purely magnetic in nature.

In addition, inelastic neutron scattering data are available for TbMnO$_3$ and have been investigated at $T=42$ K for TbMnO$_3$ orders antiferromagnetically with the magnetic moments of manganese ions aligned along the b-axis with an incommensurate sinusoidal modulation. Upon cooling a second transition into a cycloidal (spiral) phase occurs at $T_c=28$ K with a slightly different modulation vector. This low temperature phase is ferroelectric with spontaneous polarization parallel to the c-axis. Finally, a phase transition at about 9 K is attributed to the magnetic ordering of the Tb sublattice. This ordering only weakly affects the ferroelectric and dielectric properties of TbMnO$_3$.

In this paper we present detailed investigations of the terahertz properties of TbMnO$_3$ for different experimental geometries. This allowed us to separate magnetic and magnetoelectric contributions in the experimental spectra. The coincidence of the characteristic frequencies for pairs of these excitations indicates that electromagnons can be excited by magnetic ac-field as well. Finally we...
prove the c-axis in TbMnO$_3$ remains electrically silent independent of the orientation of the magnetic cycloid.

Single crystals of TbMnO$_3$ have been grown using the floating-zone method with radiation heating. Samples characterization using X-ray, magnetic and dielectric measurements showed an agreement with the published results [29]. The transmittance experiments at terahertz frequencies ($3 \text{ cm}^{-1} < \nu < 40 \text{ cm}^{-1}$) were carried out in a Mach-Zehnder interferometer arrangement [36, 37] which allows measurements of amplitude and phase shift in a geometry with controlled polarization of the radiation. The absolute values of the complex dielectric permittivity $\varepsilon^* = \varepsilon_1 + i\varepsilon_2$ were determined directly from the measured spectra using the Fresnel optical formulas for the complex transmission coefficient. The experiments in external magnetic fields up to 7 T were performed in a superconducting split-coil magnet with polypropylene windows.

Carrying out transmittance experiment with different experimental geometries and varying the polarization of the incident radiation in most cases allows to separate unambiguously magnetic and dielectric contributions to the measured spectra. However, in some cases both contributions are equally strong [37] and four independent experiments are necessary to extract both, the dielectric permittivity $\varepsilon^* = \varepsilon_1 + i\varepsilon_2$ and the magnetic permeability $\mu^* = \mu_1 + i\mu_2$. In such cases and within a good approximation the complex refractive index $n = \sqrt{\varepsilon^*/\mu^*}$ is the best representation to analyze the observed results.

Figure 1 shows three examples of the experimental transmittance of TbMnO$_3$ for different geometries. Upper and middle panels of Fig. 1 have been obtained in geometries where magnetically excited modes are observed. We assign these modes to antiferromagnetic resonances in TbMnO$_3$. Due to the comparative weakness of these modes, the transmittance is not far from unity even close to the resonance and the Fabry-Pérot oscillations on the sample surfaces are clearly seen. On the contrary, the excitation observed in the lower panel of Fig. 1 reveals much stronger absorption, which is partly close to the sensitivity limit of our spectrometer. As has been discussed previously [29, 30], these modes are excited by the electric field and are termed electromagnons.

As demonstrated in the lower panel of Fig. 1 the electromagnon mode splits into two excitations, which is most clearly seen in the spectra at the temperatures below 4 K. Using direct analysis of the transmission spectra in combination with the temperature scans, the second weaker electromagnon at 18 cm$^{-1}$ can be followed up to $T = 20$ K, i.e. deep into the cycloidal phase. This allowed us to compare the terahertz data with the results by inelastic neutron scattering (INS) [14, 15] where two magnon modes have been observed in the cycloidal phase. In addition to a high frequency excitation seen by both spectroscopies around 20 cm$^{-1}$, another mode has been observed close to 9 cm$^{-1}$. In our low temperature data this second mode can be observed as well.

The frequencies of various excitations in TbMnO$_3$ are

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**FIG. 1:** (color online) Examples of terahertz transmittance spectra of TbMnO$_3$ for different experimental geometries. Upper and middle panels: antiferromagnetic resonance modes with excitation conditions $\tilde{h}||c$ and $\tilde{h}||b$, respectively. Lower panel: transmittance for a geometry $\tilde{c}||a$ with electromagnons at 18 cm$^{-1}$ and 26 cm$^{-1}$. Much lower transmittance in this case is due to stronger intensity of electromagnons compared to AFMR. Symbols - experiment, lines - fits using Lorentzian line shape. The oscillations in the spectra are due to Fabry-Pérot interferences on the sample surfaces. Specific geometry of each transmittance experiment is given in parentheses.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**FIG. 2:** (color online) Temperature dependence of the mode frequencies of various excitations in TbMnO$_3$. Solid symbols: electromagnons which are observed for $\tilde{c}||a$ only. In the sinusoidal phase ($T > 27$ K) the electromagnons frequencies are not well defined and the positions of the maxima in $\varepsilon_2$ are plotted. Stars indicate the results from inelastic neutron scattering experiments [14, 15]. Open symbols: antiferromagnetic resonances with the following excitation conditions: circles $\tilde{h}||b$ and $\tilde{h}||c$, squares $\tilde{h}||b$, triangles $\tilde{h}||a$. Lines are guide to the eye.
summarized in Fig. 2. In this figure two observed electromagnons are indicated by solid circles and squares. In the spin spiral phase the electromagnon energies correspond to the excitation energies of well defined quasi particles. In the collinear sinusoidal phase the electromagnons are seen broad over damped modes[14]. The energies as plotted for \( T > 27 \text{ K} \) correspond to the line width of these modes indicating that the damping strongly increases towards the transitions into the paramagnetic phase.

The frequencies of the observed antiferromagnetic resonances in TbMnO\(_3\) are obtained as open symbols. In a total, four such magnetic modes have been observed in the frequency range of our experiment. Remarkably, both AFMR and electromagnons can still be observed in the paramagnetic phase. This effect has been previously observed for other multiferroics[16] and should be probably attributed to magnetic fluctuations.

One important result in Fig. 2 is the close coincidence of two AFMR modes with electromagnons. In analogy to electromagnons, these two modes are indicated by open circles (high frequency mode, excited by \( h \parallel b \) and \( h \parallel c \)) and open squares (low frequency mode, excited by \( h \parallel b \)). Another AFMR mode at intermediate frequencies which is given by open triangles can be attributed to the phason mode of the magnetic bc-cycloid. This agrees with the excitations conditions \( h \parallel a \) for this mode. The remaining magnetic mode around 5 cm\(^{-1}\) can be excited for \( h \parallel a \). Based on the fact that this mode is observed mainly in the Tb-ordered phase, we attribute this mode to the excitation of the ordered Tb moments.

In Fig. 2 the modes seen with INS technique[14, 15] are indicated by stars. Rough coincidence of both excitations suggests that both spectroscopic techniques probe the same mode. We recall however that the INS frequencies have been obtained at nonzero wave-vector with \( k_0 \simeq 0.28 \). On the contrary, in the optical spectroscopy the relevant wave-vector equals to the wave-vector of the photon and is always close to zero. Therefore, this region of the magnon branch cannot be excited directly and further mechanisms should play a role. In the present case the apparent wave-vector contradiction is resolved due to static modulation of the magnetic structure with the same wave-vector \( k_m = k_0 \simeq 0.28 \). In the presence of a periodic modulation the umklapp processes with \( k_m \) become allowed and the momentum conservation during the absorption of a photon with \( k_{ph} \approx 0 \) can be fulfilled: \( k_{ph} = k_m - k_0 \approx 0 \). There still remain a controversy concerning possible assignment of the INS frequencies to electromagnons or AFMR, which should be resolved in future experiments.

On the basis of the polarization analysis of the spectra in multiferroic manganites the electromagnons have been classified as inhomogeneous spin modes which become electrically active due to ME coupling[14]. Due to magnetic origin of these modes it can be also expected that the same modes will be excited by magnetic ac field as well. This explains the observed coincidence of two electromagnons with the AFMR modes. Full explanation of the observed modes including excitations conditions is still lacking, which is probably due to the complexity of the magnetic structure. Our preliminary theoretical analysis of the spin oscillations in the bc-cycloidal phase shows the existence of spin modes of two different types. Firstly, one expect the existence of the modes which can be excited both by magnetic field \( h \parallel b \), c-axes and by electric field \( e \parallel a \)-axis. In the simple model without magnetic anisotropy within the bc-plane, these modes are twice degenerated and in the real system correspond to the observed pair of high and low frequency magneto-electro-active modes (Fig. 2). Secondly, one phason mode is expected for the oscillations of the antiferromagnetic vector within the bc-plane. Without bc-plane anisotropy the frequency of this mode is zero (Goldstone mode). The phason mode correspond to the AFMR with excitation condition \( h \parallel a \) which is similar to the F-mode[37] in a canted antiferromagnet.

We discuss now the behavior of the electromagnons in TbMnO\(_3\) in external magnetic fields parallel to the crystallographic a- and b-axes. These results are represented in Fig. 3. Slight deviation of the shape of the modes from that published previously[4, 16] is basically due to weak sample dependence of the spectra. We recall that according to the previous experiments, the external fields along the c-axis suppress the electromagnons[9] and induce a canted antiferromagnetic structure[21, 33]. External magnetic field along the a- and b-axes leads to the rotation of the magnetic cycloid from the bc-plane to the ac-plane. Applying magnetic fields \( \mu_0 H > 5 \text{ T} \) along the b-axis allows for complete rotation of the cycloid plane. Along the a-axis fields of more than 10 T are necessary and only a tilting of the cycloid can be achieved.
magnons from simultaneously switch the excitation conditions for the electro-magnetic cycloid from bc-plane to the ac-plane should simultaneously have been determined. However, in our case all observed transition to the ab-cycloid an additional mode appears at 22 cm\(^{-1}\) along the b-axis and in low fields a redistribution of the spectral weight of electromagnons is seen. After the transition to the ab-cycloid an additional mode appears at 22 cm\(^{-1}\). Qualitatively similar complexity of the magnetic modes has been observed recently in neutron scattering experiments and complicated excitation conditions have been determined. However, in our case all observed modes retain the excitation condition \(\vec{e} \parallel \vec{a}\).

From the simple arguments the rotation of the magnetic cycloid from bc-plane to the ac-plane should simultaneously switch the excitation conditions for the electromagnons from \(\vec{e} \parallel \vec{a}\) to \(\vec{e} \parallel \vec{c}\). In order to check this prediction, a series of transmittance experiments for ac-electric fields along the c-axis has been carried out. Typical result of these experiments is shown in Fig. 4. The data are given in the representation \(n + ik = \sqrt{\varepsilon \mu}\) because electric and magnetic contributions are mixed in these experimental geometry. However, the main result can be stated already at this point: All changes detected along the c-axis as function of magnetic field are extremely weak and electromagnons are not observed along the c-axis. Indeed the measured changes in the refractive index at the magnetic transition amount roughly 0.5%. This value should be compared with the dielectric strength of the electromagnons along the a-axis which reaches \(\approx\) 5%. However, even the observed small changes along the c-axis are not due to magnetoelectric contribution but due to shifts of the AFMR frequencies, i.e. are of purely magnetic origin. The changes in the refractive index, shown in Fig. 4 can be well explained using increased intensity of the AFMR mode at \(\sim 18\) cm\(^{-1}\), which is excited by \(\vec{h} \parallel \vec{a}\) in this experimental geometry (Fig. 4 inset). This result is challenging for the interpretation of the electromagnons as spin excitations of spiral structures. In addition to above mentioned two-magnon scenario an explanation on the basis of the DM coupling has been suggested recently\[#38\]. Within this model structural peculiarities of perovskite manganites are responsible for exclusive \(\vec{e} \parallel \vec{a}\) excitation conditions for the electromagnons.

In conclusion, we have carried out terahertz experiments in multiferroic TbMnO\(_3\) in order to study magnetic and magnetoelectric excitations in this compound. Using different experimental geometries it was possible to separate magnetoelectric excitations (electromagnons) from antiferromagnetic resonances. In agreement with the neutron scattering data we observe the splitting of the electromagnon in the cycloidal phase. The frequencies of two AFMR modes coincide with the electromagnon frequencies. This indicates that both excitations correspond to the same mode of the magnetic cycloid and the magnetoelectric excitations can be excited via magnetic as well as via electric fields. In external magnetic fields an increased complexity of the magnetoelectric excitations can be observed. No electromagnon contribution can be detected along the c-axis even after the induced rotation of the magnetic cycloid from bc- to ab-plane. This clearly contradicts simple explanation of the electromagnons based on the magnetic cycloid.

We thank Anna Pimenov for help in magnetic and X-ray measurements. This work has been supported by DFG (PI372, SFB484) and by RFBR (06-02-17514, 09-02-01355).

---

[1] M. Fiebig, J. Phys. D: Appl. Phys. 38, 123 (2005).
[2] Y. Tokura, Science 312, 1481 (2006).
[3] S.-W. Cheong and M. Mostovoy, Nature Mater. 6, 13(2007).
[4] D. Khomskii, J. Magn. Magn. Mater. 306, 1 (2006).
[5] R. Ramesh and N. A. Spaldin, Nature Mater. 6, 21 (2007).
[6] T. Kimura et al., Nature 426, 55 (2003).
[7] T. Goto et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 92, 257201 (2004).
[8] N. Hur et al., Nature 429, 392 (2004).
[9] A. Pimenov et al., Nature Physics 2, 97 (2006).
[10] A. B. Sushkov et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 98, 027202 (2007).
[11] A. Pimenov et al., Phys. Rev. B 77, 014438 (2008).
[12] R. V. Aguilar et al., Phys. Rev. B 76, 060404(R) (2007).
[13] N. Kida et al., Phys. Rev. B 78, 104414 (2008).
[14] D. Senff et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 98, 137206 (2007).
[15] D. Senff et al., J. Phys.: Cond. Matter 20, 434212 (2008).
[16] A. Pimenov et al., J. Phys.: Cond. Matt. 20, 434209 (2008).
[17] V. G. Baryakhtar and I. E. Chupis, Sov. Phys.-Sol. State 11, 2628 (1970).
[18] I. E. Chupis, Low Temp. Phys. 33, 952 (2007).
[19] M. Mostovoy, Phys. Rev. Lett. 96, 067601 (2006).
[20] A. B. Harris, Phys. Rev. B 76, 054447 (2007).
[21] R. de Sousa and J. E. Moore, Phys. Rev. B 77, 012406 (2008).
[22] H. Katsura, N. Nagaosa, and A. V. Balatsky, Phys. Rev. Lett. 95, 057205 (2005).
[23] H. Katsura, A. V. Balatsky, and N. Nagaosa, Phys. Rev. Lett. 98, 027203 (2007).
[24] I. A. Sergienko and E. Dagotto, Phys. Rev. B 73, 094434 (2006).
[25] I. A. Sergienko, C. Şen, and E. Dagotto, Phys. Rev. Lett. 97, 227204 (2006).
[26] A. B. Sushkov et al., J. Phys.: Cond. Matt. 20, 434210 (2008).
[27] Y. Takahashi et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 101, 187201 (2008).
[28] N. Kida et al., J. Phys. Soc. Jpn. 77, 123704 (2008).
[29] T. Kimura et al., Phys. Rev. B 71, 224425 (2005).
[30] S. Quezel et al., Physica B&c 86, 916 (1977).
[31] R. Kajimoto et al., Phys. Rev. B 70, 012401 (2004).
[32] M. Kenzelmann et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 95, 087206 (2005).
[33] D. N. Argyriou et al., Phys. Rev. B 75, 020101 (2007).
[34] J. Stremper et al., Phys. Rev. B 78, 024429 (2008).
[35] D. Senff et al., Phys. Rev. B 77, 174419 (2008).
[36] A. A. Volkov et al., Infrared Phys. 25, 369 (1985); A. Pimenov et al., Phys. Rev. B 72, 035131 (2005).
[37] D. Ivannikov et al., Phys. Rev. B 65, 214422 (2002).
[38] R. V. Aguilar et al., [arXiv:0811.2966] (unpublished).