Effects of Zn\(^{2+}\) and Mn\(^{4+}\) Co-doping in BiFeO\(_3\) Thin Films

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Bi(Fe\(^{0.99}_{0.01}\)Zn\(^{2+}_{0.01}\)Mn\(^{4+}_{x}\))O\(_3\) thin films were deposited on Pt(111)/Ti/SiO\(_2\)/Si(100) substrates by using a pulsed laser deposition method. The effects of Mn\(^{4+}\) content in the BiFeO\(_3\) thin films on their leakage current and their ferroelectric properties were mainly investigated. Bi(Fe\(^{0.96}_{0.04}\)Zn\(^{0.01}_{0.01}\)Mn\(^{0.01}_{x}\))O\(_3\) thin film exhibited the best ferroelectric properties among them. The leakage current density of the film capacitor was 2.0 \times 10^{-5} \text{ A/cm}^2 at 200 kV/cm. The remnant polarization (\(P_r\)) and the coercive electric field (\(E_c\)) of the film capacitor were 83 \text{ μC/cm}^2 and 577 kV/cm at an applied electric field of 695 kV/cm, respectively. This can be explained based on the Fe\(^{2+}\) concentration associated with oxygen vacancies and the grain size caused by doping of Zn\(^{2+}\) and Mn\(^{4+}\) in BiFeO\(_3\) thin films.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Multiferroic materials have simultaneous ferroelectricity and ferromagnetism, which can be potentially utilized for magnetoelectronic devices. BiFeO\(_3\) (BFO) has been extensively studied due to its room-temperature multiferroic properties [1, 2]. However, BFO suffers from a high leakage current because of the existence of Fe\(^{2+}\) ions and oxygen vacancies [3]. Reports indicate that the formation of Fe\(^{2+}\) and the creation of oxygen vacancies can be controlled by doping or substitution at the Fe sites in BFO. Doping of 4+ ions is expected to decrease the creation of oxygen vacancies, and the doping of 2+ ions is expected to prevent the formation of Fe\(^{2+}\) ions [4]. Compared to BFO thin films, reduced leakage current density was observed in Zn\(^{2+}\)-doped BFO thin films and Ti\(^{4+}\)-doped BFO thin films [5–7]. In the case of Mn-doped BFO thin films, the valence state of Mn is important because Mn is a multivalent element. The BFO thin film with Mn\(^{4+}\) doping exhibits a much lower leakage current density than the Mn\(^{2+}\)-doped BFO thin film does, which is related to the concentration of oxygen vacancies [8,9]. On the other hand, oxygen vacancies can form defect complexes with other negatively-charged defects such as Zn\(^{2+}\) in the Fe\(^{3+}\) sites. In Zn\(^{2+}\)-doped BFO thin films, the leakage current has been reported to be reduced with increasing formation of defect complexes between oxygen vacancies and Zn\(^{2+}\) in Fe\(^{3+}\) sites [10]. Thus, an effective way to reduce the leakage current in BFO may be to eliminate oxygen vacancies by the introduction of 4+ ions at the Fe sites and by the formation of defect complexes.

In this study, we prepared Bi(Fe\(^{0.99}_{0.01}\)Zn\(^{2+}_{0.01}\)Mn\(^{4+}_{x}\))O\(_3\) (\(x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05\)) thin films by using a pulsed laser deposition method. The dependences of the leakage current and the ferroelectric properties on the Mn\(^{4+}\) content were investigated, and the Bi(Fe\(^{0.96}_{0.04}\)Zn\(^{0.01}_{0.01}\)Mn\(^{0.01}_{x}\))O\(_3\) thin film was found to show the lowest leakage current density and the largest remnant polarization, which is related to the Fe\(^{2+}\) concentration associated with oxygen vacancies and grain size. This provides some important information about control of the leakage current in doped-BFO thin films.

II. EXPERIMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Bi(Fe\(^{0.99}_{0.01}\)Zn\(^{0.01}_{0.01}\)Mn\(^{4+}_{x}\))O\(_3\) (\(x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05\)) thin films were deposited on Pt(111)/Ti/SiO\(_2\)/Si(100) substrates by using a pulsed laser deposition (PLD) method. PLD targets with 5% Bi excess were prepared by using a traditional solid-state reaction with Bi\(_2\)O\(_3\) (99.999%, Sigma-Aldrich), Fe\(_2\)O\(_3\) (99.999%, Sigma-Aldrich), MnO\(_2\) (99.99%, Sigma-Aldrich), and ZnO (99.9%, Sigma-Aldrich) powders. A KrF excimer laser with a wavelength of 248 nm and a repetition rate of 5 Hz was used to ablate the targets. The laser’s energy density was about 1.7 J/cm\(^2\) per pulse. During the deposition of the films, the substrate temperature was kept at 520 °C under an oxygen partial pressure of 30 mTorr. After deposition, the films were cooled to room temperature under an oxygen partial pressure of 760 Torr.
The crystal structure and the microstructure of the films were investigated by using X-ray diffraction (XRD) equipment (Rigaku, MiniFlex II) and atomic force microscopy (AFM, Park Systems, XE7), respectively. The oxidation states of the Fe ions were measured by using X-ray photoelectric spectroscopy (XPS, VG Scientifics, ESCALAB 250, Korea Basic Science Institute, Busan Center). The ferroelectric hysteresis loops and the leakage current density were measured by using a modified Sawyer-Tower circuit and a semiconductor parameter analyzer (HP 4145B), respectively. For electrical measurements, Pt top electrodes were deposited on the tops of the films by using ion sputtering through a shadow mask.

Figure 1 shows XRD patterns of Bi(Fe$_{0.99-x}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_x$)O$_3$ (x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05) thin films deposited on Pt(111)/Ti/SiO$_2$/Si(100) substrates. The diffraction peaks were indexed based on the pseudocubic structure of BFO. Compared to the crystal structure of BFO thin films [11], no significant changes in the crystal structure were observed because the ionic radii of the Zn$^{2+}$ and the Mn$^{4+}$ ions are close to that of the Fe$^{3+}$ ions [12]. No impurity peaks were observed in the XRD patterns, indicating that the Zn and the Mn ions were well-substituted into BFO. The Bi(Fe$_{0.94}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.05$)O$_3$ (110) reflection was shifted to higher 2θ angle, indicating that the lattice constant of Bi(Fe$_{0.94}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.05$)O$_3$ had become smaller than those of Bi(Fe$_{0.98}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.01$)O$_3$ and Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ because the Bi(Fe$_{0.94}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.05$)O$_3$ thin film has the largest number of Fe$^{2+}$ ions, whose radius is smaller than that of Fe$^{3+}$ ions, as shown in Fig. 3.

AFM images of the surface morphologies of the films are shown in Fig. 2. The shapes of the grains were irregular. Small grains were merged to form larger grains for the Bi(Fe$_{0.95}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.01$)O$_3$ and the Bi(Fe$_{0.94}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.05$)O$_3$ thin films. However, this was not observed in the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film. The average grain size of the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film was approximately 170 nm in diameter, which is larger than those of the Bi(Fe$_{0.98}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.01$)O$_3$ and the Bi(Fe$_{0.94}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.05$)O$_3$ thin films, indicating that the lowest leakage current may be expected in the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film. The thicknesses of Bi(Fe$_{0.99-x}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_x$)O$_3$ (x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05) thin films were 718, 614, and 679 nm, respectively.

Figure 3 shows XPS data for the oxidation states of the films. The binding energy of the 2P$_{3/2}$ state is 709.5 eV for Fe$^{2+}$ and 711.0 eV for Fe$^{3+}$ [4]. The volume fractions of Fe$^{2+}$ and Fe$^{3+}$ were estimated by using the XPSPEAK 4.1 software, as shown in Figs. 3(a)–(c). The fractions of Fe$^{2+}$ were 28%, 25%, and 31% for the Bi(Fe$_{0.99-x}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_x$)O$_3$ (x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05) thin films, respectively, as shown in Fig. 3(d). With increasing Mn$^{4+}$ content, the Fe$^{2+}$ concentration is reported to increase, and the oxygen vacancy concentration to decrease [4]. However, in the case of the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film, the concentration of Fe$^{2+}$ is lower than that of the Bi(Fe$_{0.98}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.01$)O$_3$ thin film. The full width at half maximum of the Fe$^{3+}$ peak of the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film (Fig. 3(b)) is wider than that of the other films. Fe$^{3+}$ ions may have been creating, thus resulting in a reduced Fe$^{2+}$ concentration.

Figure 4 shows the leakage current density as a function of the applied electric field measured at room temperature. The leakage current density of the Bi(Fe$_{0.99-x}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_x$)O$_3$ (x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05) thin-film capacitors were much lower than that of BiFeO$_3$ thin-film capacitors [11]. The values of the leakage current densities of the Bi(Fe$_{0.99-x}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_x$)O$_3$ (x = 0.01, 0.03, 0.05) thin-film capacitors were 1.6 × 10$^{-9}$, 2.0 × 10$^{-5}$, and 3.9 × 10$^{-4}$ A/cm$^2$ at 200 V/cm, respectively. The Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film exhibited the lowest leakage current density among them. The reduced leakage current observed in the Bi(Fe$_{0.98}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film could have originated from the small Fe$^{2+}$ concentration. Thus, fewer oxygen vacancies existed in the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film. Another origin is the large grain size observed in the Bi(Fe$_{0.96}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.03$)O$_3$ thin film, as shown in Fig. 2(b). In the low-electric-field region, a lower leakage current was observed in the Bi(Fe$_{0.98}$Zn$_{0.01}$Mn$_0.01$)O$_3$ thin film than in the