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Variation of electrolytic current when applied voltage during glow discharge

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Abstract:

The dc glow discharge spectrometry is the most essential part of the electrical and spectral emission studies of the molecules, atoms and ions in the interface of solid and liquid. We measured the intensity of radiation emitted by dc glow discharge as a function of discharge current for the different electrolytes along with V-I characteristics. The voltage-ampere characteristics during a glow discharge in the atmospheric pressure gas using an electrolytic solution as the anode and metal electrode like tungsten as a cathode were carried out. Under the study of glow discharges of various elements, a monochromatic light at various wavelengths generated. Few species shows a change in the color of the glow when discharge current increased.

Keywords: interface, radiation intensity, tunneling. glow discharge,

Introduction:

Electrical and spectral characterization of the glow discharge [1-7] of the material helps in studying the chemical composition of the material. The elements in the material may be excited in the plasma [8] produced between liquid and solid interface. The neutral atoms, ionized atoms and molecules are excited and they emit characteristic spectrum and hence atomic, ionic or molecular species may be identified. Spectral study of the glow discharge [3,4,7,9] of the material helps in studying the chemical composition of the material. The solid liquid junction is formed when current is passed through the junction; a plasma film is generated along the interfaces between solid and liquid. The plasma pressure is very near to the atmospheric pressure [10,11,12]. (The plasma parameters in DC glow discharge may be generated by a current source [13].) The method is very low cost and quick results may be obtained and therefore has wide applications.

When electric discharge is passed to a conducting solution from an electrode, which is placed in the gas space above the liquid surface, reactions take place in the liquid phase and the process is referred to as "Glow Discharge Electrolysis (GDE)". The dc glow discharge continues to be the subject of spectroscopic research [15] and analytical method development. Glow discharges [14] are used for a variety of technological, physical and analytical applications, ranging from plasma etching and deposition systems in the micro-electronics industry, to lasers or even plasma monitors. Traditionally [14] dc-glow discharge optical emission spectroscopy is mainly applied in the materials sciences where it is used for bulk and surface analysis, pellets containing the adsorbed liquid and direct analysis of the liquid samples by use of adequate sample introduction techniques. Liquids can be analyzed directly at atmospheric pressures, when applying the atmospheric electrolyte cathode glow discharge cell approach with detection by emission spectroscopy as described by Cserfalvi and Mezei [3].

Material and Methods:

The experimental arrangement used for the investigation of dc glow discharge is simple and. It is inexpensive arrangement and it is very much cost effective. It consists of tungsten electrode of length 40 mm and diameter 3mm fused in glass capillary tube and suspended axially in a hollow slotted stainless steel cylinder, of length 6 cm and internal diameter 2.54 cm. The stainless steel cylinder served as another electrode i.e. anode in the glow discharge. The suspended end of tungsten rod was carefully rounded. The tungsten electrode can be used as cathode by connecting it to the dc power supply of 700 V capacity having 1.5 A current capacity. In this arrangement the hallow cylinder was dipped in a electrolytic aqueous solution taken in a glass beaker. The depth of immersion of the tungsten electrode in electrolyte solution could be adjusted with the help of micrometer adjustable stand. By using this arrangement the tip of tungsten electrode could be just brought in touch with the upper surface of the solution or the distance between the solution surface and the electrode may be adjusted. In this way the solution itself acts as another electrode.

The different 28 electrolytic solutions have been taken for investigation using the glow discharge system. With the help of the above-mentioned experimental arrangement the following properties may be studied.

Results and Discussions:

Variation of electrolytic current with the applied dc-voltage during glow discharge in atmospheric pressure gas using 28 electrolytic solutions as the anode and cathode were carried out. The colors emitted on the glow are observed and listed in table 1. As an example we consider the electrolytic aqueous solution of 0.5N $Cd(NO_3)_2.4H_2O$ as the anode, the electrolytic process leading to a luminescent glow is best depicted by the standard voltage-current curve as shown in figure 1. The curve may be divided in to several regions and its behavior may be studied.

In the region AB the curve is almost linear, the Ohms law is satisfied and conventional electrolysis found with tiny bubbles of gas around both material electrodes-tungsten electrode and stainless steel electrode. At the voltage corresponding to point B in curve, a smooth evolution of gas bubbles is disturbed and layer of steam is seen at the tungsten cathode. In the region between B and C, the pointer of voltmeter and ammeter widely fluctuates. In this region the characteristics like current passing through the electrode and voltage applied found as unstable.

The behavior of region BC, CD and DE can be explained as follows. Because of increase in the applied dc voltage, the rate of gas evolution is increased with the formation of large size gas bubbles at a fast rate. This decreases the rate of migration of the ions and charge transfer process at the electrodes. When voltage is further increased more fluctuations are obtained in both voltage and current readings with fall in current. This unstable decreased current is shown by line BC. In the neighborhood of point C it is found that fluctuation rate decreases and now hissing sound occurs.

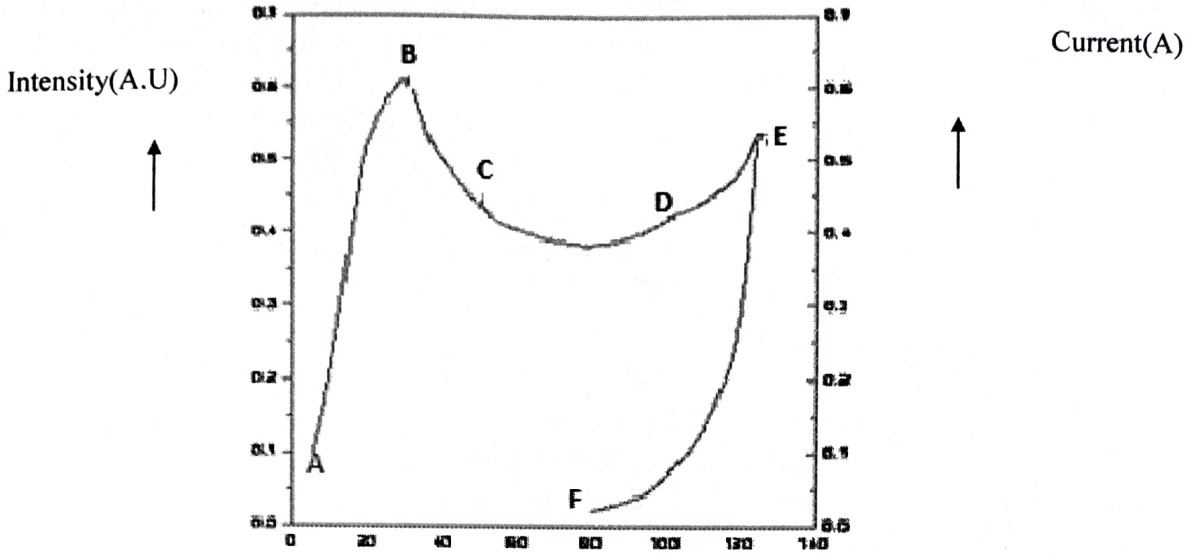

Fig 1: V-I Characteristics of 0.5 Electrolytic solution of cd(NO3) $2.4H_2$ 0

When the applied dc voltage reaches to the point C, there is intermittent sparking. The formation of gas bubbles around the tungsten electrode has now stopped. After increasing the applied dc-voltage to a still higher value the formation of movable thin vapor film around the tungsten cathode takes place, which at times produces the vortex motion and visible glow spark of greenish-blue color is found in the gap between cathode and solution phase.

Sr. No	Electrolytic Solution	Colour of glow when solution used as	
		Anode	Cathode
1	0.5N NaOH	Yellow	Yellow
2	0.5N KOH	Lavender	Lavender
3	0.25 N $LiNO_3$	Reddish	Reddish
4	0.1N $Pb(NO_3)2$	Bluish	Bluish
5	0.5N $MgSO_4$	Green	Orange
6	0.5N $CuCl_2.2H_2O$	Green	White
7	0.05N $AgNO_3$	Pale Green	Yellow
8	0.5N NaCl	Yellow	Yellow
9	0.5N KNO_3	Lavendor	Lavender
10	0.5N $CaCl_2$	Orange	Pink

Table 1: Colour of Discharge Glow

Due to vortex motion, electrolyte periodically touches to the tungsten cathode surface. This produces local heating at the tungsten cathode surface and visible glow spark of bluish-green color. Due to the local heating process there produces the vapor jet and nearby liquid molecules tried to take its place. The region CD of V- I characteristics shows this situation. Thus the region B to C represents the negative slope as seen in the curve. When the electrolyte current decreases to the corresponding point D, the violent gas evolution stops and slope of the curve changes sign from negative to positive. After the point D, with the applied dc voltages the

current starts increasing and thereby producing a stable superheated insulating layer around the cathode (tungsten electrode). At this situation a continuous bluish-green glow is developed at the cathode surface. For a further increase in applied dc voltage, the intensity of the glow increases continuously with the increase in current also as shown in figure 1. Thus the region beyond D i.e. along DE appears to be true glow discharge. This happens due to the discharge of accumulated ions through the insulating layer. This situation produces intense glow of bluish-green color and it sometimes can be pictured as corona discharge. Thus under the observation, it is quite obvious that the superheated insulating layer around the cathode is the governing factor responsible for the bluish-green glow.

Conclusion:

DC Glow discharge using a solution as the anode and the metallic electrode as the cathode for the investigation of phenomenon of spectrometry shows that, a sensitive and inexpensive technique and very much cost for the elemental analysis of electrolytic solutions.

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