

Emission spectroscopy extra data exercise

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The code has been made by Brynjar Mæhlum and Sivert Dagenborg helped with formatting to Jupyterlabs. The data has been collected within TFY4255-H18, Lab3.

Aim: Learn principles and practical aspects of (emission) spectroscopy data processing

The composition of a material can be deduced by analyzing the emission spectrum in the X-ray regime when the material is exposed to gamma-, X-ray radiation or a beam of electrons. Very practical handheld devices can be made based on the principles of characteristic X-ray spectroscopy [eg 1] and characteristic X-ray detectors can be found on the smallest scanning electron microscopes (SEM), the most advanced transmission electron microscopes, homelab X-ray set-ups as well as synchrotron beam lines and Mars [2]. Although a fast and common analytical technique, it could be asked how trustworthy qualitative spectrum analysis is as the method is prone to potential artifacts. For quantitative composition analysis the accuracy of the final result, the precision and the minimal detectable quantity should be determined, certainly when the data processing is hidden in blackbox software.

In this exercise an unknown material is characterized based on characteristic X-ray spectra taken in different setups (SEM, TEM and a X-ray set-up) and given as text files. To calibrate the set-ups, spectra of known materials are given. See Table 1 for details. The data analysis is using a python script given [3]. Line energies can be found in literature, for example [4]. The “unknown” should be determined, the principles of qualitative and to some degree quantitative analysis, artefacts and the effects of different probes and probe-sample-detector geometries should be clear. Suggestions to improve the analysis, including the code, are welcome.

Table 1: Available data sets*

Name	Details
SEM_known_Cu.msa	Bulk Cu, collected on FEI Apreo and Oxford instruments 80 mm ² SDD at 15 kV.
SEM_unknown.msa	0.3 mm thick unknown, collected as known Cu spectra.
TEM_known_NiO_on_Mo.emsa	NiO calibration specimen [6], collected at Jeol 2100 at 200 kV using a Oxford Instrument 80 mm ² SDD
TEM_unknown.msa	Unknown material crushed and deposited on a 300 mesh Cu TEM grid with a holey 20 nm C-support. Data collected as known NiO spectra.
XRF_known_Cu.msa	Bulk Cu, Mo _K X-ray source, AmpTek® energy dispersive detector.
XRF_unknown.msa	0.3 mm thick unknown Mo _K X-ray source, AmpTek® energy dispersive detector.

(*: The folder Lab3_data contains additional data sets)

Task 1: SEM-EDS

Load the SEM_Cu data. Calibrate (channel width and offset) the spectrum assuming the peaks in the spectrum are Cu_L and Cu_K. Their line energies can be found elsewhere [4, Table 1.2 in [5]]. Use additional peaks to verify your calibration is correct. Plot and identify the peaks present in the data set SEM_unknown using [4]. What could be the unknown sample? Save the calibrated spectra and obtained numbers for the different fitted peaks.

Questions/notes:

- Note the distance and ratios between alpha and beta peaks for the K and L lines.
- Compare the peak widths and note down the ratio between Cu_K and _L peaks.
- What would be the smallest detectable distance between two adjacent lines be in present set-up, the so-called “energy resolution”?
- In the spectra of the unknown material note stray (spurious) peaks and other artifacts. What could be the origin for the spurious peaks?
- Label all peaks with a peak-to-background ratio > 3 . What is the noise level?
- Sketch the spectrum if instead of 15 kV, 5 or 30 kV an electron beam was used.

Task 2: TEM-EDS

Load and plot the data (counts vs channels) for TEM_NiO on Mo. To calibrate the channels assume the two highest peaks are Ni_L and Ni_K. Details on this sample can be found in [6]. Use a third peak to verify your calibration is correct. Plot and identify the peaks present in the data set TEM_unknown using [4]. Based on the TEM-EDS, what could the unknown be? Save the calibrated spectra and obtained numbers for the different peaks.

Questions/notes:

- Note the distance and ratios between alpha and beta peaks for the K and L lines.
- Compare the peak widths and note down the ratio between Ni_K and _L peaks.
- In the spectra of the unknown note potential stray (spurious) peaks and other artifacts. What could be the origin for the spurious peaks?
- What would be the smallest detectable distance between two adjacent lines be in present set-up, the so-called “energy resolution”?
- Compare the calibrated spectra of the unknown recorded in SEM and TEM. What are the causes for the differences such as background, peak ratios (K/L, alpha/beta) and missing/additional peaks?

Task 3: XRF

Load and calibrate the XRF_Cu reference data set formed by illuminating the sample with Mo_K_alpha radiation. Check if the found dispersion and offset are correct using additional peak(s) or calibration spectra. Plot and identify the peaks present in the data set XRF_unknown using [4]. Based on the XRF, what could the unknown be? Save the calibrated spectra and obtained numbers for the different peaks.

Questions/notes:

- Compare the peak widths and note down the ratio between Cu_K peaks.
- In the spectra of the unknown note stray (spurious) peaks and other artifacts. What could be the origin for the spurious peaks?
- Check the Gaussian fitting. Why are for XRF data the fits around 18 keV not as well as for other peaks and the electron beam data?
- Compare the calibrated spectra of the unknown recorded by XRF to those from SEM and TEM. What are the causes for the differences such as background, peak ratios (K/L, alpha/beta) and missing/additional peaks?
- Could there be a reason why XRF-spectrum has poor gain for low energy range?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of the three used set-ups, for example regarding energy resolution and operation conditions?

Summary and further thoughts:

Through this exercise you should have seen principles from qualitative spectroscopy, from a data array collected in a set-up, calibration, recognizing artefacts in the spectra, to deducing structural information. Specifically, the effects of type probe, probe energy and the (probe)-specimen-(detector) set-up geometry. Spectra have theoretical aspects (models, well-defined line energies) and effects of experimental contributions (often empirically determined). In (blackbox) commercial packages the calibration and labelling is done for the users, but they should be able to verify suggested results. Open-data as for example available for [2] should in principle be verifiable.

To go beyond qualitative analysis is analyzing the spectra in a quantitative way based on the counts (ie. area under the peaks). One could for the three given spectra of the unknown material, after excluding strays and background, compare the intensity (area) of the main components (see section 5.7 in [5]). The set-up parameters (energy, type of probe, geometry and detecting characteristics) will affect the sensitivity factor between the intensity ratio deduced from the spectra and the (true) composition. In this example, the unknown material has a composition ratio of 1 between the two main constituents). Note there is a finite accuracy and precision, independent if analysis done by user or in blackbox software. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of spectra can be applied to collect data in a (n x m) array to obtain qualitative or quantitative maps for the scanned area.

References

- [1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZF17TwmAwE> (verified 221008)
- [2] K. A. Farley et al., *Science* 377, eabo2196 (2022) DOI: 10.1126/science.abo2196
- [3] Jupyterhub (login required): <https://tinyurl.com/spectroscopy-exercise>
or Download notebook, files and data: <https://github.com/HelvoortTon/spectroscopy-exercise>
(note: have Plotly in your environment or rewrite for your back-end)
- [4] A. C. Thompson, et.al., X-Ray Data Booklet (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory University of California 2001). <http://web.mit.edu/8.13/www/JLExperiments/31/XBLx-raydatabook.pdf> (verified 221008).
- [5] B. Fultz and J. Howe, Transmission electron microscopy and diffractor of materials, 4th edition, Springer, 2013.
- [6] https://www.tedpella.com/technote_html/650%20TN.pdf (verified 231011)