

# Electron spin resonance and nuclear magnetic resonance

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**Abstract.** Electron spin resonance (ESR) and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) are two important spectroscopic techniques for studying properties of materials containing particles or atoms with non-zero magnetic moments. In this experiment, we studied ESR on a sample of Diphenyl-Picryl-Hydrazil (DPPH), a paramagnetic organic molecule with an unpaired  $e^-$ , by measuring the resonant frequency as a function of externally applied magnetic field in order to determine the sample's  $g$ -factor, which was found to be  $g_{\text{DPPH}} = 2.02 \pm 0.01$ . Further, we investigated the magnetic properties of  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{19}\text{F}$  nuclei in the following substances: glycerine and polystyrene (both of which contain hydrogen), PTFE (which contains fluorine), and polythene, whose composition we wanted to learn about. The experimentally measured  $g$ -factors were  $g_{\text{glycerine}} = 5.54 \pm 0.03$ ,  $g_{\text{polystyrene}} = 5.68 \pm 0.01$  and  $g_{\text{PTFE}} = 5.34 \pm 0.01$ . Comparison with the results obtained for polythene lead us to postulate the presence of hydrogen in our polythene sample, as confirmed by its chemical formula.

## 1. Introduction

Electron spin resonance (ESR), also referred to as electron paramagnetic resonance spectroscopy (EPRS), is an important method for studying paramagnetic chemical substances in which the electron magnetic moments don't cancel, such as organic and inorganic free radicals or transition-metal ion complexes. It can provide detailed information relating to the chemical composition and structure of materials, and therefore finds innumerable applications in biology, chemistry, materials science, medicine and pharmacology, to name just a few.

Similarly, nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) exploits the fact that some nuclei possess a non-zero overall nuclear spin, and hence a magnetic moment, to study the properties of materials containing such nuclei. NMR has widespread use and applications, notably in medical imaging — it underlies MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

## 2. ESR

In the first part of the experiment we studied ESR on a sample of Diphenyl-Picryl-Hydrazil (DPPH), which is a paramagnetic organic molecule with a single unpaired  $e^-$ . The orbital angular momentum of the electron is essentially zero, and hence the molecule's magnetic moment is solely due to the electron's spin angular momentum. This makes it particularly suitable for ESR experiments.

### 2.1. Theory

In the absence of any external magnetic fields (i.e. for a free  $e^-$ ), the two possible spin states (“spin up” and “spin down”) are degenerate, i.e. they have the same energy.

However, energy splitting of the two states occurs when the  $e^-$  is placed in an external magnetic field. Indeed, the  $e^-$ 's spin gives rise to a magnetic moment  $\boldsymbol{\mu}_S$  which interacts with the applied field, and possesses a different energy depending on its spatial orientation. A bound  $e^-$  in a material, in general, has additionally an orbital angular momentum  $\mathbf{L}$  which also contributes to the total magnetic moment. However, in many compounds, including DPPH, the orbital angular momentum is not significant and only the spin needs to be considered for the purposes of ESR.

According to quantum mechanics, only two orientations of the spin are possible. The magnitude  $S$  of the spin vector  $\mathbf{S}$  and its two allowed  $z$ -components  $S_z$ , where the  $z$ -axis is defined to lie along the field direction, are respectively given by

$$\begin{aligned} S &= |\mathbf{S}| = \sqrt{s(s+1)}\hbar = \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}\hbar, \quad \text{and} \\ S_z &= m_s\hbar. \end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

where  $s = \frac{1}{2}$  is the spin quantum number,  $m_s = \pm\frac{1}{2}$  is the secondary spin quantum number, and  $\hbar$  is the reduced Planck's constant.

The associated magnetic moment is

$$\boldsymbol{\mu}_S = -g\frac{\mu_B}{\hbar}\mathbf{S} \tag{2.2}$$

where  $g$  is the Landé splitting factor, or  $g$ -factor, which for a free electron has the value  $g_e = 2.002319$ , and  $\mu_B = 9.274 \times 10^{-24} \text{ J T}^{-1}$  is the Bohr magneton. Note that the magnetic moment points in the opposite direction as the spin vector  $\mathbf{S}$  due to the electron's negative charge.

A magnetic moment in a magnetic field  $\mathbf{B}$  has potential energy

$$\begin{aligned} E &= -\boldsymbol{\mu}_S \cdot \mathbf{B} \\ &= -(-g\frac{\mu_B}{\hbar}\mathbf{S}) \cdot \mathbf{B} \quad \text{substituting in from (2.2),} \\ &= g\frac{\mu_B}{\hbar}S_z|\mathbf{B}| \quad \text{using (2.1),} \\ &= g\mu_B m_s B, \end{aligned} \tag{2.3}$$

where  $B$  denotes the magnitude of the magnetic field (so that  $\mathbf{B} = B\mathbf{e}_z$ , where  $\mathbf{e}_z$  is the unit vector in the  $z$ -direction).

Equation (2.3) shows that the two orientations no longer have the same energy — the one whose magnetic moment is aligned with the field (or equivalently whose spin points in the direction opposite to the field, i.e. having  $m_s = -\frac{1}{2}$ ) has a lower potential energy than the one whose magnetic moment is anti-parallel to the field —, as depicted in figure 1. The energy difference between the two levels is

$$\Delta E = g\mu_B B. \tag{2.4}$$

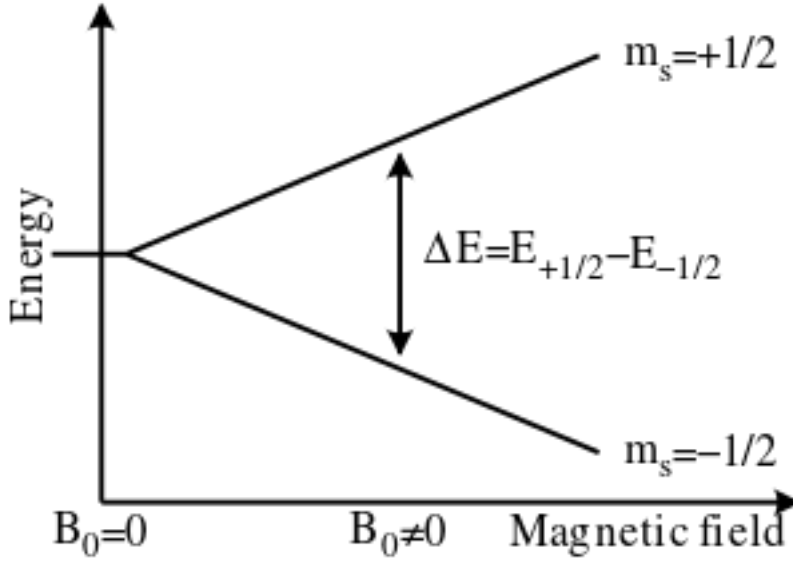
In thermal equilibrium, the spins are distributed according to the Boltzmann distribution

$$\frac{N_{+\frac{1}{2}}}{N_{-\frac{1}{2}}} = \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta E}{k_B T}\right),$$

where  $k_B$  is the Boltzmann's constant, and  $N_{\pm\frac{1}{2}}$  are the number of spins in the higher and lower states respectively.

If the conditions are such that there are more spins in the lower state than the upper state, transitions can be induced by supplying energy to the sample, e.g. by irradiating it with electromagnetic (EM) radiation with the right frequency  $\nu$ . The energy of an EM wave is given by  $E = h\nu$ , where  $h$  is Planck's constant, so the condition for resonance is

$$h\nu = g\mu_B B. \quad (2.5)$$



**Figure 1.** Energy splitting of the two spin states of an  $e^-$  placed in an external magnetic field  $B_0$ .

In a real material, an electron “feels” not only the externally applied field, but also the magnetic fields produced by any surrounding magnetic nuclei and/or other electrons, leading to further energy splitting. The effect of the surroundings can be interpreted as a shift in the  $g$ -value in equation (2.2) compared to the free-electron value. The chemical environment of the  $e^-$  also has an effect on the shape of the resonance signal and its line width, amongst other things. Thus, ESR can provide a lot of information on the chemical composition and structure of materials. In this experiment, we measured the  $g$ -value of DPPH.

## 2.2. Experimental method

The DPPH sample was placed in a uniform magnetic field generated by two parallel vertically positioned Helmholtz coils (HCs) connected to a DC current supply. The sample was inserted into another coil which was connected to an RF circuit oscillating at an adjustable frequency  $\nu$ . This coil provided the energy  $h\nu$  needed to flip the  $e^-$ s spins. The magnetic field produced by the HCs was varied, by changing the current, to identify when the resonance condition (2.5) was met for a particular (fixed) frequency. The measurement was then repeated for a number of different frequencies. The resonance was detected thanks to a measurable voltage change in the RF circuit, observed using an oscilloscope, that occurred due to the change of the RF coil's permeability when the sample was absorbing energy. (The magnetic field induced in the RF coil was perpendicular to the field of the HCs and was neglected for the purposes of the results analysis).

For an  $e^-$  with only two possible spin states, it would be necessary to match the RF frequency and the current in the HCs with considerable accuracy to obtain resonance. Also, once the

population of the spin states has been inverted, the sample can no longer absorb more energy before enough  $e^-$ s have returned to the lower state, so they need to be excited at a rate slower than the relaxation time (the time needed for the  $e^-$ s to de-excite and return to thermal equilibrium via spin-spin and spin-lattice interactions). The solution to both problems was to superimpose a (50Hz) modulation (AC) current on the DC component going into the HCs, resulting in a sinusoidally-varying modulation magnetic field. The total field  $\mathbf{B}_{total}$  was then the superposition of the two, and thus oscillated around a central value  $B_0$ . If the resonance condition (2.5) was satisfied for some value of  $\mathbf{B}_{total}$  during this oscillation, a resonance signal was observed, twice during the cycle at symmetric positions (provided that the phase lag between the modulation signal and the sample response signal was correctly accounted for). By adjusting the DC current, it was possible to make the resonance occur precisely at the point when the modulation field dropped to zero and the field was equal simply to  $B_0$ , i.e. it was the  $B_0$  that satisfying (2.5) for the given frequency.

The value of  $B_0$  could be deduced from the DC current  $I_0$  in the coils — we created a calibration curve of  $B_0$  as a function of  $I_0$  using a Hall probe sensor to measure the magnetic field in the centre of the coil set-up.

## *2.3. Results*

### *2.3.1. Helmholtz coils calibration*

### *2.3.2. Measurement of the g-factor of DPPH*

## *2.4. Analysis*

## *2.5. Discussion*

# **3. NMR**

## *3.1. Theory*

## *3.2. Experimental method*

## *3.3. Results*

### *3.3.1. Electromagnet calibration*

### *3.3.2. Measurement of the g-factors*

## *3.4. Analysis*

## *3.5. Discussion*

# **4. Conclusion**

# **References**

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