Entropy Change during Martensitic Transformation in Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ Metamagnetic Shape Memory Alloys

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1. Introduction

Since the discovery of magnetostructural transition [1] and the metamagnetic shape memory effect [2] in NiMn-based Heusler alloys, numerous research studies have been performed since the alloys are hopeful candidates for application as magnetic actuators [3] and magnetocaloric refrigerants [4]. Currently developed metamagnetic shape memory alloys include Ni-(Co)-Mn-In [2,5], Ni-Co-Mn-Sn...
[6], Ni-Co-Mn-Ga [7] and Ni-Co-Mn-Al [8] systems. Among these alloy systems, because of the low cost, several groups have also focused on the Ni-Co-Mn-Al system. To develop magnetocaloric materials, attempts have been made to evaluate isothermal entropy change [9] as well as adiabatic temperature change [10]. Other groups have also investigated the properties of sputtered film [11] and melt-spun ribbon samples [12].

In addition to the application aspect, the Ni-Co-Mn-Al alloys also show interesting fundamental physical phenomena similar to those of other NiMn-based alloys. Like Ni-(Co)-Mn-In alloys [13,14], the thermal transformation arrest (TTA) phenomenon has been observed for Ni$_{50}$Co$_{5}$Mn$_{31}$Al$_{19}$ (Co$_{5}$Al$_{19}$; we adopt the denotation of Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_{x}$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_{y}$ as Co$_{x}$Al$_{y}$ in this article) [15] and Co$_{10}$Al$_{17}$ [16] alloys. The temperature dependence of entropy change during martensitic transformation shows an abrupt decrease above the TTA temperature and becomes almost zero below it [15]. On the other hand, the kinetic behaviors, enlargement of magnetic-field hysteresis has also been observed for Co$_{5}$Al$_{19}$ [15] and Co$_{10}$Al$_{17}$ [16], as has also been observed for Ni-(Co)-Mn-In [5,14] alloys. For Ni-Co-Mn-Sb and Ni-Co-Mn-In alloys, the temperature hysteresis during martensitic transformation [17] as well as the magnetic field hysteresis [18,19] during magnetic field-induced transition obviously vary with different sweeping rates of temperature and magnetic field. For Co$_{5}$Al$_{19}$, however, an almost equivalent hysteresis has been found by comparison between the results under a pulsed magnetic field and a steady magnetic field [15].

For both the application and fundamental aspects, the entropy change during martensitic transformation is of great importance. Some systematic work has been performed on Ni-Mn-In-X alloys [5,14,20–23], Ni-Mn-Sn-X alloys [22,24] and Ni-Mn-Ga-X alloys [25,26]. However, for the Ni-Co-Mn-Al system, there are currently only indirect calculations for a single alloy [15] and estimations deduced from the Maxwell equation [9]. Very recently, we reported the pseudo-binary magnetic phase diagram of the Co$_{x}$Al$_{y}$ alloys [16]. This phase diagram is shown in Figure 1, where the Al content dependence of martensitic transformation starting temperature $T_{M_s}$ and the Curie temperature of the parent phase $T_{C_P}$ are shown. Based on these alloys reported in the phase diagram, a systematical investigation on the transformation entropy change $\Delta S$ for Co$_{x}$Al$_{y}$ alloys by direct measurement was performed.
Figure 1. The magnetic phase diagram for Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ (Co$_x$Al$_y$) alloys reported by X. Xu et al. [16] is shown. The martensitic transformation starting temperature $T_{M_s}$ and the Curie temperature of the parent phase $T_{C_P}$ are shown. $T_{M_s}$ and $T_{C_P}$ reported by R. Kainuma et al. [27], A. Okubo et al. [28] and Y. Kim et al. [9] are also plotted. $T_A$ represents for the thermal transformation arrest (TTA) temperature.

2. Experimental Methods

Refer to Ref. [16] for details of the preparation of the Co$_x$Al$_y$ samples. Specific heat from around 150 up to 663 K was measured by the heat flow method using a commercial Netzsch DSC 204 F1 Phoenix® equipped with a $\mu$ sensor, the measurements being calibrated using a standard sapphire sample according to DIN 51007. Some of the samples, which are listed in Table 1 in Ref. [16], were subjected to composition measurements by EPMA. Since their compositions were very close to the nominal compositions, the nominal compositions were directly used in this research for simplicity.

Figure 2. For Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ (Co$_x$Al$_y$) alloys without martensitic transformation behavior, only the Curie temperatures of the parent phase are observed during the specific heat measurements and are indicated by $T_{C_P}$. The values of $T_{C_P}$ are taken from Ref. [16].
3. Experimental Results

Figure 2 shows the specific heat measurements for Co$_x$Al$_y$ alloys without martensitic transformation. A strong bending of the baseline was observed for Co$_{5}$Al$_{21}$ while typical lambda-shaped peaks were observed for Co$_{10}$Al$_{19}$ and Co$_{15}$Al$_{17}$. According to our previous report [16], these peaks correspond to the Curie temperature of the parent phase. The Curie temperatures, indicated by $T_{C_P}$ in the figure, are taken from Ref. [16]. It can be seen that, with increasing Co content, not only the value of $T_{C_P}$, but also the specific heat around the $T_{C_P}$ increases. It has been reported that for the Co$_x$Al$_{25}$ alloys, the magnetic moment increases with increasing Co content [28]. Therefore, a higher Co content results in a larger lambda-shaped peak of the specific heat around $T_{C_P}$, which is contributed to by the strong spin fluctuation [29] near and above the $T_{C_P}$.

Figure 3. For Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ (Co$_x$Al$_y$) alloys, the results of specific heat obtained by DSC measurements are shown. Peak temperature $T_P$ of the heating process for the martensitic transformation is determined for each sample. Transformation enthalpy change $\Delta H$ and the Curie temperature of the parent phase $T_{C_P}$ are also indicated. Since the $T_{C_P}$ slightly varies with different Al content, the $T_{C_P}$ in the figures is shown as a temperature range.

Figure 3(a) shows the specific heat curves for Co$_5$Al$_y$ alloys. Only the heating process was measured, in order to avoid the complexity of $B2 \rightarrow L2_1$ diffusion which occurs at relatively high temperatures.
For \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{18.5} \) to \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{20} \), first-order transformations, which correspond to the reverse martensitic transformation, were detected. Reverse martensitic transformation temperature is defined as the peak temperature shown as \( T_P \), since this is the temperature with the largest heat absorption. Transformation enthalpy change \( \Delta H \) was obtained by calculating the area of the peaks, as shown by the dashed lines in the figure. Generally, straight lines connecting both the baselines were used to determine the area. For \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{19} \), however, since the baseline obviously bends around \( T_P \) and the transformation interval, \( i.e. \), the difference between the starting and finishing temperatures is very large, a cubic polynomial fitting rather than a linear one was used to determine the baseline. Hence the transformation entropy change \( \Delta S \) can be calculated by

\[
\Delta S = \frac{\Delta H}{T_P}.
\]

The obtained \( T_P, \Delta H \) and \( \Delta S \) are listed in Table 1. For \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{20} \), since the TTA phenomenon has been reported even under zero magnetic field \([15]\), it was impossible to obtain a full martensitic transformation during the current DSC measurement. Thus, its \( \Delta H \) and \( \Delta S \) are shown with parentheses in Table 1, indicating an underestimation. It can be seen that the \( \Delta H \) drastically decreases with decreasing \( T_P \). Here, note that for the specific heat data shown in Figure 3, at temperatures away from the martensitic transformation, the values show the specific heat of the sample, whereas for the temperature range near the martensitic transformation, the amount of latent heat is added due to the nature of the heat flow method. According to DIN 51007, the absolute values of the specific heat were calculated based on the assumption that the system backgrounds during each measurement are identical. However, a small change of the system background may exist and this may correspond to a small amount of error of several \( J \cdot \text{mol}^{-1} \cdot \text{K}^{-1} \), shown as \( C_{p,\text{err}} \) in Figure 3(a). (Also note that Figure 3(a) is an enlarged view compared to the scales in Figures 3(b) and 3(c)) However, the error \( C_{p,\text{err}} \) hardly affects on the determination of \( \Delta S \). As shown in Figure 3(a), bending of the baseline instead of the typical lambda-shaped peak was observed for \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{20} \) and \( \text{Co}_5\text{Al}_{21} \) at the \( T_{C_P} \). The reported \( T_{C_P} \)s \([16]\) are indicated in the figure.

Figure 3(b) shows the specific heat curves for \( \text{Co}_{10}\text{Al}_y \). Results similar to those in Figure 3(a) were obtained. However, for \( \text{Co}_{10}\text{Al}_y \), magnetic transition of the parent phase was clearly observed, which is indicated in the figure. For \( \text{Co}_{10}\text{Al}_{17.5} \), \( \Delta H \) and \( \Delta S \) were likely underestimated due to the TTA phenomenon \([16]\).

For \( \text{Co}_{15}\text{Al}_y \), Figure 3(c) shows the results of specific heat measurements. For the series of \( \text{Co}_{15}\text{Al}_y \), the samples have very close compositions; therefore, it is quite apparent that the \( \Delta H \) gradually decreases with decreasing \( T_P \).
Table 1. Transformation peak temperature ($T_p$), enthalpy change ($\Delta H$) and entropy change ($\Delta S$) determined by DSC are listed for the reverse martensitic transformations of Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ (Co$_x$Al$_y$). $\Delta H$ was calculated from the area shown in Figure 3. Numbers with parentheses suggest possible underestimations. Here the unit of molar mass is taken to be molar atoms, rather than molar molecules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal</th>
<th>$T_p$ /K</th>
<th>$\Delta H$ /kJ · mol$^{-1}$</th>
<th>$\Delta S$ /J · mol$^{-1}$K$^{-1}$</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Co$<em>5$Al$</em>{18.5}$</td>
<td>309.7</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>5$Al$</em>{19}$</td>
<td>260.0</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>1.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co$<em>5$Al$</em>{20}$</td>
<td>212.8</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.482)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>5$Al$</em>{21}$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{14}$</td>
<td>517.0</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{16}$</td>
<td>430.2</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{17}$</td>
<td>341.6</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{17.5}$</td>
<td>344.8</td>
<td>(0.0835)</td>
<td>(0.242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{18}$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{10}$Al$</em>{19}$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{15}$Al$</em>{12}$</td>
<td>555.9</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>3.32</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.703</td>
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<td>390.8</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>0.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co$<em>{15}$Al$</em>{17}$</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion

The data of $\Delta S$ shown in Table 1 are plotted against the Al content in Figure 4(a), together with the $T_{Cp}$ reported for the Co$_x$Al$_y$ alloys [16]. The same tendency for $\Delta S$ to decrease with increasing Al content was also found in all the series. It is important to note that the transformation type changes at $T_{Cp}$, i.e., a paramagnetic parent to paramagnetic martensite transformation is to the left side of $T_{Cp}$ while a ferromagnetic parent to paramagnetic martensite transformation is to the right side of $T_{Cp}$. Hence, on crossing the $T_{Cp}$, it was found that the $\Delta S$ begins to abruptly decrease, which shows similar behavior to that of Ni-Co-Mn-In alloys [22,23,30]. It is of great importance that this behavior of $\Delta S$ may be one of the vital evidences showing the influence of magnetism on the phase stability as well as the magnetostuctural transformations. As shown in Figure 2, the magnetic contribution to entropy changes with the Curie temperature, therefore the ferromagnetic ordering should also influence greatly on the stability of the parent phase. This is consistent with the earlier reported experimental results as well as theoretical predictions [22,31]. Moreover, the magnetic contribution may also affect the modes of lattice
vibration, and an stabilization effect of the parent phase may also exist, as the impact on the martensite phase in Ni-Mn-Ga [32,33]. A systematical study and selective comparison between representative metamagnetic and ferromagnetic shape memory alloys are required to further understand this question.

In Figure 4(b), the $\Delta S$ is plotted against $T_P$, and the earlier data for Co$_5$Al$_{19}$ [15] and Co$_{10}$Al$_{17}$ [16] are also plotted. It can be seen that $\Delta S$ decreases with decreasing $T_P$ and approaches zero at a sufficiently low temperature. A general consistency was found.

Figure 4. Martensitic transformation entropy change $\Delta S$ for Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ (Co$_x$Al$_y$) alloys shown in Table 1 is plotted against (a) Al content and (b) transformation peak temperature $T_P$. $\Delta S$ reported for Co$_5$Al$_{19}$ [15] and Co$_{10}$Al$_{17}$ [16] are also plotted against the measurement temperature in (b). $T_{C_P}$ means the Curie temperature of parent phase and $T_A$ indicates the thermal transformation arrest (TTA) temperature. Both the solid and dashed lines in (a) and (b) are guides for the eye.

$\Delta S$ for Co$_7$Al$_{19}$ film was also estimated using the data reported by S. Rios et al. [11]. Using the Clausius-Clapeyron equation

$$\Delta S = -\Delta M \cdot \frac{dH}{dT},$$

where $dT/dH = 2.1$ K/T [11] is the martensitic transformation shift under different magnetic fields. $\Delta M \approx 585$ emu/cc is the magnetization difference between parent and martensite phases estimated from Figure 3(a) in Ref. [11], where the magnetization for the martensite phase is taken to be zero. Taking the lattice parameter to be $a = 2.88$ Å [11,28], the $\Delta S$ is calculated to be 4.0 J/mol-K at 173 K (not plotted in Figure 4(b)). This value is much larger than those of other reports shown in Figure 4(b).

The possibility of overestimation here can be considered as follows. First, when calculating the $\Delta M$, the magnetization for the martensite phase was taken to be zero. However, this may not be true since the sample by S. Rios et al. had been subjected to ageing heat treatment [11]. Though systematical research for the magnetic properties of the aged martensite phase in Ni-Co-Mn-Al alloys has not been performed to date, with reference to similar alloy systems such as Ni-Mn-In [34], Ni-Co-Mn-Ga [35], and Ni-Mn-Ga [36], there is a possibility of an increase in magnetization in the martensite phase. Note that as long as the heat treatment is kept as the condition in this research, i.e., no ageing treatment at low temperature being performed, the martensite phase has a paramagnetic-like weak magnetism, as reported
for Co$_5$Al$_y$ and Co$_{10}$Al$_y$ [8]. Thus, an overestimated $\Delta M$ may have resulted in the overestimation of $\Delta S$. Second, the Co$_7$Al$_y$ film undergoes a martensitic transformation with large thermal hysteresis where the TTA phenomenon occurs. Therefore, the actual value of $dT/dH$ might be much larger than 2.1 K/T. Actually, the $dT/dH$ approaches infinity at the TTA temperature, and a $dT/dH$ as large as 100 K/T can be estimated from Figure 3(b) in Ref. [16].

Moreover, for the Co$_x$Al$_y$ alloys shown in Figure 4(b), the temperature at which $\Delta S$ becomes zero should correspond to the TTA temperature $T_A$. The $T_A$s are indicated for Co$_5$Al$_y$, Co$_{10}$Al$_y$ and Co$_{15}$Al$_y$. The values of $T_A$s for Co$_5$Al$_y$ (40 K) and Co$_{10}$Al$_y$ (160 K) show good consistency with earlier reports [15,16]. For Co$_{15}$Al$_y$, the interval of the martensitic transformation is very large and MFIT measurement for it has not been successfully performed even with pulsed magnetic fields up to 55 T. Therefore, we do not have any information on $\Delta S$ at low temperature for this series. The dashed line in Figure 4(b) roughly extrapolates the $T_A$ for Co$_{15}$Al$_y$, assuming that the temperature dependence of $\Delta S$ has a shape similar to those of Co$_5$Al$_y$ and Co$_{10}$Al$_y$. This gives a value of about 300 K, which is much higher than 190 K, which is reported from thermomagnetization measurements [16]. The reason is discussed as follows. First, as shown in Figure 3(c), the Al content dependence of $T_P$ is very large, and the composition measurements by EPMA also found that the composition difference between different grains is as large as several permillage. This may result in an obvious transformation temperature distribution inside the sample, resulting in an underestimation of $T_A$ by thermomagnetization measurements. Second, as shown in Figure 1, the $T_C$ decreases with increasing Al content when the Co content is held constant. Generally the $\Delta S$ begins to decrease abruptly only below the $T_C$ [22,37]; therefore, a higher $T_A$ can be observed in a sample with a higher $T_C$. Hence, a $T_A$ distribution may exist in the sample if the sample has Co or Al inhomogeneity. Third, the Ni-Co-Mn-Al alloy system shows much better ductility than other NiMn-based alloy systems, where even polycrystalline samples can be subjected to compression testing and show superelasticity behavior [38]. Hence, a strong binding in the grain boundary can be expected, and the constraint by the grain boundary may become nucleation sites for the martensitic transformation. Thus, martensitic transformation may still occur at the grain boundary due to this non-chemical reason at a temperature at which martensitic transformation otherwise would have stopped. This reason can also result in an underestimation of the $T_A$ by thermomagnetization measurements. However, in order to measure the $T_A$ for Co$_{15}$Al$_y$ precisely, use of a stronger non-destructive pulsed magnet [39] is necessary. Nevertheless, a rough estimation of the $T_A$ as 190–300 K can still be concluded based on the results of the present study.

5. Conclusions

In this research, specific heat measurements by the heat flow method were performed systematically on Ni$_{50-x}$Co$_x$Mn$_{50-y}$Al$_y$ metamagnetic shape memory alloys. Second-order ferromagnetic–paramagnetic transition as well as first-order martensitic transformation were directly observed via specific heat measurements. The transformation entropy change $\Delta S$ was estimated from the latent heat by the specific heat measurements. The $\Delta S$ decreases with increasing Al content under the series with fixed Co content. The decreasing tendency enlarges below the Curie temperature of the parent phase. The $\Delta S$ estimated in this work was found to be consistent with findings of earlier reports.
Acknowledgements

This work was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research and by a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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