Optical, structural and hydrogen sensing properties of TiO_2 thin films

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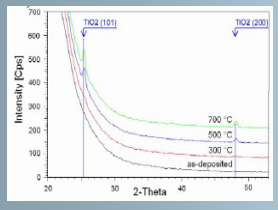
Abstract

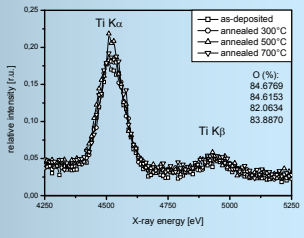
TiO_2 thin films were prepared by DC reactive magnetron sputtering in a mixture of oxygen and argon on glass and oxidized silicon substrates. The effect of annealing (300 ºC, 500 ºC and 700 ºC for 8 h in air) on the structural and morphological (XRD, EDX, AFM) properties of TiO_2 thin films are presented. In addition, the effect of Pt surface modification (1, 3 and 5 nm) on hydrogen sensing was studied. In the range of temperatures from 300 ºC to 500 ºC crystallization starts and the thin film structure changes from amorphous to polycrystalline (anatase phase). In the case of samples on glass substrate, the optical transmittance spectra were recorded and energy band gap was estimated. TiO_2 thin films were used as sensors towards hydrogen at concentrations 10000-1000 ppm and working temperatures within the range 180-200 ºC. The samples with 1 nm and especially with 3 nm Pt on the surface responded fast at with high sensitivity to hydrogen.

Characterization of the TiO_2 films

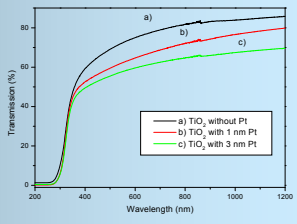


•The XRD diffractogram shows that the samples without annealing and annealing at 300 ºC have amorphous structure, whereas the samples annealed at 500 and 700 ºC show polycrystalline structure with (101) and (200) peaks in XRD diffractogram.

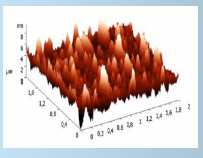
•The samples treated at temperatures 500 and 700 ºC show peaks representing the anatase phase of polycrystalline TiO_2 with preferential orientation in direction (101).



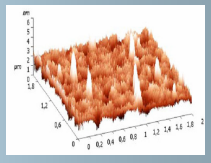
The EDX analysis showed that the Ti:O ratio increases at temperatures between 300 and 500 ºC The biggest change in thin film oxygen content from 84.6 % to 82 % occurred during crystallization.



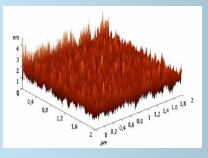
Transmittance spectra of the modified samples by 1, 3 and 5 nm Pt. The energy band gap was calculated and found to be 3,93, 3,92 and 3,91 eV for TiO_2 without Pt, with 1 and 3 nm Pt successively. A significant lowering of transmittance due to increase of Pt layer thickness was observed.



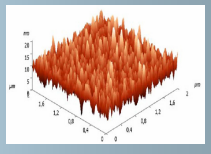
Without annealing



Annealed at 300 ºC



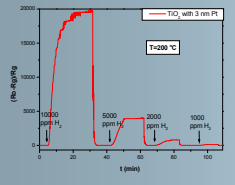
Annealed at 500 ºC

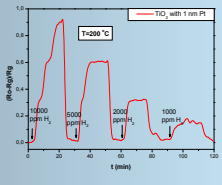


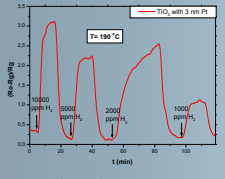
Annealed at 700 ºC

AFM measurements show a decrease of the RMS roughness with increasing annealing temperature till 500 ºC. A significant difference occurs at temperature of 700 ºC, where the roughness increases markedly.

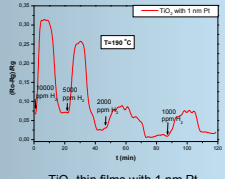
Hydrogen sensing







TiO_2 thin films with 3 nm Pt



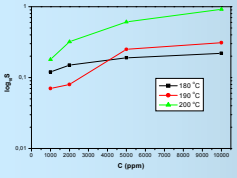
TiO_2 thin films with 1 nm Pt

•Before every sensing measurement the TiO_2 thin films were heated for 10 hours for thermal activation.

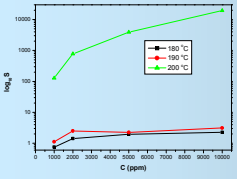
•Samples without Pt overlayer did not respond to hydrogen at 200 ºC which was the maximum temperature used in our experiments.

•At the sample with 5 nm Pt modification, the Pt layer caused a shortage in our measurements and the access of hydrogen to TiO_2 surface was prohibited.

•TiO_2 samples with 1 and 3 nm Pt surface modification were tested towards hydrogen concentrations 10000, 5000, 2000 and 1000 ppm at 180, 190 and 200 ºC.



TiO_2 thin films with 1 nm Pt



TiO_2 thin films with 3 nm Pt

•The sensitivity was defined as: S = (Ro-Rg)/Rg where Ro is the resistance of the film in dry air and Rg is the resistance of the film in the gas/air mixture.

•The samples with 1 and 3 nm Pt showed high sensitivity towards hydrogen and the response time was several minutes. It is clear that the sensitivity of all TiO_2 sensors towards hydrogen showed a strong dependence on both the operating temperature and gas concentration. For the same operating temperature, the response of the sensors towards hydrogen sharply increased with the increase of gas concentration.

•All samples showed a saturation-like behaviour in dependence on the hydrogen concentration. The temperature range 180-200 ºC is adequate for hydrogen detection as low as 1000 ppm. The best results were obtained by the sample with 3 nm Pt (higher sensitivity and faster response).

• An optimization of DC Magnetron Reactive Sputtering parameters is in progress to decrease the operating temperature of TiO_2 thin films and cut down the response time of the developed sensors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Greek General Secretariat for Research & Technology for financial support in the framework of the bilateral Greek–Slovak Research Agreement for 2005–2007.

2nd International Symposium on Transparent Conductive Oxides 22 - 26 October, 2008 Hersonissos, Crete, Greece