Accepted Manuscript

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PII:	S1388-2481(17)30140-6
DOI:	doi: 10.1016/j.elecom.2017.05.015
Reference:	ELECOM 5948
To appear in:	Electrochemistry Communications
Received date:	26 April 2017
Revised date:	18 May 2017
Accepted date:	22 May 2017

Please cite this article as: Katie Lutton, Kateryna Gusieva, Noemie Ott, Nick Birbilis, John R. Scully, Understanding multi-element alloy passivation in acidic solutions using operando methods, *Electrochemistry Communications* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.elecom.2017.05.015

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Understanding multi-element alloy passivation in acidic solutions using operando methods

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Abstract

The kinetics of passivation and dissolution of many corrosion resistant engineering alloys remain incompletely characterized. Clarification of such kinetics and the unique role of alloying elements were investigated upon Ni-22% Cr and Ni-22% Cr-6% Mo, wt%, in an acidic chloride-free sulfate environment using simultaneous electrochemistry, on-line Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectroscopy (ICP-MS), and Single Frequency-Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy (SF-EIS). The combination of methods enabled *in-operando* tracking of the total current densities for (i) oxidation, (ii) cation ejection by multiple paths, and (iii) oxide film growth during non-steady state passivation. An improved and physically accurate interpretation of passivation processes is presented and clarifies and alters the frequently made assumption that Cr₂O₃ is the dominant oxide on Ni-Cr alloys throughout oxidation.

Keywords: passivation, nickel-chromium alloys, single-frequency electrochemical impedance, spectroelectrochemistry, selective dissolution, operando

1. Introduction

The investigation of aqueous passivation of metals and alloys under varying experimental conditions for the purposes of assessing passive film thickness and composition is nominally carried out by AC or DC electrochemical techniques [1–4], ellipsometry [5–7], neutron reflectometry [8], X-

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