Scripta Materialia 130 (2017) 229–233

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Scripta Materialia

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/scriptamat

Regular article

Divergent strain acceleration effects in metallic glasses

Z. Lu [a], X.N. Yang [b], B.A. Sun [c], Y.Z. Li [a], K. Chen [b], W.H. Wang [a], H.Y. Bai [a,*]

[a] Institutes of Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190, China
[b] Beijing National Laboratory for Condensed Matter Physics and Key Laboratory of Soft Matter Physics, Institute of Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190, China
[c] Center for Advanced Structural Materials, Department of Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 11 November 2016
Received in revised form 10 December 2016
Accepted 12 December 2016
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Bulk metallic glass
Relaxation
Anelastic behavior
Strain rate sensitivity
Temperature-strain equivalence

ABSTRACT

Relaxation is a key feature in glassy physics, and the strain-induced effects on relaxations in metallic glasses are of practical significance, yet still unclear. Through a contrastive combination of dynamical mechanical spectroscopy and linear-heating stress relaxation methods, we find that strain effectively facilitates the relaxation dynamics with divergent modulation behaviors in a wide temperature range for metallic glasses. Two loading modes are coupled with linear-heating, and we experimentally confirm the "temperature-strain equivalence". Our results benefit for better understanding the unique effect of strain on relaxation and for providing guidance on applications of metallic glasses with improved performances at different temperatures.

During glass transition, atoms are trapped into glassy states, which are in various potential energy valleys [1–5]. While glassy materials behave like solids as a whole below the glass transition temperature T_g, thermal energy could activate local atomic motions or locally unjammed atoms, by which relaxations occur. These atoms constitute flow units, accommodate the flow and lead to deformation behaviors in glasses [6–9]. When the cluster density of flow units reaches a critical value, the percolation of flow units occurs and the entire glass system can unjam from a frozen state into a supercooled liquid state [3,9–11]. The flow units can also be activated by external strain [12,13], which plays an equivalent role as temperature in the systems such as granular materials and foams. In thermal systems including colloidal and metallic glasses (MGs), both thermal and mechanical stimulations can lead to unjamming. Although the interplay among thermal energy, applied force, and packing constraint has been intensely studied in colloidal systems [14–16], there is few investigation into the interaction between temperature and strain in the jamming theory for MGs. This investigation would be of practical importance because MGs, serving as structural materials with unique mechanical property, suffer from complex mechanical and thermal circumstances. Clarifying the effect of strain under different loading modes and thermal invigoration on relaxations would also contribute to understanding the behavior of shear bands [12, 17–19], plastic deformation, and fracture morphology patterns [20,21]. Recently, the strain effects such as strain-induced glass transition and mechanical flow have been investigated by molecular dynamics simulations [7,14,22]. The elastostatic compression strain applied on MGs can create irreversible structural disordering and cause permanent deformation at room temperature [23,24]. However, experimentally, the effect of strain on relaxation under different loading modes at different temperatures, the direct examination of 'strain-temperature equivalence' and the jamming phase diagram for MGs are still unclear.

In this Letter, we use dynamical mechanical spectroscopy (DMS, a dynamical loading mode) and linear-heating stress relaxation (a quasi-static loading mode) methods to study the effect of external loading on MG relaxations in a wide temperature range. We find that strain effectively facilitates the occurrence of α-relaxation (glass transition) but has negligible effect on β-relaxation (low temperature relaxation) in the dynamic loading mode, while in the quasi-static loading mode the strain has significant impact on low temperature relaxation. The concept of 'strain-temperature equivalence' and the jamming diagrams with different loading modes of MGs are constructed to understand the impact of strain on the jamming-unjamming transition of MGs system at different temperatures.

A typical $La_{55}Ni_{20}Al_{25}$ (in atomic percent) MG was selected for experiments for its pronounced β-relaxation behavior. The MG ribbon with the thickness of 30 μm was prepared using a melt-spinning technique and the glassy nature of the sample was ascertained by X-ray diffraction and differential scanning calorimeter. Two different loading modes were applied to the MG ribbons. The dynamical loading was performed with a TA Q800 dynamical mechanical analyzer (DMA) by uniaxial tension method with a heating rate of 3 K/min, testing frequency $f = 1$ Hz with varied strain amplitudes. The other deformation mode is a constant loading mode performed through the same DMA with various tension strains at the same linear heating rate of 3 K/min [25].

* Corresponding author at: Institute of Physics, P.O. Box 603, Beijing 100190, China.
E-mail address: hybai@iphy.ac.cn (H.Y. Bai).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.scriptamat.2016.12.017
1359-6462/

The mechanical relaxation spectra of $La_{55}Ni_{20}Al_{25}$ MG with different strains under dynamical loading are shown in Fig. 1(a). Regardless of strain amplitudes, the temperature dependence of loss modulus yields two distinct peaks. The peak in the range from 330 K to 420 K represents β-relaxation and the peak at a higher temperature corresponds to α-relaxation. The emergence of β-relaxation peak indicates that a fraction of atoms locally are unjammed from frozen state and transform into flow units [26]. When the cluster density of flow units reaches a critical point, the percolation of flow units leads to the MG entirely unjamming and contributes to distinct α-relaxation (or occurrence of glass transition) [27] as shown in Fig. 1(a). In order to investigate the strain modulation of relaxation under dynamic loading, a series of strain amplitudes were applied to the glass ribbons. The β-relaxation peak remains almost unchanged with strain increased from 0.07% to 0.4%, while the α-relaxation peak shifts to low temperatures with sharply decreased intensity. To quantitatively certify the invariable of β-relaxation, the Arrhenius equations are used to fit the β relaxation process and the fitting results are presented in the Supplemental Data and Fig. S1 and Table S1. The inset of Fig. 1(a) shows the strain amplitude dependences of the intensity and peak temperature for the α-relaxation.

Our previous work shows that the MGs can be considered as a fraction of separated flow units confined in an elastic matrix [9,28] as shown in Fig. 1(b). We quantitatively rationalize the distinguished strain modulation effects on α- and β-relaxations under the dynamical loading using Maxwell model [29], in which flow unit is represented by a dashpot and the elastic glassy matrix by spring. The total strain ε can be written as:

$$\frac{d\varepsilon}{dt} = \frac{\sigma}{\eta} + \frac{1}{E}\frac{d\sigma}{dt}, \tag{1}$$

where σ is the stress, η is the viscosity of flow units and E is Young's modulus of the matrix. In DMA, the applied sinusoidal strain is $\varepsilon = \varepsilon_0 \exp(i\omega t)$, and the resulting stress is $\sigma = \sigma_0 \exp(i\omega t + \delta)$, where ω is the applied frequency and δ is the phase difference between stress and strain. Eq. (1) can be rewritten as $i\omega\varepsilon = \sigma/\eta + i\omega\sigma/E$ and the loss modulus is [30]:

$$G''(\omega) = \frac{\omega/\eta}{(1/\eta)^2 + (\omega/E)^2} = \frac{\omega\alpha\Omega}{k_B T}\exp\left(-\frac{W}{k_B T}\right) \Big/ \left\{\left[\frac{\alpha\Omega}{k_B T}\exp\left(-\frac{W}{k_B T}\right)\right]^2 + (\omega/E)^2\right\}, \tag{2}$$

where α is the material's characteristic strain rate, k_B is the Boltzmann constant, W and Ω are the energy barrier and volume for flow units, respectively. When the temperature $T = T_g$, the energy barrier for α-relaxation can be expressed as [31] $W_{\tau,\alpha} = \beta T_g[(\tau_C - \tau)/\tau_C]^{3/2}$, where β is constant, τ is shear stress and τ_C is critical yield stress. Thus, Eq. (2) can be rewritten as:

$$G''(\omega) = \frac{\omega C f(\tau)}{[C f(\tau)]^2 + (\omega/E)^2}, \tag{3}$$

where $C = \alpha\Omega/k_B T_g$ is constant by assuming that the flow units of $La_{55}Ni_{20}Al_{25}$ MG have the same constant volume, and $f(\tau) = \exp[-\beta/-k_B(1 - \tau/\tau_C)^{3/2}]$. For DMS experiments, $W_{\tau,\alpha}$ can be effectively decreased by increasing the applied strain, and thus the flow units can be activated at relatively lower temperatures [32] and the temperature of α-relaxation peak moves toward low temperatures as shown in Fig. 1(a). Meanwhile, $G''(\omega)$ has a significant inverse relation with $f(\tau)$ according to Eq. (3), and the value of $f(\tau)$ will increase with the enhanced strain or stress. Therefore, strain or stress can reduce the intensity of α-relaxation peak, and our theoretical analysis is consistent with the experiment observation that the intensity of α-relaxation peak is weakened by incremental strain [see Fig. 1(a)]. However, when the temperature is much lower than T_g, the α-relaxation is suppressed. The energy barrier of β-relaxation can be expressed as [18]: $W_{\tau,\beta} = 4RG_{0T}\gamma 2\, C(1 - \tau/\tau_c)^{3/2}\zeta\Omega$, where $R = \pi^2/32$, $\gamma_C = 0.027$, $\zeta = 3$, the shear modulus $G_{0T} = 19.4$ GPa, and the volume of flow units is about 5.31 nm^3 for $La_{55}Ni_{20}Al_{25}$ [33]. For the DMS experiments, τ/τ_c varies from 0.035 to 0.2 (strain changes from 0.07% to 0.4% in the apparent elastic regime ~2% of the MG), and the energy barrier $W_{\tau,\beta}$ varies from 1.64 eV down to 1.24 eV. However, the thermal activation energy $E_T = 0.937$ eV at the peak temperature for β-relaxation of 380 K for linear heating process, and the mechanical energy $E_S = \gamma\tau\Omega$ changes from 0.046 eV to 0.26 eV as strain varies from 0.07% to 0.4%, where $\gamma = 0.1$ is shear strain of flow units [30]. Even though applied strain can decrease energy barrier, the combined thermal and mechanical activation energy are still well below the value of energy barrier for the β-relaxation of the MG, thus the increased strain cannot activate more flow units, which causes the intensity and temperature of β-relaxation peak remain nearly unchanged as shown in Fig. 1(a).

Glass is in non-equilibrium state and its relaxation behaviors are time dependent [34]. Aside from the modulation of relaxation under dynamical loading, we also investigate the stress relaxation under constant strain with the same heating rate. Fig. 2(a) shows the stress relaxation upon heating with various strains for $La_{55}Ni_{20}Al_{25}$, the stress is normalized by initial stress σ_0. Under the strain of 0.4%, the stress of the sample starts to drop at about 350 K. As the strain increases, the obvious stress relaxation tends to occur at lower temperatures. This

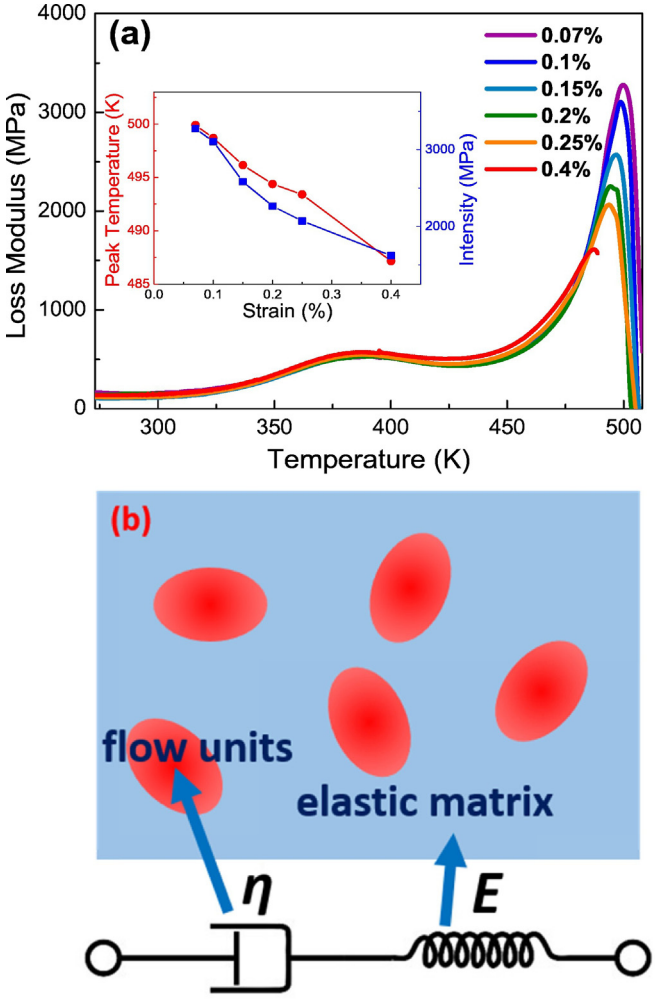

Fig. 1. (a) The loss modulus G'' as a function of temperature for different strain amplitudes. The inset shows the relation between strain amplitude, peak temperature and intensity of α-relaxation. **(b)** The schematic illustration of Maxwell model and flow units model: the flow units are surrounded by elastic matrix and present viscosity behavior.