Physical and electrical characterization of sol-gel derived $\text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3$ thin films of various composition ratios and thicknesses

By

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DECLARATION OF THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF THESIS i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS iii
LIST OF TABLES vi
LIST OF FIGURES vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ix
ABSTRAK x
ABSTRACT Xi

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Overview of Barium Strontium Titanate 1
1.3 Problem Statement 3
1.4 Research Objectives 4
1.5 Research Scope 5
1.6 Dissertation Layout 5

CHAPTER 2 A REVIEW ON BST
2.1 Introduction 7
2.2 An Overview of Ferroelectricity 7
2.3 Properties of Barium Strontium Titanate 10
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction 84
5.2 Conclusion 84
5.3 Future Work Recommendation 86

REFERENCES 87

APPENDIX A 92

APPENDIX B 95

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 99
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Preparation techniques of BST thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The amount of material used in preparing ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Lattice parameters of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) films at room temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Surface morphology of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3-D Image of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) Thin Films Surface of 4 Layer Thickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Grain size of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Average rms surface roughness ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films for each layer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Thickness of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films for each layer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Film thickness, grain size, dielectric constant, loss tangent and dielectric tunability of ( \text{Ba}<em>{0.5}\text{Sr}</em>{0.5}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Film thickness, grain size, dielectric constant, dielectric loss and dielectric tunability of ( \text{Ba}<em>{0.6}\text{Sr}</em>{0.4}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Film thickness, grain size, dielectric constant, dielectric loss and dielectric tunability of ( \text{Ba}<em>{0.7}\text{Sr}</em>{0.3}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Film thickness, grain size, dielectric constant, dielectric loss and dielectric tunability of ( \text{Ba}<em>{0.8}\text{Sr}</em>{0.2}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Dielectric constant of ( \text{Ba}<em>x\text{Sr}</em>{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 ) thin films with different thickness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Transition characteristic of ferroelectric material</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The ABO$_3$ perovskite structure of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ (Adikary, 2003)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Curie temperature of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ as a function of stoichiometry (Remmel et al., 1999)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Lattice parameter of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ versus composition at room temperature</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Summary of the overall physical and electrical characterization process of the Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ film</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Process flow of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ solution preparation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Complete Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ deposition process</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Heat treatment process of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ solution</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Scanning location on the sample with AFM</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 BST thin film capacitor</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Overall process of fabricated BST capacitor</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 SPA probe position</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 XRD pattern of Ba$<em>{0.5}$Sr$</em>{0.5}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 XRD pattern of Ba$<em>{0.6}$Sr$</em>{0.4}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 XRD pattern of Ba$<em>{0.7}$Sr$</em>{0.3}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 XRD pattern of Ba$<em>{0.8}$Sr$</em>{0.2}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Grain size of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function of layers</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Average rms surface roughness of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function layers</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Step profile of 2 layer Ba$<em>{0.8}$Sr$</em>{0.2}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Step profile of 4 layer Ba$<em>{0.7}$Sr$</em>{0.3}$TiO$_3$ thin films</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Thickness of Ba$<em>x$Sr$</em>{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function layers</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.10 $\varepsilon_r$-V characteristics of Ba$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$TiO$_3$ thin films with 4 different thickness

4.11 Film thickness dependence of the dielectric constant and tunability of Ba$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$TiO$_3$ thin films

4.12 Film thickness dependence of the dielectric constant and tunability of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films

4.13 Grain size dependence of the dielectric constant and tunability of Ba$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$TiO$_3$ thin films

4.14 Grain size dependence of the dielectric constant and tunability of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films

4.15 $\varepsilon_r$-V characteristics of Ba$_{0.6}$Sr$_{0.4}$TiO$_3$ thin films with 4 different thickness

4.16 $\varepsilon_r$-V characteristics of Ba$_{0.7}$Sr$_{0.3}$TiO$_3$ thin films with 4 different thickness

4.17 $\varepsilon_r$-V characteristics of Ba$_{0.8}$Sr$_{0.2}$TiO$_3$ thin films with 4 different thickness

4.18 The variation dielectric constant of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function of film thickness

4.19 The variation dielectric tunability of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function of film thickness

4.20 The variation dielectric loss of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films as a function of film thickness
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BST = Barium strontium titanate
AFM = Atomic Force Microscopy
XRD = X-ray Diffraction
PVD = Physical Vapor Deposition
RTA = Rapid Thermal Annealing
Ba = Barium
Sr = Strontium
Pt = Platinum
Si = Silicon
SiO₂ = Silicon dioxide
Al = Aluminum
Rms = Root means square
DRAM = Dynamic Random Access Memory
T_c = Curie temperature
RF = Radio Frequency
MOCVD = Metal Organic Chemical Vapor Deposition
Pencirian fizikal dan elektrikal berasaskan teknik sol-gel untuk menghasilkan filem nipis $\text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3$ untuk pelbagai nisbah komposisi dan ketebalan

ABSTRAK

Antara pelbagai bahan-bahan dielektrik, barium strontium titanate telah dikaji secara meluas kerana mempunyai pemalar dielektrik yang tinggi, kehilangan dielektrik yang rendah dan tunabiliti yang tinggi. Barium strontium titanate adalah komposisi yang bergantung kepada suhu Curie yang menurun secara linear dengan peningkatan jumlah Sr dalam komposisi tersebut. Dalam kajian ini, filem nipis barium strontium titanate dengan empat komposisi berbeza; $\text{Ba}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{TiO}_3$, $\text{Ba}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{TiO}_3$, $\text{Ba}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{TiO}_3$ dan $\text{Ba}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{TiO}_3$ telah disediakan dengan menggunakan teknik sol-gel dan difabrikasi atas substrat Pt/$\text{SiO}_2$/Si. Filem nipis itu dikristalkan dengan baik, padat, rata dan bebas retak yang diperolehi dengan suhu penyepuhlindapan pada 800 °C. Pemalar dielektrik, tunabiliti, dan kehilangan dielektrik menunjukkan hubungan erat dengan mikrostruktur filem. Pemalar dielektrik, tunabiliti dan kehilangan dielektrik bertambah dengan bertambahnya saiz butiran dan ketebalan filem. Variasi pemalar dielektrik dengan fungsi voltan untuk filem nipis $\text{Ba}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{TiO}_3$ dan $\text{Ba}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{TiO}_3$ tanpa pengutuban spontan, menunjukkan kewujudan sifat paraelektrik dalam suhu bilik. Bagaimanapun, filem nipis $\text{Ba}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_{0.7}\text{TiO}_3$ dan $\text{Ba}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{TiO}_3$ mempunyai bentuk lengkung kupu-kupu menunjukkan kewujudan sifat ferroelektrik. Pemalar dielektrik tertinggi dan tunabiliti, 485.02 dan 34.75 % diperhatikan dalam komposisi $\text{Ba}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{TiO}_3$ pada ketebalan 447.6 nm kerana suhu Curie $\text{Ba}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{TiO}_3$ hampir kepada suhu bilik. Kerja ini menunjukkan pencirian berjaya dalam sifat-sifat fizikal dan elektrik berbilang lapisan filem nipis $\text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3$ dengan nisbah Ba dan Sr yang berbeza.
Physical and electrical characterization of sol-gel derived Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films of various composition ratios and thicknesses

ABSTRACT

Among the various dielectric materials, barium strontium titanate has been extensively studied due to its high dielectric constant, low dielectric loss and high tunability. Barium strontium titanate is a composition dependent to Curie temperature, which decreases linearly with the increasing of Sr amount in the composition. In this study, barium strontium titanate thin films with four different compositions; Ba$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$TiO$_3$, Ba$_{0.6}$Sr$_{0.4}$TiO$_3$, Ba$_{0.7}$Sr$_{0.3}$TiO$_3$ and Ba$_{0.8}$Sr$_{0.2}$TiO$_3$ and four different thicknesses were prepared by using sol-gel technique and deposited on Pt/SiO$_2$/Si substrates. The well-crystallized, dense, smooth and crack-free thin films are obtained through annealing process at temperature of 800 $^\circ$C. The dielectric constant, tunability and dielectric loss shows strong relationship with the films microstructure. The dielectric constant, tunability and dielectric loss increases as the grain size and film thickness increases. The variations of dielectric constant as a function of voltage for Ba$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$TiO$_3$ and Ba$_{0.6}$Sr$_{0.4}$TiO$_3$ thin films are devoid of any spontaneous polarization, which indicates that the thin film is paraelectric in room temperature. However, Ba$_{0.7}$Sr$_{0.3}$TiO$_3$ and Ba$_{0.8}$Sr$_{0.2}$TiO$_3$ thin films with butterfly-shaped curves show the existence of ferroelectric nature. The highest dielectric constant and tunability, 485.02 and 34.75 % were observed in Ba$_{0.7}$Sr$_{0.3}$TiO$_3$ composition at thickness of 447.6 nm due to the Curie temperature of Ba$_{0.7}$Sr$_{0.3}$TiO$_3$ is close to room temperature. This work demonstrates successful physical and electrical characterization of multiple layers of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films to its different composition ratios of Ba and Sr.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the overview of the research done followed by the problem statement. The objectives and scope of this research are described in detail. Finally the dissertation of layout of this thesis is briefly explained.

1.2 Overview of Barium Strontium Titanate

Barium strontium titanate (Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$/ BST) material is one of the ferroelectric materials which attract great interest among researchers to study its electrical properties due to high dielectric constant and composition dependent to Curie temperature (Roy & Krupanidhi, 1993). Barium strontium titanate compounds are the continuous solid solution of barium titanate (BaTiO$_3$) and strontium titanate (SrTiO$_3$). The introduction of Sr atoms to the A site of BaTiO$_3$ lattice substitute the Ba atoms will change the Curie temperature of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$. The Curie temperature of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ system decreases linearly with the increase of Sr amount in the BaTiO$_3$ lattice which enables the paraelectric-ferroelectric transition temperature to be tailored by adjusting the barium-to-strontium ratio for specific application.
There are few techniques available to fabricate the BST such as radio frequency (RF) magnetron sputtering (Oh et al., 2007), metal organic chemical vapor deposition (MOCVD) (Bogert, 1999), pulsed laser deposition (Zhu et al., 2006), soft-solution processing (Shi, Yao & Zhang, 2005) and sol-gel process (Wang, Uusimäki & Leppävuori, 1997). Among these techniques, sol-gel technique which involves the usage of liquid solution mixture as a starting material offers a homogenous distribution of elements at molecular level, high purity, ease of composition control and better homogeneity. The lower cost of the equipment makes it a great method for preparing new solutions with different compositions. Sol-gel technique also offers easier deposition on large and complex area substrate for thin films fabrication.

Ferroelectric barium strontium titanate thin films have been widely investigated due to its potential in microelectronic devices such as thin films capacitors (Kawakubo et al., 1998), dynamic random access memory (DRAM) (Horikawa et al., 1993), (Kumar & Manavalan, 2005), (Cho et al., 1997), infrared sensors (Zhu et al. 2004), microwave devices (Wang et al. 2003), and hydrogen gas sensor (Zhu et al., 2000). This is mainly because of its high dielectric constant, low dielectric loss, large electric-field tunability, long lifetime and good temperature stability.

The previous work of other researchers show that the electrical properties; dielectric constant, dielectric loss, leakage current and dielectric tunability of barium strontium titanate thin films is affected by the composition of the films that changed the Curie temperature. The film thickness, grain size, surface roughness, deposition technique and type of dopant also influence the electrical properties of barium strontium titanate thin films (Zhu et al., 2006), (Hu, Yang & Zhang, 2008), (Guiying, Ping, & Dingquan, 2007). Therefore, the electrical behavior of BST is extremely dependent on
its material properties, including its stoichiometry, microstructure and thickness of the films.

1.3 Problem Statement

Ferroelectric materials are being widely pushed to the forefront for usages in microelectronic field. In this aspect, taking into consideration of the ferroelectric materials capability of high dielectric constant function, it has good potential as a capacitive device. Barium strontium titanate is vastly being researched in the area of ferroelectric and piezoelectric areas, so this material is chosen in this work to study its characteristic in both physical and electrical properties. Many theories and findings have been brought forward in regards of correlation between physical and electrical properties. These relationships are pivotal in device fabrication and functional parameter tuning. To the best of the author’s knowledge, most of the previous work done focused on single layer and multiple ratios of \( \text{Ba}_{x}\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \) composition for the thin films physical and electrical property characterization. Work on multiple thickness or layers is virtually not existence. In this work, multiple layer deposition and its correlation to multiple ratios of \( \text{Ba}_{x}\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \), physical and electrical were investigated.
1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this work is to study the physical and electrical properties of BST thin films by using sol-gel technique. The sub-objectives of this research are:

1. To prepare \( \text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \) solutions using sol-gel technique by varying barium-to-strontium ratio with \( x=0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8 \).
2. To deposit \( \text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \) solutions on Pt/SiO\(_2\)/Si substrate with multiple layers noted as 1 layer, 2 layer, 3 layer and 4 layer for physical characterization including microstructure and thickness of the films.
3. To deposit Al/\( \text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \)/Pt layer to produce capacitor in order to study the electrical characteristics of the \( \text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \) films.
4. To determine correlation between the microstructure of \( \text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3 \) thin films with the electrical properties.
1.5 Research Scope

In this work, the Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films are prepared by using sol-gel technique. The Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ solutions are deposited on Pt/SiO$_2$/Si substrates by spin coating process in order to study the microstructure of the films. The microstructure of the films consists of the surface roughness and the grain size. The dots of Aluminum are deposited on Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$/Pt/SiO$_2$/Si to produce metal/ferroelectric/metal layer to study the electrical properties of the Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ thin films. The barium-to-strontium ratio is varied with $x=0.5$, $0.6$, $0.7$ and $0.8$ in order to study the effect of microstructure and electrical properties of the thin films with four different thicknesses noted as 1 layer, 2 layer, 3 layer and 4 layer.

1.6 Dissertation Layout

This dissertation is divided into five chapters as Introduction, Overview of Barium Strontium Titanate, Research Methodology, Results and Discussions and finally the Conclusion.

The first chapter describe a brief review of the material used, problem statement, objectives and scope of this research.

Chapter two covers review on BST and previous work on related topic by other researchers.
Chapter three discusses the flow and process of the work done. The preparation of the $\text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3$ solution is explained in this chapter and also the characterization of the thin films.

Chapter four presents the results obtained from physical and electrical characterization works. The first part displays the XRD pattern of the BST thin films. Physical characterization consists of surface analysis and grain size is discussed. The study of electrical characterization of $\text{Ba}_x\text{Sr}_{1-x}\text{TiO}_3$ thin films in sandwiched of Al/BST/Pt is also discussed in this chapter.

Finally, in chapter five, conclusion of overall results has been done with some future work recommendation.
CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW ON BST

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three subsections which are the overview of ferroelectricity, properties of barium strontium titanate and previous work done by other researchers on barium strontium titanate thin films. The barium strontium titanate films have been studied with different parameters which are preparation technique of the barium strontium titanate films, film composition, film thickness, crystalline temperature, etc which influences the electrical properties of the film itself.

2.2 An Overview of Ferroelectricity

Ferroelectricity is an electrical phenomenon of ferroelectric materials that exhibit a spontaneous polarization in which the direction of the polarization can be switched by the application of an external electric field. This phenomenon was discovered by J. Valasek in 1920 during his study on the analogy between the magnetic properties of ferromagnetic and the dielectric properties of Rochelle Salt (Gonzalo & Jiménez, 2005). Barium titanate, BaTiO$_3$, the first perovskite ferroelectric was discovered during the early 1940’s in the United States, Russia and Japan. In 1945 and
1946, Von Hippel, and Wul and Goldman demonstrated first ferroelectric switching in 
BaTiO$_3$. Thus followed switching found in other perovskites, which is in KNbO$_3$ and 
KtaO$_3$ discovered by Matthias in 1949, in LiNbO$_3$ and LiTaO$_3$ by Matthias and 
Remeika in 1949 and in PbTiO$_3$ by Shirane, Hishima and Suzuki in 1950 (Gonzalo & 
Jiménez, 2005).

Ferroelectric materials with higher dielectric constant has a low dielectric loss 
and high dielectric tunability compared to ordinary insulating substance. This makes 
ferroelectric materials a good candidate for a variety of applications such as high 
dielectric capacitors, tunable microwave devices, DRAM (dynamic random access 
memory) capacitor, pyroelectric sensors, piezoelectric transducers, and electro optic 
devices. This wide range of applications is mainly attributed to the phase transitions in 
ferroelectrics. Most of the ferroelectric materials transforms to paraelectric cubic phase 
above a transition temperature called Curie temperature, $T_C$. The ferroelectric materials 
change from paraelectric cubic phase to ferroelectric tetragonal phase below the $T_C$. The 
phase transition of ferroelectrics due to temperature is shown in Figure 2.1 (Manavalan, 
2005).
In ferroelectric phase, the dielectric permittivity also known as the dielectric constant ($\varepsilon_r$), increases as the temperature increase while in the paraelectric phase, the dielectric constant decreases with increase in temperature according to the Curie-Weiss,

$$\varepsilon_r = \varepsilon_0 + \frac{C}{T - T_C} \approx \frac{C}{T - T_C}$$

(2.1)

where C is the Curie constant, $T_C$ is the Curie temperature and $T$ is temperature. The dielectric constant reaches its maximum value at $T_C$ and for $T > T_C$, $\varepsilon_r$ severely decreases. In ferroelectric phase, a highly non-linear loop or hysteresis loop is observed that reveals that the material has memory (Haertling, 1999)). In the paraelectric phase, without spontaneous polarization, the dielectric constant is still high and suitable for
tunable microwave and DRAM applications. One of the promising ferroelectric materials is strontium-doped barium titanate (Ba$_{x}$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_{3}$) compound due to high dielectric constant and composition dependent Curie temperature (Roy & Krupanidhi, 1993).

### 2.3 Properties of Barium Strontium Titanate

Barium strontium titanate (Ba$_{x}$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_{3}$) compounds are continuous solid solution of barium titanate (BaTiO$_{3}$) and strontium titanate (SrTiO$_{3}$). The introduction of Sr atoms to the BaTiO$_{3}$ lattice substitutes the Ba atoms which will influence the crystalline structure and its properties (Adikary, 2003). BaTiO$_{3}$ and SrTiO$_{3}$ adopt ABO$_{3}$ perovskite structure because of its crystal structure is in the group of material with the mineral name calcium titanate (CaTiO$_{3}$). Figure 2.2 shows the ABO$_{3}$ perovskite structure of Ba$_{x}$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_{3}$. A (Ba or Sr) represents the large cations located at the corners of the unit cell, B (Ti) represents the smaller cations located at the body center and O is the oxygen atoms positioned at the face centers.

![Figure 2.2: The ABO$_{3}$ perovskite structure of Ba$_{x}$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_{3}$ (Adikary, 2003)](image)
The substitution of Ba\textsuperscript{2+} ion with Sr\textsuperscript{2+} ion to the A site of the BaTiO\textsubscript{3} crystal structure is found to reduce the Curie temperature of BaTiO\textsubscript{3} while maintaining its high dielectric constant. The structure, dielectric and ferroelectric properties of Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} generally depends on the Sr content because the Curie temperature of Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} system decreases linearly towards room temperature with the increasing amount of Sr in the BaTiO\textsubscript{3} lattice as shown in Figure 2.3. The decreasing amounts of T\textsubscript{C} enable the paraelectric-ferroelectric transition temperature to be tailored by adjusting the barium-to-strontium ratio for specific application.

![Figure 2.3](image)

**Figure 2.3:** Curie temperature of Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} as a function of stoichiometry (Remmel et al., 1999)

BaTiO\textsubscript{3} has a paraelectric cubic phase above its Curie temperature at about 120 °C while at room temperature, BaTiO\textsubscript{3} exhibit tetragonal perovskite structure. The tetragonality of Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} system decreases with the increasing of Sr content thus at room temperature, the Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} with higher Ba content is tetragonal while with higher Sr content is cubic. Therefore, the Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} with higher Ba content is ferroelectric and tetragonal at room temperature.

The ferroelectric properties of Ba\textsubscript{x}Sr\textsubscript{1-x}TiO\textsubscript{3} generally depend on the tetragonality of the structure because smaller tetragonal value of c/a ratio may not be
sufficient to create separation and spontaneous polarization. Figure 2.4 shows the lattice parameter (a and c) of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ as a function of Sr (mol %) content at room temperature. From Adikary, it is reported that Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ shows a complete solid solubility over all compositions with a cubic structure at room temperature for $0 \leq x \leq 0.3$, becoming tetragonal for $0.3 \leq x \leq 1$ which shown in Figure 2.4 which x is refer to the Ba content.

![Figure 2.4: Lattice parameter of Ba$_x$Sr$_{1-x}$TiO$_3$ versus composition at room temperature](image)

2.4 Overview and Previous Work of BST thin films

BST thin films received a large interest because of its potential in the application of microelectronic devices due to high dielectric constant, relatively low dielectric loss tangent and large dielectric field tunability (Chen et al., 2006). In general, a thin film is a layer of material ranging from several nanometers to several micrometers in thickness and is grown on a substrate. The relationship between the film and substrate influences the characteristics of BST thin films (Su & Button, 2001, Su et al., 2003, Yi et al., 2002 & Koutsaroff et al., 2002). Some of the common materials used as a substrate are