§9. Development of an He\(^{-}\) source for a Diagnostic Beam of Alpha Particle Measurement

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Among the various elements, the production of He\(^{-}\) is known to be extremely difficult. The ground state of helium does not form a negative ion, but the a long-life metastable state of 1s2s (\(^3S\)) has a small electron affinity of 0.078 eV and a negative ion state of 1s2s2p (\(^4P_5/2, 4P_3/2\)) can be formed. This is an autodetachment state having life-times of 10 \(\mu\)s (50%) and 300\(\mu\)s (50%).

After much effort to certify the surface production of He\(^{-}\), it has been concluded that the production rate of He\(^{-}\) from a Cs-Mo surface of minimum work function is nearly zero or much less than that of H\(^{-}\) [1]. Moreover, it is known that He\(^{-}\) cannot be directly extracted from a helium plasma in a multicusp ion source.

On the other hand, He\(^{-}\) has been produced via a two step process in an alkali metal gas cell, such as Li, Na, Mg, K, Rb, or Cs [2]. The maximum value of the He\(^{-}\) fraction of 1.7% is obtained through collisions with a Rb target, at an He\(^{+}\) ion incident energy of 6-9 keV. Using a sodium gas cell, Dimov et al. have reported the production of a 10-mA He\(^{-}\) beam at 12 keV in a 100 msec pulse with a current density of 2.6 mA/cm\(^2\) [3]. A 70-mA He\(^{-}\) beam was also generated in a pulsed mode by Hooper et al. [4].

Development of an He\(^{-}\) source using a Rb gas cell in a DC operation has been recently initiated for the purpose of application to the alpha-particle measurement. Fig. 1 shows the schematic view of the experimental set-up. The essential point of the development is that of an effective and long-life Rb gas cell, which can be operated in a DC, or a modulated mode. Fig.2 shows the measured He\(^{+}\) and He\(^{-}\) current as a function of the Rb cell temperature. In the present preliminary experiments, the Rb cell was operated in a DC mode at high pressure to convert He\(^{+}\) to He\(^{-}\) at an efficiency of greater than 2%. Since a positive ion current density of greater than 200 mA/cm\(^2\) can be expected using a conventional source, a negative current density of 4 mA/cm\(^2\) will be feasible.

**Fig. 1**

**Fig. 2** He\(^{+}\) and He\(^{-}\) current as a function of the Rb cell temperature.

**References**

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