Spin transport in graphene

A. Fert[1], A. Anane[1], C. Berger[2,3], W. de Heer[2], C. Deranlot[1], B. Dlubak[1], L. Hueso[4],
H. Jaffrès[1], N. Mathur[5], F. Petroff[1], P. Seneor[1], M. Sprinkle[2], B. Servet[6], S. Xavier[6]
albert.fert@thalesgroup.com
[1] Unité Mixte de Physique CNRS/Thales, Palaiseau and Université Paris-Sud, Orsay, France
[2] School of Physics, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA
[3] Institut Néel, CNRS, Grenoble, France
[4] CIC Nanogune, San Sebastian, Spain
[5] Department of Materials Science, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK
[6] Thales Research and Technology, Palaiseau, France

Several spintronic devices (logic gates, spin FET, etc) are based on spin transport in a lateral channel between spin polarized contacts. We want to discuss, with experiments in support, the potential of graphene for the transport of spin currents to long distance in such types of device. The advantage of graphene over classical semiconductors and metals comes from the combination of its large electron velocity with the long spin life time due to the small spin-orbit coupling of carbon. This leads to spin diffusion lengths ≈ 100 μm.

The experiments we present are magneto-transport measurements on graphene multilayers on SiC [1] connected to cobalt electrodes through alumina tunnel barriers. In terms of $\Delta R = \Delta V/I$, the spin signals, at low and room temperature, are in the MΩ range, well above the spin resistance of the graphene channel. The analysis of the results in the frame of drift/diffusion equations [2] leads to spin diffusion length in graphene around 100 μm for a series of samples having different lengths and different tunnel resistances . The advantage of the graphene is not only the long spin diffusion length. The large electron velocity also leads to short enough dwell times even for spin injection though tunnel barriers.

Our results on graphene can be compared with previous results [3] obtained by some of the authors (L.H., N.M., A. F.) on carbon nanotubes with also spin signals ΔR in the MΩ range ($\Delta R/R$ up to 72%) and spin diffusion lengths around 50 μm. A unified picture of spin transport in nanotubes and graphene will be presented.

In conclusion, graphene, with its combination of a long spin life time with a large electron velocity and the resulting long spin diffusion length, turns out as a material of choice for large scale logic circuits and the transport/processing of spin information. Understanding the mechanism of the spin relaxation, improving the spin diffusion length and also testing various concepts of spin gate are the next challenges.

References

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