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REVIEW OF BORATE GLASSES AS SOLID-STATE BATTERY ELECTROLYTES

Shilpa Kulkarni[1] and Shalini V[2]

[1]Sri Kolli Nageshwar Rao Gangaiah Government First Grade College, Gangavati-583227, Karnataka, India
[1]Shilpakulkarni2026@gmail.com

[2]T.S.H.M.S Government First Grade College, Siruguppa-583121, Karnataka, India
[2]Shalini.gadag@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Borate glasses are gaining attention as solid-state electrolytes for next-generation lithium batteries because of their distinctive structural and electrochemical characteristics. Their amorphous framework enables the formation of continuous lithium ion pathways, resulting in high ionic conductivity and enhanced transport kinetics. Borate glasses also offer a broad electrochemical stability window, which makes them well suited for high voltage applications and enhances safety compared to traditional liquid electrolytes. Recent studies highlight their versatility, as they can function both as bulk electrolytes and as protective interfacial coatings that mitigate electrode degradation and suppress dendrite growth. This review consolidates current progress in the design, synthesis, and characterization of borate glass electrolytes, with emphasis on their ion conduction mechanisms, structural features, and electrochemical performance. Challenges such as optimizing mechanical stability, scalability, and compatibility with diverse electrode chemistries are critically discussed. Finally, future perspectives are outlined to guide the development of borate glass based solid-state batteries toward practical, high energy density applications.

KEYWORDS: Borate glasses, Solid-state electrolytes, Ionic conductivity, Electrochemical stability

1. INTRODUCTION

Borate glasses make a strong case as solid electrolytes, offering distinctive structural and electrochemical advantages that position them as promising materials for advanced energy storage.Their amorphous nature eliminates grain boundaries that typically hinder ion transport in crystalline systems, allowing for smoother lithium ion migration and reduced interfacial resistance [1]. Lithium borate compositions (Li_2O–

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B_2O_3) demonstrate room-temperature ionic conductivities between 10^{-4} and 10^{-3} S/cm, values comparable to many established solid electrolytes and underscoring their strong potential for energy storage applications.[2-6]. Additionally, the robust chemical framework of borate glasses provides a wide electrochemical stability window, enabling compatibility with high-energy cathode materials and supporting advanced battery chemistries. From a practical standpoint, their ease of fabrication through melt-quenching offers scalability and versatility, making them suitable for bulk electrolytes, thin films, and protective coatings across both research and industrial contexts.

2. Fabrication and Structural Evolution of Borate Glasses

2.1 Melt-Quenching Technique

The most widely employed synthesis route involves melting Li_2O and B_2O_3 precursors at elevated temperatures (≈1000 °C), followed by rapid quenching[7]. This process effectively suppresses crystallization, yielding a homogeneous amorphous glass with continuous ionic pathways that support efficient lithium ion transport.

2.2 Structural Evolution with Li_2O Incorporation

The addition of lithium oxide modifies the borate network by converting trigonal BO_3 units into tetrahedral BO_4^- groups, thereby introducing mobile Li^+ ions. At higher Li_2O concentrations, non-bridging oxygens (NBOs) are generated, further enhancing ionic conduction[8,9]. This compositional dependence of conductivity, often referred to as the *boron anomaly*, is a distinctive hallmark of borate glass chemistry and underpins their unique electrochemical behaviour [10].

3. Attributes of Borate Glass Electrolytes

3.1 Ionic Conductivity

The ionic conductivity of borate glasses can be precisely tuned by varying the Li_2O concentration. Maximum conductivity is typically observed at intermediate compositions, where the balance between tetrahedral BO_4^- units and non-bridging oxygens (NBOs) creates optimal pathways for Li^+ migration [11-14]. This compositional dependence underscores the unique transport behaviour of borate systems.

3.2 Thermal Stability

Borate glasses exhibit structural stability up to approximately 300–400 °C, aligning well with the operating temperature range of solid-state batteries[15]. This thermal resilience ensures reliable long term performance and enhances safety under demanding electrochemical conditions.

3.3 Electrode Compatibility

Thin borate glass coatings have demonstrated effectiveness in stabilizing interfaces with Ni-rich cathodes,

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particularly in sulphide based all solid state batteries[16]. By mitigating interfacial degradation and suppressing side reactions, these coatings significantly improve cycling stability and overall device longevity.

4. Roles and Advantages of Borate Glasses in Solid-State Batteries

4.1 Electrolytes

Borate glasses can serve directly as bulk solid electrolytes in lithium ion batteries. Their amorphous network provides continuous Li^+ conduction pathways, effectively minimizing interfacial resistance and enhancing overall ionic transport efficiency [17].

4.2 Protective Coatings

Thin layers of lithium borate glass are highly effective in stabilizing electrode electrolyte interfaces. When applied to Ni-rich cathodes, these coatings suppress undesirable side reactions, mitigate interfacial degradation, and thereby improve cycling stability and extend battery lifespan [18].

4.3 Hybrid Electrolyte Systems

Borate glasses can be integrated with sulphide or oxide electrolytes to form composite systems. These hybrids combine the high ionic conductivity of borates with the mechanical strength or chemical stability of other electrolytes, delivering a balanced performance that effectively addresses multiple design challenges at once [19].

5. Challenges and Limitations of Borate Glass Electrolytes

5.1 Moisture Sensitivity

Borate glasses are inherently hygroscopic, making them prone to absorbing atmospheric moisture. This uptake can compromise both structural integrity and ionic conductivity, requiring careful handling and protective encapsulation during battery fabrication and operation [20].

5.2 Mechanical Weakness

Compared to crystalline ceramic electrolytes, borate glasses exhibit lower mechanical strength and fracture toughness [21]. Their limited ability to withstand mechanical stresses in large scale battery assemblies highlights the need for reinforcement strategies, such as composite designs or hybrid architectures.

5.3 Composition Dependent Conductivity

The ionic conductivity of borate glasses is strongly influenced by the concentration of Li_2O. Moderate additions enhance conduction through the formation of BO_4^- units and non-bridging oxygens (NBOs), but

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excessive Li_2O disrupts network stability, reducing durability[22]. Achieving the optimal balance between conductivity and structural robustness remains a critical challenge in their development.

6. Emerging Research Directions for Borate Glass Electrolytes

6.1 Interface Engineering

Borate glass coatings are increasingly employed to stabilize high voltage cathodes. By mitigating interfacial degradation and suppressing side reactions, these coatings enhance cycling stability and extend the operational lifespan of solid-state batteries[23,24].

6.2 Composite Electrolytes

Current research emphasizes the integration of borate glasses with polymers or oxide based electrolytes. These hybrid systems seek to retain the high ionic conductivity of borates while enhancing mechanical strength and chemical durability, thereby overcoming key limitations of pure glass electrolytes.

6.3 Innovative Design Approaches

Inspired by the structural flexibility of borate networks, researchers are exploring bio inspired and multifunctional designs. Such strategies seek to couple ionic conduction with additional functionalities, opening pathways toward advanced energy materials that extend beyond conventional battery applications [26].

CONCLUSIONS

Borate glasses are regarded as a highly promising class of solid-state electrolytes for next-generation lithium batteries. Their amorphous network eliminates grain boundaries, enabling continuous Li^+ conduction pathways and reducing interfacial resistance. With tuneable ionic conductivity, wide electrochemical stability windows, and ease of processing through melt-quenching, they offer significant advantages both as bulk electrolytes and as protective interfacial coatings.

Despite these strengths, challenges such as moisture sensitivity, limited mechanical robustness, and composition dependent conductivity remain critical barriers to large scale implementation. Addressing these limitations through interface engineering, composite electrolyte designs, and innovative bio inspired approaches is essential to unlock their full potential.

When integrated with other solid electrolyte systems such as sulphides or oxides borate glasses can combine high ionic conductivity with enhanced mechanical and chemical stability, offering a balanced performance profile. Together, these attributes establish borate glasses as versatile, forward-looking materials capable of enabling safer, more stable, and higher performance solid-state lithium batteries.

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