Magnetic and Spin-Dependent Transport Properties of Co/Cu/Ni Junction

P. Vlaic
University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Iuliu Hatieganu", Physics & Biophysics Department, 400023 Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The electronic structure of fcc Co/Cu/Ni (001) trilayer systems have been studied by means of a self-consistent Green's function technique based on the tight-binding linear muffin-tin method (TB-LMTO) in the atomic sphere approximation (ASA). The results show that at the Co/Cu interfaces the cobalt magnetic moment retains its bulk value while at the Ni/Cu interfaces the nickel magnetic moment is reduced. The different magnetic behavior of interface Co and Ni atoms are explained as a competition effect between the narrowing of the density of states (DOS) at the Fermi Level due to the low coordination number and respectively, the hybridization between Co(Ni) and Cu states. An oscillatory interlayer exchange coupling with respect to the Cu spacer thickness is evidenced. The conductance and the giant magnetoresistance ratio (GMR) in the current perpendicular to-the-plane geometry (CPP) are calculated by means of the transmission matrix formulation of the Kubo-Landauer formalism. In either antiferromagnetic states the conductance is determined by the majority-spin electrons whose contribution to the transmission amplitude is higher due to the difference in the electronic structure at the Co(Ni)/Cu interfaces. Damped oscillations of the GMR ratio with increasing Cu spacer thickness are obtained.

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Corresponding author:
P. Vlaic

Address for correspondence:
B-dul N. Titulescu nr 6, Bl. P2, Ap. 27, 400420 Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email address:
vlaic_pc@yahoo.com