

# The Effect of Solution Density on the Synthesis of Magnesium Borate from Boron-Gypsum

N. Tugrul, E. Sariburun, F. T. Senberber, A. S. Kipcak, E. Moroydor Derun, S. Piskin

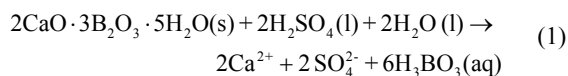
**Abstract**—Boron-gypsum is a waste which occurs in the boric acid production process. In this study, the boron content of this waste is evaluated for the use in synthesis of magnesium borates and such evaluation of this kind of waste is useful more than storage or disposal. Magnesium borates, which are a sub-class of boron minerals, are useful additive materials for the industries due to their remarkable thermal and mechanical properties. Magnesium borates were obtained hydrothermally at different temperatures. Novelty of this study is the search of the solution density effects to magnesium borate synthesis process for the increasing the possibility of boron-gypsum usage as a raw material. After the synthesis process, products are subjected to XRD and FT-IR to identify and characterize their crystal structure, respectively.

**Keywords**—Boron-gypsum, hydrothermal synthesis, magnesium borate, solution density.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**B**ORIC ACID is used as a raw material for the production of boron compounds. Also it is used in several industries as an additive. Turkey is the world's major source of high grade boron mineral such as; colemanite, ulexite and tincalconite [1], [2]. Colemanite ( $2\text{CaO} \cdot 3\text{B}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ), which is one of the most important boron minerals in the world, is used as the raw material in the boric acid production [3]. Boric acid, is produced by dissolving colemanite in aqueous sulfuric acid where by gypsum ( $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) is formed as a byproduct and must be separated from the main product. This process consists of two steps as, dissolution of colemanite and formation of gypsum.

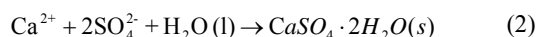
In the first reaction where boric acid is produced is a very fast reaction and given (1):



In the second step, gypsum crystals are formed in the

reaction mixture to up to a size large enough to be filtered out of the solution.

Gypsum crystallization reaction is given in (2):



Boron-Gypsum which is waste product of boric acid production process consist gypsum,  $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$  and some impurities that causes various environmental and storage problems. The content of  $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$  in boron-gypsum obtained during the boric acid production increases up to 7%. It is a valuable industrial raw material for its  $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$  content. In contrast,  $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$  is dissolved by rain water and mixed with soil. High amount of boron content, which has toxicological effect leads economic losses and also causes environmental pollutions [4], [5].

In literature, there are some studies about the reducing pollution and disposal of industrial wastes. Several works have been carried out for the utilization for borogypsum as calcium sulfate dihydrate (gypsum) in cement production. The addition calcinated borogypsum addition to Portland cement clinker increases the compressive strength. Therefore, the use of different forms of borogypsum in building industry as raw materials offers a potential alternative for utilization [6]. Also in another study it is concluded that hemihydrate borogypsum could be used as a retarder for Portland cement that would play an important role in preventing environmental pollution [5]. Hemihydrate borogypsum may also be useful for decreasing the radioactive permeability of concrete due to the boron content. As it is known, colemanite, borax and ulexite which have high boron content are used in nuclear reactors as shielding materials for radiation [5].

Magnesium borate minerals, as a source of magnesium and boron, can be used instead of other refined borates or metal borate [6]. Due to superior properties such as; high coefficient of elasticity, high heat resistance, corrosion resistance, the using areas of magnesium borates are ceramic industry, contact lens rinsing waters, corrosion inhibitor in paint, composition of detergent, production of superconducting materials, in the friction-reducing additives in oils and insulating coating compositions [7].

The production of high-purity boron is an expensive and difficult process in the industry [3]. Magnesium borates can be synthesized by hydrothermal procedures which involves the mixture of raw materials in a liquid phase. In literature, there are some examples of synthesized magnesium borate minerals by hydrothermal production procedure ( $\text{aMgO} \cdot \text{bB}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot \text{cH}_2\text{O}$ ) The common points of these studies are the high reaction

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temperatures, which are higher than 100°C [8]-[11].

In this study, starting from a waste material of boron-gypsum, the synthesis of magnesium boron hydrates are aimed. Using the mixture of boron-gypsum and magnesium oxide Senberber et al. [12] studied 100 mL reaction medium, and found that the crystal formations were low. In order to achieve better crystal formations the reaction medium of this study is selected as 50 mL. So the effect of boron-gypsum content that dissolved in the water is experimented in the production of magnesium borates. After the synthesis the products were characterized by the techniques of X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) and Fourier Transform Infrared (FT-IR) Spectroscopy.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### A. Materials

Boron gypsum was retrieved from Boron Management Plant in Bandirma, Turkey and grinded with ceramic mortar before usage (Fig. 1). MgO was supplied from Merck Chemicals and used without any pretreatment.

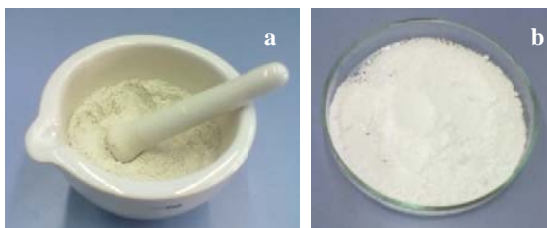


Fig. 1 (a) Boron gypsum grinding process, (b) ground boron gypsum

Then materials were subjected to XRD (Philips PANalytical XPert Pro used with Cu-K $\alpha$  tube and the parameters of 45 kV and 40mA).

### B. Methods

In the hydrothermal synthesis four different mole ratios of MgO and Boron gypsum is studied. These ratios were 1:4, 1:6, 1:8 and 1:10. Before the synthesis, boron gypsum is mixed with water at 80°C for 1h to dissolve the boric acid content inside the boron gypsum as Senberber et al. [12]. Then the solution is filtered and boric acid solution is used in the hydrothermal syntheses. Also in order to examine the solution phase, the solutions water phase is evaporated in an oven at 40°C.

The reaction temperature and reaction time were set to 80°C and 60 mins. Following to synthesis, the mixture is filtered through Whatman blue ribbon filter paper and unreacted MgO is removed. Then the solution part is put in an oven at 40°C to evaporate the excess water. After 48 hours, formed white crystals are washed with pure ethanol (96%) to remove the unreacted boric acid.

After obtaining the pure magnesium borate crystals, XRD (Fig. 2 (a)) technique is conducted with the parameter set explained in the Materials part. Also FT-IR (Perkin Elmer Spectrum One) (Fig. 2 (b)) analyses with Attenuation Total Reflection (ATR) apparatus was used for the determination of

the characteristic bands of minerals. In FT-IR analyses scan number is set to 4, resolution is set to 4 cm<sup>-1</sup> and scan range is set between 1800 – 650 cm<sup>-1</sup>.



Fig. 2 (a) Philips PANalytical XPert Pro XRD, (b) Perkin Elmer Spectrum One FT-IR Spectroscopy

## III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

### A. Raw Materials Characterizations

From the XRD results of the raw materials, MgO was found from the previous study of [12] as similar to the powder diffraction file (pdf) number of “01-077-2179” that responds to phase “Priclase (MgO)”, boron gypsum is similar to the pdf numbers of “00-06-0046” and “01-070-0983” that represents the two different phases of “Gypsum (CaSO<sub>4</sub>.2H<sub>2</sub>O)”.

Before the synthesis gypsum was dissolved in the distilled water to extract the boric acid phase inside, as explained detailed in “Materials Part”. The boric acid phase XRD result was mainly similar to pdf of “01-078-2158” that represents the “Boric acid (H<sub>3</sub>BO<sub>3</sub>)”. The XRD patterns of the gypsum and boric acid is given at Fig. 3.

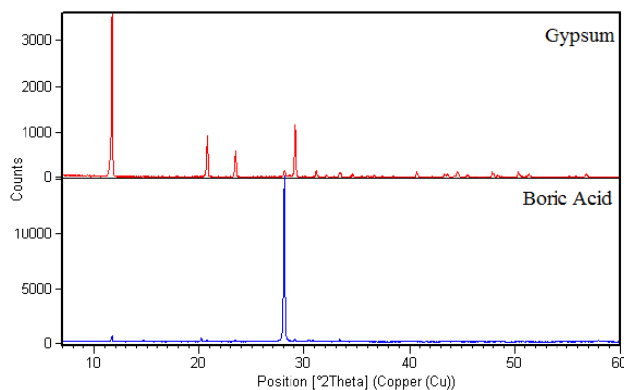


Fig. 3 XRD patterns of the gypsum and boric acid

### B. Products Characterizations

XRD patterns and results are shown in Figs. 4, 5, Tables I and II, respectively.

The phases of; mcallisterite  $Mg_2(B_6O_7(OH)_6)_2 \cdot 9(H_2O)$ , admontite  $MgO(B_2O_3)_3 \cdot 7(H_2O)$ , and magnesium borate hydrate  $MgO(B_2O_3)_3 \cdot 6(H_2O)$  were formed at the set of 50 ml reaction volume. From the XRD scores, where a perfect crystalline mineral have a score value of 100, the mcallisterite

phase was seen as the major phase. And the mole ratios of 1:4 and 1:8 had the best formations.

TABLE I  
XRD RESULTS OF THE SYNTHESIZED MAGNESIUM BORATES IN  
50 ML REACTION VOLUME

Mole Ratio	PDF No.	Mineral Name	Score
1:4	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite*	64
	01-076-0540	Admontite*	19
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate*	24
1:6	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	51
	01-076-0540	Admontite	18
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate	16
1:8	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	62
	01-076-0540	Admontite	17
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate	19
1:10	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	16
	01-076-0540	Admontite	18
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate	22

\* Mcallisterite  $\text{Mg}_2(\text{B}_6\text{O}_7(\text{OH})_6)_2 \cdot 9(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ ,

\* Admontite  $\text{MgO}(\text{B}_2\text{O}_3)_3 \cdot 7(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ ,

\* Magnesium borate hydrate  $\text{MgO}(\text{B}_2\text{O}_3)_3 \cdot 6(\text{H}_2\text{O})$

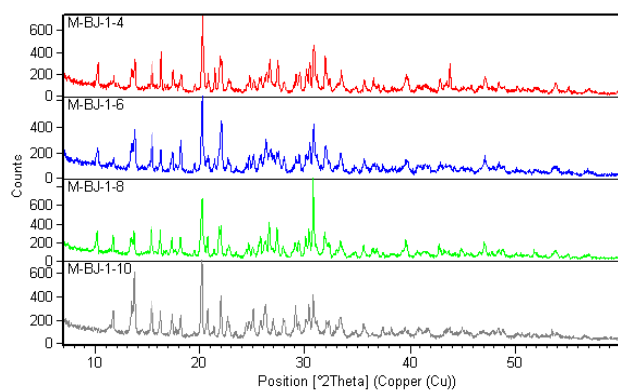


Fig. 4 XRD patterns of the synthesized magnesium borates in 50 mL reaction volume

TABLE II  
XRD RESULTS OF THE SYNTHESIZED MAGNESIUM BORATES IN  
100 ML REACTION VOLUME [12]

Mole Ratio	PDF No.	Mineral Name	Score
1:4	01-073-1254	Aksaite*	10
	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	11
	01-076-0540	Admontite	6
1:6	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	35
	01-076-0540	Admontite	6
1:8	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	47
	01-076-0540	Admontite	14
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate	12
1:10	01-070-1902	Mcallisterite	48
	01-076-0540	Admontite	11
	01-076-0539	Magnesium borate hydrate	9

\* Aksaite  $\text{Mg}(\text{B}_6\text{O}_7(\text{OH})_6)_2 \cdot 2(\text{H}_2\text{O})$

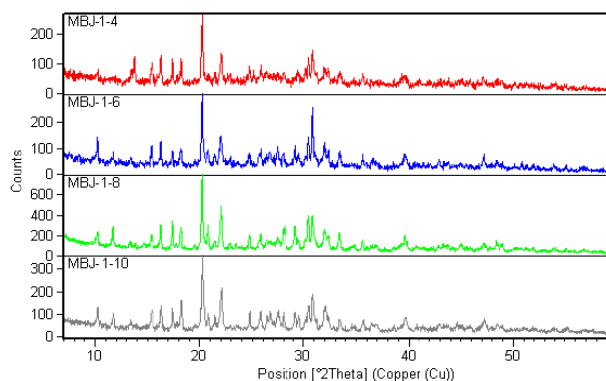


Fig. 5 XRD patterns of the synthesized magnesium borates in 100 mL reaction volume [12]

At the set of 100 ml reaction volume, the phases of mcallisterite, admontite and magnesium borate hydrate and Aksaite  $\text{Mg}(\text{B}_6\text{O}_7(\text{OH})_6)_2 \cdot 2(\text{H}_2\text{O})$  were formed. The major phase was mcallisterite. The XRD scores were decreased compared to the results obtained at 50 ml reaction volume set. The best crystal formations were seen at the mole ratios of 1:8 and 1:10.

FT-IR spectra of the synthesized magnesium borates are shown in Figs. 6 and 7, respectively.

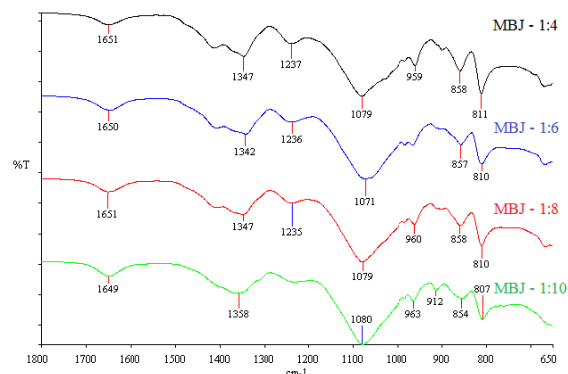


Fig. 6 FT-IR spectra of the synthesized magnesium borates in 50 mL reaction volume

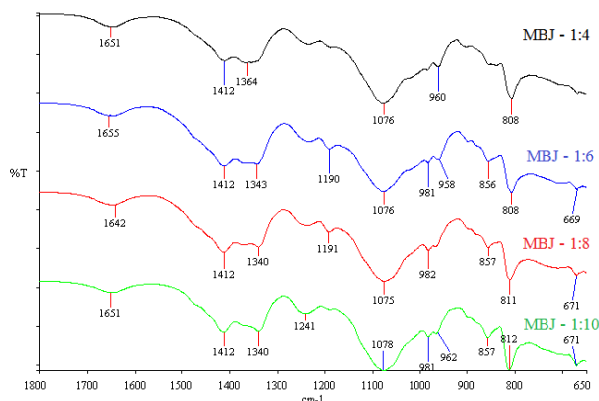


Fig. 7 FT-IR spectra of the synthesized magnesium borates in 100 mL reaction volume [12]

TABLE III  
FT-IR PEAK INTERPRETATIONS

Peaks (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	Peak Explanation
1651-1642	$\delta(\text{H-O-H})$
1412-1340	$\nu_{\text{as}}(\text{B}_{(3)}\text{-O})$
1241-1235	$\delta(\text{B-O-H})$
1080-958	$\nu_{\text{as}}(\text{B}_{(4)}\text{-O})$
857-807	$\nu_{\text{s}}(\text{B}_{(4)}\text{-O})$
671-669	$\delta(\text{B}_{(3)}\text{-O})$

From the FT-IR results, the bending of H-O-H and asymmetrical stretching of three coordinate boron bands are seen at the peaks between 1651-1642 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 1412-1340 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. At the peaks between 1241-1235 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 1080-958 cm<sup>-1</sup>, bending of B-O-H and asymmetrical stretching of four coordinate boron bands are observed, respectively. Last two bands are symmetrical stretching of four coordinate boron and bending of three coordinate boron are formed at the band values between 857-807 cm<sup>-1</sup> and 671-669 cm<sup>-1</sup>.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study the formation of magnesium borates was studied using the MgO and a waste material of boron gypsum. Several different mole ratios of the raw materials were experimented for the determination of the optimum crystal formation. From the experimental results it is seen that three different types of magnesium borate minerals namely; mcallisterite  $\text{Mg}_2(\text{B}_6\text{O}_7(\text{OH})_6)_2 \cdot 9(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ , admontite  $\text{MgO}(\text{B}_2\text{O}_3)_3 \cdot 7(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ , and magnesium borate hydrate  $\text{MgO}(\text{B}_2\text{O}_3)_3 \cdot 6(\text{H}_2\text{O})$  were formed. The major phase is found as the mcallisterite phase. For the crystal formation the XRD scores of the minerals were compared. At the reaction volume of 50 ml, mcallisterite XRD score is 64 and 62 at the ratios of 1:4 and 1:8, respectively. At the previous study which the reaction volume of 100 ml [12], mcallisterite XRD score is 47 and 48 at the ratios of 1:8 and 1:10, respectively. Finally it can be said that the reaction volume decrease to 50 ml, yielded better crystal formation.

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