1 Introduction

Li-ion batteries (LIBs) are widely used in a myriad of applications such as portable devices, electric vehicles and renewable energy storage systems. In an effort to develop superior LIBs, many candidate electrode materials have been investigated in terms of energy density, output voltage, charge-discharge rates and cycle lifetimes. At the same time, efforts to improve battery safety, compactness and stability have led to the development of solid electrolytes that exhibit good Li-ion conductivities and structural compactness and stability have led to the development of solid electrolytes obtained by performing transmission electron microscopy with a Wien-filter monochromator-equipped microscope. While the peaks of Li-K edges are positioned at about 62 eV for most of the materials examined, the peak positions of O-K edges vary within a range of about 530 to 540 eV, and the peaks can be categorised into three groups based on their characteristic edge shapes: (i) double peaks, (ii) single sharp peaks, and (iii) single broad peaks. The double peaks of group (i) are attributable to the d⁰ electronic configuration of their transition metal ions bonded to O atoms. The origin of the different peak shapes of groups (ii) and (iii) is more subtle but insights are gained using density functional theory methods to simulate O-K ELNES edges of group (ii) material LiCoO₂ and group (iii) material LiFePO₄. Comparison of their densities of states reveals that in LiCoO₂ the Co–O hybrid orbitals are separated from Li–O hybrid orbitals, resulting in a sharp peak in the O-K edge, while Fe–O, Li–O and P–O hybrid orbitals in LiFePO₄ partially overlap each other and produce a broad peak.

Electrical conductivity, state of charge and chemical stability of Li-ion battery materials all depend on the electronic states of their component atoms, and tools for measuring these reliably are needed for advanced materials analysis and design. Here we report a systematic investigation of electron energy-loss near-edge structures (ELNES) of Li-K and O-K edges for ten representative Li-ion battery electrodes and solid-state electrolytes obtained by performing transmission electron microscopy with a Wien-filter monochromator-equipped microscope. While the peaks of Li-K edges are positioned at about 62 eV for most of the materials examined, the peak positions of O-K edges vary within a range of about 530 to 540 eV, and the peaks can be categorised into three groups based on their characteristic edge shapes: (i) double peaks, (ii) single sharp peaks, and (iii) single broad peaks. The double peaks of group (i) are attributable to the d⁰ electronic configuration of their transition metal ions bonded to O atoms. The origin of the different peak shapes of groups (ii) and (iii) is more subtle but insights are gained using density functional theory methods to simulate O-K ELNES edges of group (ii) material LiCoO₂ and group (iii) material LiFePO₄. Comparison of their densities of states reveals that in LiCoO₂ the Co–O hybrid orbitals are separated from Li–O hybrid orbitals, resulting in a sharp peak in the O-K edge, while Fe–O, Li–O and P–O hybrid orbitals in LiFePO₄ partially overlap each other and produce a broad peak.
peak shapes accurately. While measurements with resolutions up to 0.3 eV (as determined by the full width half maximum (FWHM) of the zero-loss peak) can be obtained using cold-Fe guns,\(^21\) to obtain resolutions better than 0.1 eV requires use of monochromators.\(^{22-24}\) The latter allows Li-K edge spectra to be used to measure Li concentrations and distributions quantitatively with nanoscale resolution, as reported for materials LiCoO\(_2\),\(^{25,26}\) LiFePO\(_4\),\(^{27,28}\) and Li\(_2\)MnO\(_3\).\(^{29}\) One drawback of this method, however, is that TM-M\(_{2,3}\) (or TM-N\(_{2,3}\)) edges lie near to Li-K edges, making their peaks difficult to deconvolute.

Although measurements of Li-K and O-K edges of many LIB materials have been reported,\(^{14,15,30-36}\) to the best of our knowledge, the dependence of the ELNES spectra on the type of TM, the crystal structure, and the bonding environment has not been studied systematically. This lack of systematic comparison has sometimes led to conflicting results in the literature, and hampers deeper understanding of the relationship between electronic structure, chemical environment and electrochemical properties of these materials.

In this study, using a monochromator-equipped TEM, we carried out a systematic comparison of the effect of different TM elements and crystal environments on Li-K and O-K ELNES spectra for ten typical LIB-related materials. The structure types of each material and the coordination numbers (CN), valence states and d-electron configurations of their component TM elements are listed in Table 1, with representative crystal structures depicted in Fig. 1. The materials examined include six cathode materials, two solid electrolyte materials, one anode material, and one non-conductive material (as reference). The cathode materials include two layer-type materials, LiCoO\(_2\) and Li\(_2\)MnO\(_3\); two olivine-type materials, LiFePO\(_4\) and LiCoPO\(_4\); and two spinel-type materials, LiMn\(_2\)O\(_4\) and LiNi\(_0.5\)Mn\(_1.5\)O\(_4\). LiCoO\(_2\) and LiFePO\(_4\) have been widely investigated and Li\(_2\)MnO\(_3\) was also characterised as a reference material because it shares their perovskite-like structure but with fully occupied crystallographic Li sites. The anode material was spinel-type Li\(_4\)Ti\(_5\)O\(_12\).

These materials all exhibit differently shaped EELS spectra, especially in the case of O-K ELNES. To understand the origins of these differences, we carried out DFT-based calculations of LiCoO\(_2\) and LiFePO\(_4\), which exhibit representative spectrum shapes. Although several theoretical investigations have been reported for both compounds,\(^{40,47-49}\) the reported results are not sufficiently detailed to provide explanations for the differences in ELNES peak positions and shapes. In particular, electronic structures of excited states have not yet been reported, so in this study we performed ELNES simulations of LiCoO\(_2\) and LiFePO\(_4\) taking into account the electronic structures of the excited state, and compared the results with experimental spectra.

### Table 1 Li-ion battery materials examined in this study, their composition, structure type, and atomic coordination numbers (CNs), together with charge states and d-electron configurations of their transition metal (TM) ions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Structure type</th>
<th>CN Li</th>
<th>TM</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>d config.</th>
<th>TM ion d config.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LiFePO(_4)</td>
<td>Olivine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fe(^{2+})</td>
<td>d(^6) (HS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiCoO(_2)</td>
<td>Olivine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Co(^{2+})</td>
<td>d(^6) (HS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiCoO(_2)</td>
<td>Layered rocksalt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mn(^{4+})</td>
<td>d(^3) (LS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li(_2)MnO(_3)</td>
<td>Layered rocksalt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mn(^{4+})</td>
<td>d(^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li(_2)MnO(_3)</td>
<td>Spinel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mn(^{4+})</td>
<td>d(^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiNi(<em>{0.5})Mn(</em>{1.5})O(_4)</td>
<td>Spinel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ni(^{2+})</td>
<td>d(^8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li(<em>{0.5})Ti(</em>{0.5})O(_3)</td>
<td>Spinel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mn(^{4+})</td>
<td>d(^3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiNbO(_3)</td>
<td>Trigonal perovskite</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>~12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nb(^{5+})</td>
<td>d(^0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li(<em>{0.14})La(</em>{0.14})TiO(_3)</td>
<td>Perovskite</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>~12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ti(^{4+})</td>
<td>d(^0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li(<em>{0.14})La(</em>{0.14})NbO(_3)</td>
<td>Perovskite</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>~12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nb(^{5+})</td>
<td>d(^0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2 Methods

#### 2.1 Specimen preparation

Samples of the ten compounds were prepared by different methods, as described below:

1. **LiFePO\(_4\)**: Powder was prepared by solid-state reaction between stoichiometric amounts of Li\(_2\)CO\(_3\), Fe\(_2\)O\(_3\), 2H\(_2\)O and (NH\(_4\))\(_2\)HPO\(_4\) at 600 °C for 6 h, followed by annealing at 800 °C for 24 h under pure Ar gas flow.

2. **LiCoPO\(_4\)**: A thin film of LiCoPO\(_4\) was prepared via an aqueous sol–gel route using citric acid as the chelating agent.\(^{51}\) Stoichiometric amounts of CH\(_3\)COOLi, Co(NO\(_3\))\(_2\), 6H\(_2\)O and NH\(_4\)H\(_2\)PO\(_4\) were dissolved in distilled water and citric acid was added to the solution. The precursor solution was spread on an Au-coated Al\(_2\)O\(_3\) substrate by spin-coating and annealed first at 350 °C for 1 h and then at 700 °C for 1 h.
TEM specimens of thin films of LiCoPO$_4$, LiMn$_2$O$_4$ and Li$_4$Ti$_5$O$_12$

(3) LiCoO$_2$. LiCoO$_2$ single crystals were prepared via a flux method using LiCoO$_2$, Li$_2$O and LiCl. The mixture was heated at 900 °C for 10 h, cooled to 700 °C at a rate of 2 °C h$^{-1}$ and then allowed to cool naturally down to room temperature. Platelet-like LiCoO$_2$ single crystals were separated by rinsing the frozen flux in hot water.

(4) Li$_2$MnO$_3$. Li$_2$MnO$_3$ nanocrystals were fabricated by a hydrothermal method. LiOH·H$_2$O was dissolved in distilled water and γ-MnO$_2$ powder was added to the solution. The mixture was heated at 180 °C for 24 h in an autoclave, centrifuged, washed with water and ethanol, and dried at 120 °C.

(5) LiMn$_3$O$_4$. LiMn$_3$O$_4$ thin film was fabricated by chemical solution deposition of chemically modified LiOC$_2$H$_4$OC$_2$H$_5$ and Mn(O$_2$C$_2$H$_4$OC$_2$H$_5$)$_3$ solutions by refluxing in C$_2$H$_5$OC$_2$H$_4$OH.$^{52}$ The precursor solution was spin-coated onto an Au-coated Al$_2$O$_3$ substrate to form a thin film after heat treatment at 750 °C for 1 h.

(6) LiNi$_{0.33}$Mn$_{0.33}$O$_4$. LiNi$_{0.33}$Mn$_{0.33}$O$_4$ polycrystalline powder was prepared by a sol–gel method. LiCH$_3$COO and Li$_2$CO$_3$, TiO$_2$ and La$_2$O$_3$.$^{55}$ were dissolved in distilled water and gelled. After calcining the precursor gel at 250 °C for 1 h, the powder was sintered at 800 °C for 20 h.

(7) Li$_3$Ti$_5$O$_{12}$. Li$_3$Ti$_5$O$_{12}$ thin film was fabricated by a sputtering method using a pristine Li$_3$Ti$_5$O$_{12}$ target.$^{53}$ The deposited film was annealed at 900 °C.

(8) LiNbO$_3$. LiNbO$_3$ powder was prepared by a conventional solid-state reaction method from Li$_2$CO$_3$ and Nb$_2$O$_5$ by sintering at 1000 °C for 5 h.$^{54}$

(9) Li$_{0.33}$La$_{0.56}$TiO$_3$. Li$_{0.33}$La$_{0.56}$TiO$_3$ powder was prepared by a solid-state reaction method by sintering mixtures of Li$_2$CO$_3$, TiO$_2$ and La$_2$O$_3$.$^{55}$

(10) Li$_{0.14}$La$_{0.23}$NbO$_3$. A single crystal of Li$_{0.14}$La$_{0.23}$NbO$_3$ was fabricated by a conventional unidirectional solidification method.$^{54}$ LiNbO$_3$ and LaNb$_2$O$_6$ precursor powders were mixed, compacted into a cylindrical shape and sintered at 1200 °C for 20 h. The sintered polycrystalline Li$_{0.14}$La$_{0.23}$NbO$_3$ rod that resulted was melted in a Pt crucible at 1380 °C and then gradually passed downward through a unidirectional solidification furnace.

X-ray diffraction measurements were used to confirm that materials (1) to (10) were each prepared successfully as a single phase with the appropriate crystal structure under ambient conditions (see Fig. S1 in ESI†).

2.2 EELS measurements

TEM specimens of thin films of LiCoPO$_4$, LiMn$_2$O$_4$ and Li$_4$Ti$_5$O$_{12}$ were prepared using low-temperature (liquid N$_2$-cooled to below −100 °C) and low-voltage (3.0 kV to 0.2 kV) ion-milling (PIPS, Gatan Inc.). Special care was taken to minimise damage to the samples, and surfaces were cleaned using a plasma cleaner (Solarus, Gatan Inc.) to remove residual amorphous phases. TEM specimens of the other bulk samples were prepared by careful crushing, and the resulting powders dispersed and deposited onto lacey carbon films (above copper substrates).

EELS measurements were carried out using a JEM-2400FCS atomic resolution microscope (JEOL Ltd.) equipped with a spherical-aberration corrector (CEOS GmbH), an EELS spectrometer (GIF Tridiem ERS, Gatan Inc.) and a Wien-filter type monochromator. The microscope was installed in a room designed and constructed to minimise AC magnetic fields, floor vibrations, air-flow volume, temperature fluctuations and acoustic vibrations. In this stable environment, a high energy resolution below 30 meV was achieved.$^{24}$

EELS spectra were recorded with an accelerating voltage of 60 kV to reduce irradiation damage and a convergence/collection semi-angle of 30/35 mrad. The energy resolution, ΔE, specified in terms of the FWHM of the zero-loss peak, was controlled by changing the width of an energy selection slit in the monochromator. To examine the effect of energy resolution on ELNES spectra, we measured Li-K edges of LiFePO$_4$, LiCoPO$_4$, LiCoO$_2$ and Li$_4$Ti$_5$O$_{12}$ under various slit conditions, viz., no slit, slit of width 4 μm, and slit of width 1 μm, keeping the dispersion value constant at 0.05 eV per pixel. The resulting ΔE were 0.7 eV, 0.35 eV and 0.1 eV, respectively.

Measurements to compare Li-K edges of all materials were performed using a dispersion value, slit width, and measurement exposure time of 0.05 eV per pixel, 1 μm and 0.2 s, respectively. Similarly, for O-K edges, values of 0.1 eV per pixel, 4 μm and 1 s, respectively, were used. The dispersion value of 0.1 eV per pixel used for O-K edge measurements was larger than that for Li-K edges, but is comparable to the natural line width of the O-K edge, 0.12 eV.$^{56}$ These conditions provided resolutions of ΔE = 0.1 and 0.3 eV for Li-K and O-K edges, respectively. Integration times per measurement for both edges were 10–20 s. Energy alignment was carried out by measuring the zero-loss peak just before and after recording edge spectra. The standard deviation of the zero-loss peak position was 0.03 eV over a time span of 10 minutes (see Fig. S2 in ESI†).

2.3 ELNES simulations

Theoretical O-K ELNES spectra of LiCoO$_2$ and LiFePO$_4$ were generated from first-principles calculations using the DFT+U method including spin polarisation.$^{57}$ In all calculations, the GGA-PBE functional was used for the exchange-correlation term.$^{58}$ Values of U of 4.91 eV and 3.71 eV, respectively, were applied to d electrons in Co$^{3+}$ in LiCoO$_2$ and Fe$^{2+}$ in LiFePO$_4$.$^{59}$ In LiFePO$_4$, although the most stable spin configuration is antiferromagnetic, the temperature of the anti-ferromagnetic-to-ferromagnetic transition is below room temperature,$^{49}$ so we assumed LiFePO$_4$ to be in the ferromagnetic state for the calculations.

Before generating ELNES spectra, lattice parameters of LiCoO$_2$ and LiFePO$_4$ were determined by performing structural optimisation using the VASP code$^{60}$ with a plane-wave cut-off energy of 500 eV. The hexagonal R$3$m unit cell (12 atoms) of LiCoO$_2$ was optimised using a 15 × 15 × 3 Brillouin zone k-point mesh, and the orthorhombic Pnma unit cell (28 atoms) of LiFePO$_4$ using a 6 × 9 × 15 k-point mesh.

O-K ELNES spectra were generated using the core-hole method implemented in the WIEN2k code with an all-electron
basis set \((\text{APW} + \text{lo method})\).\(^{61}\) In this method, the transition probabilities were calculated using a supercell with an electron removed from the 1s orbital of an O atom (core hole) and placed in the conduction band.\(^{62}\) According to the spin selection rule, we need to consider the probability of each spin state of the excited electron. In the case of an up-spin excited electron, only up-spin orbitals are relevant to the transition calculation, and vice versa for down-spin excited electrons. Because LiCoO\(_2\) in its ground state is non-magnetic, the probabilities of up-spin excitation and down-spin excitation are identical, so we only performed calculations for an up-spin excitation. In the case of LiFePO\(_4\), although up- and down-spin excitations are not equivalent, our test calculations revealed that the differences between the two excited states are small. The theoretical ELNES spectra of LiFePO\(_4\) reported here were generated by averaging contributions of up- and down-spin orbitals from calculation of a down-spin excitation.

Muffin tin radii \((R_{\text{MT}})\) for Li, O, P, Co and Fe were 1.70, 1.60 \((\text{LiCoO}_2)/1.45\) \((\text{LiFePO}_4)\), 1.45, 2.00 and 2.10 bohr, respectively. The cutoff parameter that determines the maximum wave number of plane waves, \(k_{\text{max}}\), was set at 7.0, and O-1s states were treated as core levels for both LiCoO\(_2\) and LiFePO\(_4\). A \(4 \times 4 \times 1\) (192 atom) supercell was constructed from the LiCoO\(_2\) unit cell and a \(1 \times 2 \times 2\) (112 atom) supercell from the LiFePO\(_4\) unit cell, with \(3 \times 3 \times 2\) and \(4 \times 3 \times 3\) \(k\)-point meshes, respectively, for integrating over the Brillouin zone. In LiFePO\(_4\), as there are three non-equivalent O sites, we calculated the contribution of each type of O separately and took the weighted average when calculating the projected density of states (PDOS) of O-p orbitals and ELNES spectra. The core level of the most distant O atom from the excited O atom in each supercell was used as reference to adjust the PDOS position. The transition energy obtained from the difference in total energies between ground and excited states was used to adjust ELNES edge positions.

### 3 Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Effect of energy resolution on Li-K ELNES

The effect of different energy resolutions, \(\Delta E\), of 0.7, 0.35 and 0.1 eV, on EELS spectra in the low-loss region around Li-K edges was examined for LiFePO\(_4\), LiCoPO\(_4\), LiCoO\(_2\) and Li\(_4\)Ti\(_5\)O\(_{12}\) (Fig. 2). As can be seen in Fig. 2(c) and (d), the positions and shapes of the strongest peaks change little with \(\Delta E\) in the cases of Li\(_4\)Ti\(_5\)O\(_{12}\) and LiCoO\(_2\). In the case of LiFePO\(_4\), when \(\Delta E = 0.35\) eV, a small trough appears at higher energy than the largest peak, around 64 eV, and when \(\Delta E = 0.1\) eV, small peaks appear on both sides of this trough as indicated by the blue arrow in Fig. 2(b). The splitting of the peak on the left side of the trough from the largest peak is accompanied by a shift of the largest peak to slightly lower energy, allowing the edge position to be determined with higher accuracy. In the case of LiFePO\(_4\), the single peak at 58.2 eV apparent when \(\Delta E = 0.7\) eV changes into a main peak and shoulder peak at 57.6 and 58.3 eV, respectively, when \(\Delta E = 0.1\) eV, as indicated by the red arrows in Fig. 2(a).

In the cases of LiFePO\(_4\), LiCoPO\(_4\) and Li\(_4\)Ti\(_5\)O\(_{12}\) pre-edge peaks become more distinct with decreasing \(\Delta E\) as indicated by green arrows in Fig. 2(a), (b) and (d). In LiCoO\(_2\) and LiFePO\(_4\) small bumps appear in the tails of the largest peaks at higher energies when \(\Delta E \leq 0.35\) eV, as indicated by blue arrows in Fig. 2(a) and (c). Although such peaks are small, they are useful for checking the accuracy of calculated spectra. For example, the spectral shape including tail peaks of LiCoO\(_2\) has been verified by DFT calculations using the \(Z + 1\) method by Kikkawa et al.\(^{30}\) In the case of LiFePO\(_4\), while the largest peak in Fig. 2(a) at around 58 eV corresponds to the Fe-M\(_{2,3}\) edge, the peaks above 60 eV indicated by the blue arrows are thought to be components of the Li-K edge because it has been reported that the intensities of these peaks decrease with decreasing Li content.\(^{33}\) In this case, performing EELS measurements with high resolution becomes critically important as such features may otherwise be missed.

#### 3.2 Comparison of Li-K ELNES

Fig. 3(a) shows experimentally obtained ELNES spectra for all materials measured with a resolution of \(\Delta E = 0.1\) eV. The main
peak positions of TM-M$_{2,3}$ (or N$_{2,3}$ for Nb) edges and Li-K edges are indicated by grey and black inverted triangles, respectively. The weak peaks assumed to be Li-K edges in the spectra of Li$_{0.14}$La$_{0.29}$NbO$_3$ and Li$_{0.33}$La$_{0.56}$TiO$_3$ are indicated by open inverted triangles. Fig. 3(b) shows a magnified view of the energy region around the Li-K edges after background subtraction. TM-M$_{2,3}$ (or N$_{2,3}$ for Nb) edges have also been subtracted, except for the Fe-M$_{2,3}$ edge for LiFePO$_4$. Table 2 compares these peak positions with data available in the literature.$^{13,14,30,32–34,36}$ Agreement to within 1 eV was obtained in all cases.

TM-M$_{2,3}$ (Nb-N$_{2,3}$) edges are known to correspond to transitions from 3p$^{3/2,1/2}$ (or 4p$^{3/2,1/2}$) core states to the unoccupied conduction bands. A systematic comparison of the spectra reveals peak positions shift to higher energies as the atomic number increases. This trend reflects the shift to lower core energy levels with increasing atomic number.

In LiNi$_{0.5}$Mn$_{1.5}$O$_4$, LiFePO$_4$, LiCoPO$_4$ and LiCoO$_2$, the M$_{2,3}$ edges of Ni, Fe and Co are close to and partially overlap the Li-K edges, complicating detection of the latter. As mentioned in the previous section, in the case of Fe-M$_{2,3}$ edge for LiFePO$_4$, we cannot assign the weak protrusion at around 62 eV to the Li-K edge without comparison with measurements from delithiated samples.$^a$ In the case of LiCoPO$_4$, no such data are available, so we here assume the peak at around 62 eV to be the Li-K edge, similar to the case for LiCoO$_2$. The Ni-M$_{2,3}$ edge of LiNi$_{0.5}$Mn$_{1.5}$O$_4$ is assumed to occur at energies higher than the Li-K edge by several electron-volts because in Ni metal it appears at 68 eV.$^{13}$ Based on this, the small protrusion at 61.9 eV to the right of the Mn-M$_{2,3}$ edges was assigned to the Li-K edge.

In the magnified spectra of Li$_{0.14}$La$_{0.29}$NbO$_3$ and Li$_{0.33}$La$_{0.56}$TiO$_3$, very slight peaks are visible at around 60 eV. However, it is difficult to distinguish these Li-K edges from Nb-N$_1$ and Ti-M$_1$ edges.

Table 2 Peak positions of TM-M,N and Li-K edges compared with data in the literature. Values obtained by background subtraction are given in parentheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>TM-M,N edges (eV)</th>
<th>Li-K edge (eV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This work</td>
<td>Previous work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiFePO$_4$</td>
<td>55.9, 58.3</td>
<td>55.5, 57.4$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiCoPO$_4$</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiCoO$_2$</td>
<td>50.0, 55.5</td>
<td>50.4, 55.4$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiMnO$_3$</td>
<td>50.2, 54.9</td>
<td>49.5, 54.5$^d$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiNi$<em>{0.5}$Mn$</em>{1.5}$O$_4$</td>
<td>49.7, 54.6</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li$<em>{1/3}$Ti$</em>{1/2}$O$_{12}$</td>
<td>39.3, 47.3$^d$</td>
<td>39.5, 47.3$^d$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiNbO$_3$</td>
<td>39.0, 46.6</td>
<td>39.8$^f$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li$<em>{0.33}$La$</em>{0.56}$TiO$_3$</td>
<td>39.2, 47.4$^d$</td>
<td>(58.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li$<em>{0.11}$La$</em>{0.29}$NbO$_3$</td>
<td>38.4, 46.4</td>
<td>(58.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ Ref. 20. $^b$ Ref. 36. $^c$ Ref. 14. $^d$ Ref. 33. $^e$ Ref. 51. $^f$ Ref. 30. $^g$ Ref. 34.
edges which also exist at around 60 eV, so it is difficult to identify the Li-K edges with certainty. The chief reason for this is the lower Li concentrations in these solid electrolytes compared to the other materials; the volume densities of Li atoms in these two materials are approximately 2.3 and 5.7 atoms per nm$^3$, respectively, while those of the other materials are between 13 and 40 atoms per nm$^3$.

Previous studies of other Li-containing materials by ELNES or XANES showed that the positions of Li-K edges can vary by more than 5 eV depending on the particular chemical environment of the Li atoms, as reflected in the Mulliken electronegativities or oxidation numbers of neighbouring atoms.\textsuperscript{18,63}

In our work, the main Li-K peaks were observed to lie at around 61–62 eV for all materials except $\text{Li}_{0.33}\text{La}_{0.56}\text{TiO}_3$ and $\text{Li}_{0.14}\text{La}_{0.29}\text{NbO}_3$. This suggests that, although there are differences between the compounds, such as the CN of Li, Li–O bond lengths, and the types of second nearest neighbour cations, the positions of the main peaks are only slightly affected by the local environments around Li.

For some materials, the fine structures of Li-K edges contain small pre-edge peaks and/or sub-peaks above the main peak. These structures are expected to contain valuable information about the chemical bonding states in these compounds. It remains difficult, however, to extract these details because of the overlap with TM-M$_{2,3}$ edges mentioned above. Furthermore, although DFT calculations can help explicate these fine structures, simulation of a Li-K edge requires a calculation scheme that includes electron-hole coupling effects, e.g., the Bethe-Salpeter equation (BSE) method,\textsuperscript{64} which is beyond the scope of the present work.

### 3.3 O-K ELNES

Fig. 4 shows O-K ELNES spectra of the LIB materials examined in this study obtained with $\Delta E = 0.3$ eV. The peak positions occur at energies between 530 eV and 550 eV. Based on the peak shapes, the materials can be categorised into the following three groups: (i) $\text{Li}_{0.14}\text{La}_{0.29}\text{NbO}_3$, $\text{Li}_{0.33}\text{La}_{0.56}\text{TiO}_3$, $\text{LiNbO}_3$ and $\text{Li}_4\text{Ti}_5\text{O}_{12}$, with double peaks split by a few electron-volts (indicated by inverted open triangles); (ii) $\text{LiCoO}_2$, $\text{Li}_2\text{MnO}_3$, $\text{LiMn}_2\text{O}_4$ and $\text{LiNi}_{0.5}\text{Mn}_{1.5}\text{O}_4$, with a single sharp, strong peak at the edge position (indicated by black inverted triangles); and (iii) $\text{LiCoPO}_4$ and $\text{LiFePO}_4$, with a single broad peak (indicated by grey inverted triangles). In Table 3, the peak positions are listed for all ten materials and compared with available reported values. In all cases, differences in energy are less than 2 eV.

The observed trends can be partly interpreted in terms of the effect of TM-d orbitals overlapping with neighbouring O-2p orbitals. As reported in Table 1, TM atoms in group (i) materials have a $d^0$ configuration, while TM atoms in the other two groups have partially occupied $d$ orbitals. Since all TM atoms of the materials examined here are in octahedral coordination environments, their $d$ orbitals are split into $t_{2g}$ and $e_g$ bands.

In group (i) materials, the $t_{2g}$ and $e_g$ bands hybridise with unoccupied O-2p orbitals to form part of the conduction band. Such hybridisation results in splitting of the O-2p states into which an O-1s electron is excited, resulting in the double peak in the O-K ELNES spectra.
respectively. The broad peak at energies higher than 536 eV originate from the hybridisation of O-p orbitals with Co-d and Li-p orbitals, broad peak in the ELNES. Other changes in the shape of the broad hybridisation is consistent with previous DFT calculations. 48

3.4 O-K ELNES simulations of LiCoO₂ and LiFePO₄

Fig. 5(a) shows experimental and simulated O-K ELNES spectra of LiCoO₂ when \( \Delta E = 0.3 \) eV. The simulated spectrum matches the shape of the experimental spectrum well, as well as the calculated O-K X-ray absorption near edge structure. 47,48

Fig. 5(b) shows PDOSs of O-p, Co-d and Li-p orbitals, with ground-state and excited-state PDOSs plotted as solid and dashed lines, respectively. The excited-state PDOSs are from the O atom containing the core hole in the case of the O-p orbital, and from Co and Li atoms neighbouring the excited O atom in the case of Co-d and Li-p orbitals, respectively.

In ground-state LiCoO₂, the valence band consists of Co-3d \((t_{2g})\) and O-2p orbitals and the conduction band of Co-3d \((e_g)\), O-2p and Li-2p orbitals. 30,47 The octahedral environment of the Co atom causes Co-d orbitals to split into fully occupied \(t_{2g}\) states and unoccupied \(e_g\) states. The calculated band gap of 2.5 eV is consistent with previous DFT calculations. 48

Formation of an O-1s hole reduces the symmetry reduction of CoO₆ octahedra resulting in splitting of Co-d \((e_g)\) orbitals hybridised with 2p orbitals of the excited O atom. This splitting lowers the conduction band minimum by about 1.5 eV, resulting in a lowering of the energy of the O-K edge, and produces the very small shoulder-like sub-peak in the tail of the main peak in the ELNES. Other changes in the shape of the broad hybridisation band between O-2p and Li-2p orbitals at energies higher than 7 eV in the excited state are also noticeable in the PDOS plots in Fig. 5(b). Since the O-K ELNES spectrum is produced by the transition of an O-1s electron to unoccupied O-p states, Fig. 5(b) shows that the single sharp ELNES peak at around 532 eV and the broad peak at energies higher than 536 eV originate from hybridisation of O-p orbitals with Co-d and Li-p orbitals, respectively.

Experimental and calculated O-K ELNES spectra of LiFePO₄ using \( \Delta E = 0.3 \) eV are compared in Fig. 6(a). Fig. 6(b) shows PDOSs of O-p, Fe-d, P-p and Li-p orbitals in ground and excited states in the same manner as for LiCoO₂ in Fig. 5(b) where PDOSs of the excited O atom and Fe, P and Li atoms neighbouring it have been averaged over contributions from crystallographically independent sites.

The calculated O-K ELNES spectrum in Fig. 6(a) has a single broad peak and appears more similar to the experimental spectrum compared to those previously calculated using the Z + 1 method or from dielectric function calculations. 49 This result demonstrates the efficacy of using the core–hole method to simulate the ELNES spectra with reasonable accuracy. 62

In the ground state, while the top of the valence band of LiFePO₄ consists of O-2p and Fe-3d orbitals, in the energy range from 3 to 5 eV above the valence band maximum (VBM), the conduction band mainly consists of O-2p and Fe-3d orbitals and the region with energies higher than 5 eV consists of O-p, P-p and Li-p orbitals (Fig. 6(b)). The relatively large differences between up- and down-spin contributions in PDOSs of Fe-d and O-p orbitals reflect the high-spin states of Fe²⁺ ions with a \(d^6\) electronic configuration, i.e., \((t_{2g})^6(e_g)^2\). The observed broad distribution of the O-p PDOS in the conduction band is a result of hybridisation between O-p orbitals and neighbouring Fe, P and Li orbitals. This overlapping of several orbitals in the conduction band is characteristic of LiFePO₄, in contrast to the clear separation between hybrid O-Co and Li-O orbitals in the conduction band of LiCoO₂.
When an electron is elevated from an O-1s shell in LiFePO₄, the PDOSs of O-p, Fe-d and P-p orbitals at the bottom of the conduction band (around 3 to 7 eV above the VBM) change dramatically, while their PDOSs at higher energies undergo relatively little change. Introduction of the core hole shifts the bottom of the conduction band, which in the ground state consists mainly of Fe-d electrons between 3 and 5 eV above the VBM, higher by about 1.5 eV. The PDOS of P-p orbitals between 5 and 7 eV above the Fermi level also increases dramatically, a consequence of the strong covalent bonding between P and O atoms. The band gap, however, remains essentially unchanged because Fe-d orbitals at the top of the valence band in the ground state are elevated to the bottom of the conduction band in the excited state. These changes enhance the energetic overlap between the Fe–O, Li–O and P–O hybrid orbitals, resulting in the characteristic broad peak in the O-K ELNES of LiFePO₄, in contrast to that of LiCoO₂. The broad single peaks observed for group (iii) materials (LiFePO₄ and LiCoPO₄) can thus be attributed to the presence of tetrahedral PO₄ units in addition to the TM–O polyhedra. Group (ii) materials, which lack PO₄ tetrahedral units, exhibit single, sharp O-K edges regardless of the overall crystal structure, e.g., layered-rocksalt in the case of LiCoO₂ or spinel in the case of LiMn₂O₄.

Although the band gaps of LiCoO₂ and LiFePO₄ are almost the same, the peak positions of O-K edges in LiCoO₂ and LiFePO₄ differ by about 6.7 eV. Our ELNES simulations also demonstrated a similar trend, with a calculated difference in peak positions of 4.9 eV. Analysis of the electronic structures showed that this difference arises from the difference in changes in the conduction bands in the excited state. As mentioned above, the peak in the O-K edge of LiCoO₂ corresponds to the conduction band minimum composed of hybrid O–Co orbitals, and decreases by about 1.5 eV upon introduction of a core hole. In the case of LiFePO₄, the conduction band minimum is not decreased when a core hole is introduced, and neither are there isolated hybrid O–TM orbitals. This difference provides one explanation for why the main peak of the O-K edge in LiFePO₄ appears at higher energy than in LiCoO₂.

4 Conclusions

Li-K and O-K ELNES spectra of ten different representative LIB materials were systematically investigated by EELS using an aberration-corrected TEM equipped with a monochromator. Measurements with a high energy resolution of ΔE = 0.1 eV revealed fine structures in Li-K ELNES spectra that can otherwise remain hidden. The peak positions of Li-K edges were found to be about 62 eV for most of the LIB materials because of the similar coordination environments of their Li ions. In contrast, the peak positions of O-K edges varied over a range of about 10 eV. The shapes of O-K edges could be divided into three groups. Group (i) materials contained octahedrally coordinated TM ions with empty d orbitals, and these materials produced ELNES with double peaks at the O-K edges because of splitting of TM-d orbitals into t₂g and eₕ levels. Group (ii) and (iii) materials both contained TM ions with partially filled d orbitals, but the shapes of their O-K edges were found to be distinctly different, the former with a single sharp peak and the latter with a single broad peak.

ELNES simulations based on DFT revealed that the single sharp peak in the O-K edge of group (ii) material LiCoO₂ results from hybridisation of O-p and Co-d eₕ orbitals with energies close to the conduction band minimum. In contrast, the broad peak of the O-K edge of group (iii) material LiFePO₄ results from hybridisation between O-p orbitals with P-p, Fe-d and Li-p orbitals in the conduction band at similar energy levels.

Our systematic analysis of EELS spectra demonstrates how a combination of high-resolution ELNES measurements and
simulations based on DFT calculations provides useful insights into the electronic structures and coordination environments of atoms in LIB materials.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Acknowledgements

This work was partially supported by the Research & Development Initiative for Scientific Innovation of New Generation Batteries 2 (RISING 2) project from the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO), Japan. The authors thank Toyota Motor Corporation for providing some of the samples.

References


