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Grahn, T.

2013


http://hdl.handle.net/10138/166305
https://doi.org/10.1051/epjconf/20136301009

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Coulomb excitation of re-accelerated \(^{208}\text{Rn}\) and \(^{206}\text{Po}\) beams

T. Grahn\(^{1,2,a}\), M. Albers\(^3\), K. Auronen\(^{1,2}\), C. Bauer\(^3\), C. Bernards\(^5\), A. Blazhev\(^6\), P. Butler\(^5\), S. Bönig\(^6\), A. Damyanova\(^{12}\), T. De Coster\(^7\), H. De Witte\(^7\), J. Elseviers\(^7\), L. P. Gaffney\(^{7,5}\), M. Huyse\(^7\), A. Herzär\(^{1,2}\), U. Jakobsson\(^{1,2}\), N. Kesteloot\(^7\), J. Konki\(^{1,2}\), Th. Kröll\(^6\), L. Lewandowski\(^3\), K. Mosher\(^3\), J. Pakarinen\(^{2,8}\), P. Peura\(^{1,2}\), M. Pfeiffer\(^3\), D. Radeck\(^3\), P. Rahkila\(^{1,2,8}\), E. Rapisarda\(^{7,8}\), P. Reiter\(^5\), K. Reynolds\(^7\), M. Rudiger\(^3\), M.-D. Saisac\(^7\), S. Sambi\(^7\), M. Scheck\(^6\), B. Siebeck\(^3\), M. Seidlitz\(^3\), T. Steinbach\(^3\), S. Stolze\(^{1,2}\), P. Thoele\(^6\), M. Thürauf\(^6\), N. Warr\(^3\), P. Van Duppen\(^{7,8}\), M. Venhant\(^{10}\), M. J. Vermeulen\(^{11}\), V. Werner\(^4\), M. Veselsky\(^{10}\), A. Vogt\(^3\), F. Wenander\(^6\), K. Wrzosek-Lipska\(^7\), and M. Zielinska\(^3\)

\(^1\) Department of Physics, University of Jyväskylä, P. O. Box 35, FI-40014 Jyväskylä, Finland
\(^2\) Helsinki Institute of Physics, P. O. Box 64, FI-00014, Helsinki, Finland
\(^3\) Institut für Kernphysik, Universität zu Köln, 50937 Köln, Germany
\(^4\) Wright Nuclear Structure Laboratory, Yale University, P.O. Box 208120, New Haven, CT 06520-8120, U.S.A.
\(^5\) Department of Physics, Oliver Lodge Laboratory, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, L69 7ZE, United Kingdom
\(^6\) Institut für Kernphysik, TU Darmstadt, 64289 Darmstadt, Germany
\(^7\) Institut voor Kern- en Stralingsfysica, Department of Physics, KU Leuven, 3001 Leuven, Belgium
\(^8\) CERN-ISOLDE, PH Department, CERN, CH-1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland
\(^9\) CEA-Saclay, 91191 GIF-sur-Yvette, France
\(^10\) Institute of Physics, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Dubravska cesta 9, 845 11 Bratislava 45, Slovak Republic
\(^11\) Department of Physics, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, United Kingdom
\(^12\) University of Geneva, Bd du Pont-d’Arve 40, 1211 Genève, Switzerland

Abstract. In the present study, \(B(E2; 2^+ \rightarrow 0^+)\) values have been measured in the \(^{208}\text{Rn}\) and \(^{206}\text{Po}\) nuclei through Coulomb excitation of re-accelerated radioactive beams in inverse kinematics at CERN-ISOLDE. The resulting \(B(E2; 2^+ \rightarrow 0^+)\) values in \(^{208}\text{Rn}\) are \(\approx 0.08\ \text{e}^2\text{b}^2\). These nuclei lie in, or at the boundary of the region where seniority scheme should persist. However, contributions from collective excitations may be present when moving away from the \(N = 126\) shell closure. To date, surprisingly little is known of the transition probabilities between the low-spin states in this region.

1 Introduction

Reduced transition probabilities, \(B(E2)\) values, give particularly precise information of the collectivity and its development in atomic nuclei as a function of \(N\) and \(Z\). Furthermore, with sophisticated nuclear models, information of the underlying microscopic single particle and collective structures can be gained through the knowledge of the \(B(E2)\) values.

In Ref. [1] evolution of the \(B(E2)\) values in the context of seniority and collectivity has been discussed. When nuclear structure is dominated by a relative high-\(j\) single-particle orbital (with \(j \geq 7/2\)), seniority \(\nu\) can be regarded as a good quantum number. In such cases the usual increasing trend of the \(B(E2)\) values within a band can be reversed. This is due to the fact that the \(2^+ \rightarrow 0^+\) transition is a seniority changing transition \((\Delta \nu \neq 0)\), whereas the transitions with \(2 < I_\nu < 2j - 1\) conserve the seniority \((\Delta \nu = 0)\). When a high-\(j\) orbital is only fractionally filled, transitions with \(\Delta \nu \neq 0\) can have larger \(B(E2)\) values than those for \(\Delta \nu = 0\) transitions. Such behaviour is illustrated later in Fig. 6, where the predictions of the seniority scheme are plotted. The seniority changing \(\Delta \nu = 2\) \(2^+ \rightarrow 0^+\) transition shows parabolic upward behaviour across the sub-shell, similar to that from collective models. The \(B(E2; 2^+ \rightarrow 0^+)\) value is maximised at mid-\(j\) shell. Seniority-conserving \(\Delta \nu = 0\) transitions such as the \(8^+ \rightarrow 6^+\) transition, however, show contrasting parabolic downward behaviour crossing zero at the mid-\(j\) shell.

In Fig. 1 the level energy systematics for the \(N = 122\) isotones are illustrated. The level pattern develops from a well pronounced seniority \(\nu = 2\) level structure of the \(2^+\) and \(4^+\) states in \(^{204}\text{Pb}\) into a more evenly spaced levels when approaching \(^{210}\text{Rn}\). The isotemic nature of the \(I^\pi = 8^+\) states is characterised by the low energy of the \(8^+ \rightarrow 6^+\) transition. As discussed in Ref. [3], the low-spin states in the \(N = 122\) isotones may arise from the coupling of the two protons in the \(h_{9/2}\) orbital. On the other hand in Ref. [4], shell-model calculations with empirical one- and two-body interactions have been carried for \(^{208}\text{Rn}\). The calculations predict that the \(8^+\) state would be a pure \(\nu = 2\) proton \(h_{9/2}\) state, which is consistent with the
outcome of Ref. [3]. The calculations also predict rather low-lying non-yраст $\nu = 2$ proton multiplet (see Fig. 10 of Ref. [4]). For the $2^+$ state the predictions of the two frameworks are controversial. While according to the seniority scheme the $2^+$ state should be the similar $\nu = 2$ proton $h_{9/2}$ state as the $8^+$ state, the shell-model calculations predict it to be a neutron-hole state. The proton-neutron interaction in this region should not be strong due to the large $\Delta l$ and $\Delta \ell$ between the available proton and neutron orbitals [5]. Therefore, a possible increase in the $B(E2)$ values is likely to be manifested by the increasing valence proton space and indicate the $\nu = 2$ proton structure.

In the $N = 122$ isotones with $Z \geq 82$, just four neutrons removed from the $N = 126$ shell closure, behaviour of the $B(E2)$ values resembling the seniority scheme predictions has been observed [3]. These nuclei lie at the boundary of the region where seniority scheme should persist [1]. Therefore, the knowledge of the $B(E2; 2^+ \rightarrow 0^+)$ values for the $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn nuclei, respectively, provide important benchmarks for the validity of the models and for the interplay of the seniority regime and collective motion around the $N = 126$ and $Z = 82$ shell closures. In order to address this issue we have carried out measurements of the $B(E2; 0^+ \rightarrow 2^+)$ values in $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn nuclei at the REX-ISOLDE facility [6] at CERN.

2 Experiments

The $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn nuclei of interest were produced by bombarding uranium carbide ISOLDE primary targets with 1.4 GeV protons delivered by CERN PS-Booster. Polonium atoms were ionised using the RILIS laser ion source [7] and mass selected with the ISOLDE High Resolution Separator (HRS). Radon as a noble gas was ionised with the VADIS ion source [8] with cooled Ta transfer line and subsequently mass selected with the ISOLDE General Purpose Separator (GPS). Both $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn nuclei were injected into the REX-ISOLDE re-accelerator complex consisting of the REX-TRAP penning trap, the REX-EBIS charge breeder and the REX linear accelerator. REX-TRAP was used to cool, bunch and purify the beam while REX-EBIS matched the mass to charge ratio suitable to be for re-acceleration. REX delivered 2.85 MeV/u and 2.82 MeV/u $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn beams, respectively to the target position of the MINIBALL $\gamma$-ray spectrometer [9]. The $^{206}$Po beam was in fact extracted without the proton irradiation as the half-life of $^{206}$Po is 8.8 days. Therefore sufficient yield for the present experiment was extracted from the $^{206}$Po activity accumulated during the previous irradiations of the primary target.

The radioactive beams of $^{206}$Po and $^{208}$Rn were delivered to the MINIBALL target position and Coulomb excited using the secondary 2 mg/cm$^2$ thick $^{109}$Pd and $^{116}$Cd targets, respectively. The target was chosen so that the excitation energy of the first 2$^+$ state is lower than the corresponding energies in the nuclei of interest in order to minimise the $\gamma$-ray background arising from Compton scattering. The MINIBALL Ge-detector array, with a photopeak efficiency of 7% for 1.3 MeV $\gamma$ rays, detected $\gamma$ rays de-exciting the levels under investigation. Both scattered projectiles and target recoils were detected using a double-sided silicon strip detector (CD) with 16 annular strips positioned downstream of the secondary target. The principle of the Coulomb excitation measurement is illustrated in Fig. 2. Both beams were found to be $\approx 100\%$ pure by measuring the $\gamma$-ray spectra with the RILIS laser set off ($^{206}$Po), and by measuring the beam composition using the ionisation chamber located upstream of the secondary target ($^{208}$Rn).

Coulomb excitation event for both the beam and target nuclei can be identified based on the reaction kinematics. Fig. 3 shows the spectrum of particle annular position and deposited energy recorded with the CD detector. The $\gamma$ rays were recorded in coincidence with one-particle events observed in CD. As the reactions kinematics can be reconstructed from the angular and energy information of the events recorded with CD, event-by-event Doppler
K \langle 208 \rangle B \ 208 = 0 \to 208 \minima \ falls \ within \ the \ statistical \ un-
122 isotones \ against \ the \ fractional \ state \ is \ discussed \ f \ \chi \to L \ B \ transitions \ as \ the \ state \ is \ deduced \ to \ have \ similar \ neutron-hole \ 0 \to + \ transition \ was \ seen. \ Therefore, \ in \ Q \ 206 \ transition \ was \ carried \ out. \ [0x14]Q \ 206 0, 8 \to + \ transitions \ in \ 208 \ transition \ was \ carried \ out \ is \ cases \ with \ (2^+ \langle \hat{E}2 \rangle \langle 2^+ \rangle) \ set \ to \ constant \ values \ of \ ±1, \ ±0.5 \ and \ 0 \ eb. \ The \ results \ are \ shown \ in \ Fig. \ 5, \ which \ demonstrates \ that \ (2^+ \langle \hat{E}2 \rangle |0^+ \rangle) \ is \ only \ marginally \ sensitive \ to \ the \ diagonal \ matrix \ element \ in \ the \ present \ study. \ The \ variation \ of \ the \ \chi^2 \ minima \ falls \ within \ the \ statistical \ un-
certainties \ of \ the \ (B(E2)) \ value.

The \ theoretical \ B(E2) \ values \ predicted \ by \ the \ senior-
yority \ scheme \ for \ the \ N = 122 \ isotones \ against \ the \ fractional \ filling \ f = n/(2j + 1), \ where \ n \ denotes \ the \ number \ of \ particles \ in \ the \ sub-shell \ j, \ are \ plotted \ in \ Fig. \ 6 \ as \ a \ func-
tion \ of \ fractional \ filling \ f \ of \ the \ 1h_{9/2} \ proton \ orbital. \ The \ prelimi-
nary B(E2; 2^+ \to 0^+) \ values \ for \ 206\Po \ and \ 208\Rn \ together \ with \ the \ previously \ known \ data \ for \ the \ 8^+ \to 6^+ \ transitions \ are \ also \ shown \ in \ Fig. \ 6. \ The \ predic-
tions \ of \ the \ seniority \ scheme \ reproduce \ the \ experimental \ data \ for \ the \ \Delta \nu = 0, 8^+ \to 6^+ \ transitions \ as \ the \ B(E2) \ values \ minimise \ at \ f \approx 0.5. \ With \ the \ new \ data \ for \ the \ supposed \ f = 0.2, 0.4 \ nuclei \ the \ upward \ parabolic \ trend \ can \ be \ seen. \ The \ predic-
tions \ of \ the \ simple \ model \ such \ as \ seniority \ scheme \ should \ be \ treated \ with \ caution \ as \ the \ structure \ of \ the \ 2^+ \ states \ in \ N = 122 \ isotones \ are \ likely \ to \ be \ more \ complex. \ This \ may \ be \ inferred \ from \ the \ results \ in \ Ref. \ [4], \ in \ which \ neutron \ structure \ is \ predicted \ for \ the \ yrast \ 2^+ \ state \ in \ 208\Rn, \ while \ the \ proton \ 2^+ \ state \ is \ predicted \ to \ be \ non-yrast. \ In \ Ref. \ [10] \ the \ level-energy \ systematics \ are \ discussed \ and \ based \ on \ that \ the \ 2^+ \ state \ is \ deduced \ to \ have \ similar \ neutron-hole \ structure \ as \ those \ in \ Pb \ nuclei. \ Furthermore, \ based \ on \ the \ interacting \ boson \ approximation \ the \ 2^+ \ state \ is \ discussed \ to \ be \ a \ collective \ state \ consisting \ of \ admixture \ of \ proton \ and \ neutron \ components.

We \ have \ measured \ the \ preliminary \ B(E2; 2^+ \to 0^+) \ values \ in \ 206\Po \ and \ 208\Rn \ and \ addressed \ the \ nature \ of \ these \ states \ in \ nuclei \ which \ lie \ at \ the \ boundary \ of \ senior-
yority \ regime \ and \ collective \ motion. \ The \ data \ have \ been \ collected \ also \ for \ 210\Rn, \ however \ no \ preliminary \ value \ is \ available \ at \ the \ moment. \ These \ data \ points \ will \ pro-
vide \ important \ benchmarks \ of \ the \ transition \ probabilities \ in \ this \ region. \ While \ the \ data \ is \ reproduced \ by \ the \ senior-
yority \ scheme \ rather \ well \ no \ clear \ conclusions \ can \ be \ drawn \ yet. \ It \ would \ also \ be \ beneficial \ to \ measure \ B(E2; 4^+ \to 2^+)
values, however those are beyond the energy of the current re-accelerator REX but may become available in the advent of HIE-ISOLDE.

The authors acknowledge the support of the ISOLDE collaboration and technical teams. The present study was supported by IA-ENSAR (EU FP7 contract 262010), German BMBF under contracts 06KY9136I, 05P09PKCI5 and 05P12PKFNE, U.S. DOE grant no. DE-FG02-91ER-40609. TG acknowledges the support of the Academy of Finland, contract 131665.

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Figure 6. Calculated (open symbols) and experimental (filled symbols) $B(E2)$ values as a function of fractional filling $f$ of the $\pi h_{9/2}$ orbital for the $\Delta \nu = 2$ $2^+ \rightarrow 0^+$ (black squares) and $\Delta \nu = 0$ $8^+ \rightarrow 6^+$ (red circles) transitions in the $N = 122$ isotones. The calculated values are obtained within the seniority scheme (for equations, see e.g. Ref. [1]) and have been normalised to the experimental values of $^{204}$Pb ($\Delta \nu = 2$ transitions) and $^{206}$Po ($\Delta \nu = 0$ transitions). The experimental $B(E2)$ values have been extracted from the present work and from Refs. [2, 3].