Dual-function nanoprecipitates enhance the strength and ductility of a medium-entropy alloy

Ying Yang\textsuperscript{a}, Easo P. George\textsuperscript{a,b,*}

\textsuperscript{a}Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Mater. Sci. & Tech. Division, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, USA

\textsuperscript{b}University of Tennessee, Mater. Sci. & Engineering Department, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA

\textsuperscript{*}egeorge@utk.edu

We present here a novel use of precipitates to tune transformation-induced plasticity via the spatial confinement due to closely spaced nanoprecipitates. When this is combined with conventional precipitation hardening, high strengths can be achieved without a significant trade-off in ductility. This dual functionality is demonstrated in model Fe-Ni-Al-Ti medium-entropy alloys, one of which is a single-phase solid solution whose composition was designed to undergo an FCC to BCC martensitic phase transformation upon quenching from elevated temperatures, while the other was designed as a two-phase alloy containing nanoscale L1\textsubscript{2} precipitates in an FCC matrix whose composition is identical to the single-phase alloy. When precipitate size/spacing are carefully controlled, the matrix of the precipitate-containing alloy, instead of transforming, remains as metastable FCC constrained by the surrounding precipitates. Then, during tensile testing, it undergoes a deformation-induced transformation to BCC. This leads to high work hardening, which when combined with a conventional precipitation hardening mechanism (dislocation cutting in our alloy), results in enhanced strength and ductility. Broader implications for the design of high-strength alloys utilizing sequential deformation mechanisms are discussed.

Keywords: Tensile properties, phase transformation, medium-entropy alloy, strength, ductility, work hardening.


References: