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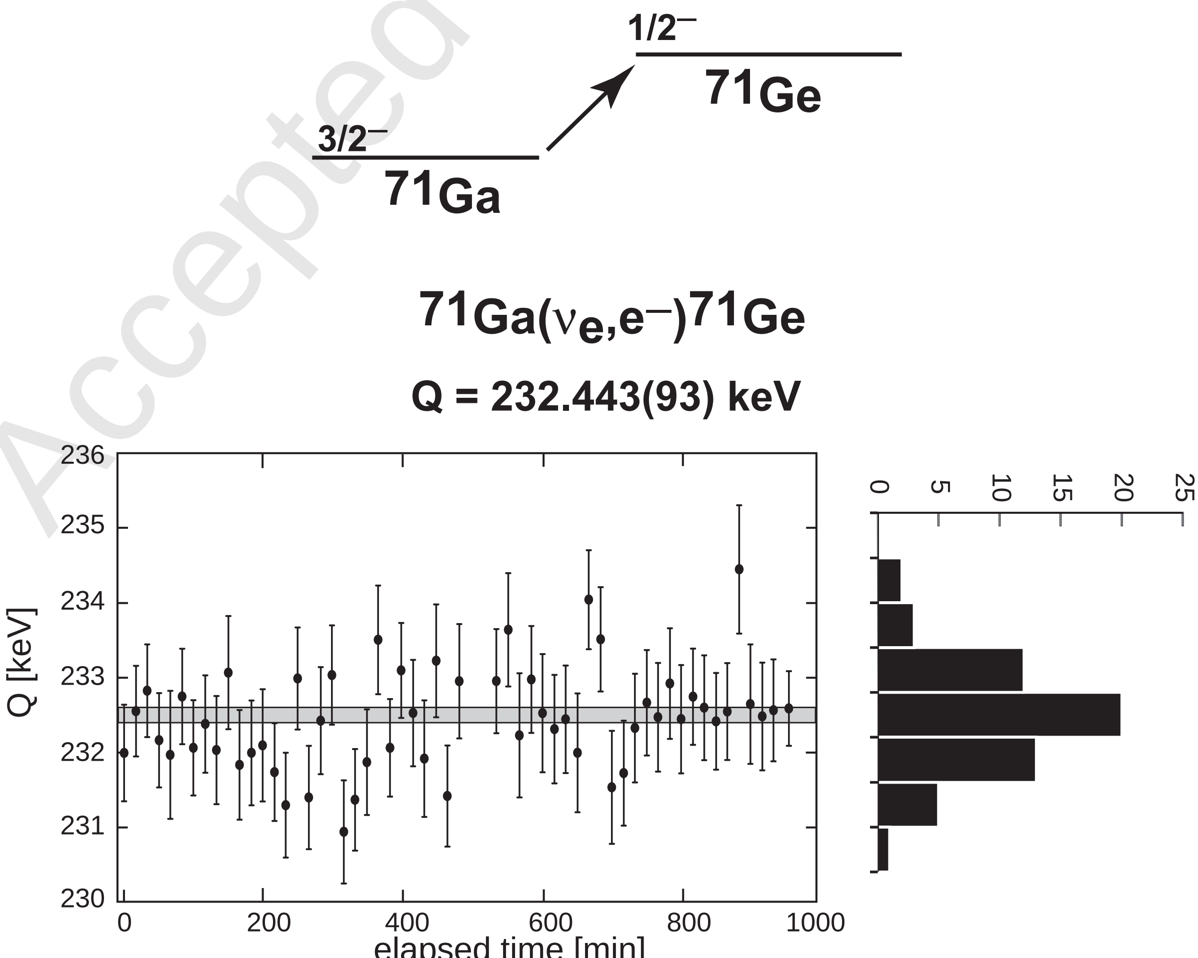
1/2−
71Ge
3/2−
71Ga
71Ga(νe,e−)71Ge
Q = 232.443(93) keV
Q [keV]
elapsed time [min]

Highlights

- Precision measurement of the ^{71}Ga(ν_e,e^-)^{71}Ge reaction Q value to 232.443 keV with an accuracy of 93 eV performed.
- Hypothesis of the SAGE/GALLEX neutrino calibration discrepancy being due to an incorrect Q value discarded.
- Solar neutrino capture rate on ^{71}Ga re-evaluated to 122.8 SNU

Precision ^{71}Ga – ^{71}Ge mass-difference measurement

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Abstract

The ^{71}Ga$(\nu_e, e^-)^{71}$Ge reaction Q value has been measured with the JYFLTRAP mass spectrometer at the IGISOL facility of the University of Jyväskylä to $Q = 232.443(93)$ keV. This value agrees with previous measurements, though it features a much higher accuracy. The Q value is being discussed in the context of the solar neutrino capture rate in ^{71}Ga.

Keywords: mass measurements, Q value for solar-neutrino capture rates

1. Introduction

The ^{71}Ga$(\nu_e, e^-)^{71}$Ge reaction Q value is a key parameter for the evaluation of the solar-neutrino capture rate in the SAGE and GALLEX experiments [1, 2] and thereby also for the evaluation of the fraction of neutrinos undergoing a flavor change during their passage from Sun to Earth. Recently the solar-neutrino capture rate (in solar neutrino units SNU) was re-evaluated in a neutrino-nonoscillation scenario to 122.4 ± 3.5 SNU [3]. It decreased compared to a previously accepted value of 132 ± 18 SNU [4, 5], and since the measured neutrino rate from the combined experiments GALLEX (incl. GNO) and SAGE was 66.2 SNU, the electron neutrino survival fraction for the same reason increased from 50% to 54%. The new SNU value was the result of a re-evaluation of the ^{71}Ga$(\nu_e, e^-)^{71}$Ge cross section using the Gamow-Teller strength B(GT) values from high-resolution ^{71}Ga$(^3$He$, t)^{71}$Ge

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charge-exchange data [3]. However, the $B(\mathrm{GT})$ values were calibrated against the ^{71}Ge electron-capture ft value, and since the ft value carries a quadratic dependence on the ^{71}Ge decay Q value (i.e. $ft \propto Q^2$), the latter needs to be known with a precision preferentially better than 1%. We note that a lowering of the Q value would bring the SNU value up.

The Q value had also attracted attention when the SAGE and GALLEX detectors were calibrated with neutrinos from reactor-produced ^{51}Cr and ^{37}Ar sources and the ratio between the measured and expected neutrino capture rates on ^{71}Ga came out to be 13% too low at a $2.5\,\sigma$ level [6], thus spurring speculations about the existence of a non-standard neutrino [7, 8, 9, 10]. It was, however, also conjectured that this could have been a result of an incorrect Q value for the ^{71}Ga neutrino-capture calculations [11], for which so far 232.69 keV had been taken (see Ref. [12] and references therein). It was furthermore argued that a precision measurement of the $^{71}\mathrm{Ge}-^{71}\mathrm{Ga}$ mass difference, e.g., by using an ion trap, had never been carried out. An experiment was eventually performed at the ISAC facility at TRIUMF using the TITAN ion-trap and mass-measuring setup [13], and it provided a value of 233.5 ± 1.2 keV [11]. This new value did not resolve the observed neutrino calibration discrepancies, because reaching consistency at a minimum 1σ level would have required an increase of the Q value to at least 240 keV. Also a re-evaluation of the capture rate to the excited states in ^{71}Ge by the neutrinos from the ^{51}Cr and ^{37}Ar sources showed that the discrepancy remained robust or even got slightly amplified [14, 15].

The Q-value measurements reported in Ref. [11] exhibited, however, unknown systematic uncertainties. The quoted Birge ratio [16] came out to be significantly larger than unity, thereby indicating a non-statistical error contribution. In the final error evaluation these non-statistical components were accounted for by an increased error value, however, the origin of those remained largely unknown.

In this note we report on a new precision measurement of the $^{71}\mathrm{Ge}-^{71}\mathrm{Ga}$ mass difference using the JYFLTRAP mass spectrometer at the IGISOL facility of the University of Jyväskylä. This new measurement essentially confirms previous Q-value determinations, however at much higher precision.

2. Experimental Details

The measurements were performed at the IGISOL facility [17, 18] of the University of Jyväskylä. A 10 MeV proton beam with an intensity of $\approx 2\ \mu$A was directed onto a gallium(III)-sulfide Ga_2S_3 target. The ^{71}Ge isotopes were produced via a (p,n) reaction on ^{71}Ga, and both isobaric ion species $^{71}Ge^+$ and $^{71}Ga^+$ were released from the target.

The ions were thermalized in the IGISOL gas cell and transported by means of gas flow and the sextupole ion guide to the high-vacuum region, where they were accelerated with a 30 kV potential and mass-number selected with a dipole magnet. The $A/q = 71$ ions were injected into the radio-frequency quadrupole cooler and buncher [19], and then transferred to the JYFLTRAP system [20]. The JYFLTRAP features two cylindrical Penning traps in a 7 T magnetic field. The first trap is the purification trap filled with helium buffer gas at low pressure (i.e., in the range of 10^{-5} mb). The second trap is the precision mass-measuring trap, where the cyclotron frequency of the ion is determined by the time-of-flight ion-cyclotron-resonance technique (TOF-ICR) [21].

As the mass difference between the ^{71}Ge and ^{71}Ga is expected to be ≈ 232 keV, the cyclotron-frequency difference can be evaluated to be ≈ 5.3 Hz. A full isobar separation was achieved by employing the buffer-gas-cooling [23] and Ramsey-cleaning techniques [24]. A Ramsey-excitation pattern of 25–750–25 ms (on–off–on) was then employed for the TOF-ICR measurement (see Fig. 1). Further details are described in Refs. [25, 26].

By switching between the ion species $^{71}Ge^+$ and $^{71}Ga^+$, data from 565 interleaved cycles were acquired, where each scanning cycle took about a minute to complete. In the analysis typically 10 cycles were summed before a fit to the time-of-flight data was performed and the cyclotron frequencies $\nu_c^{(i)}$ of the pair with ionic masses m_i and the frequency ratio R,

$$R = \nu_c^{\mathrm{Ga}}/\nu_c^{\mathrm{Ge}}, \qquad \nu_c^{(i)} = \frac{1}{2\pi}\frac{eB}{m_i}, \tag{1}$$

were evaluated. By this mode of operation magnetic field fluctuations, which are measured to be $8.18(19) \times 10^{-12}$/min [27], need not be considered, and since the two ion species constitute an A/q doublet, systematic effects resulting from field imperfections cancel in the frequency ratio [28]. Furthermore, no systematic frequency shifts were seen when the data were analyzed using a count-class analysis as described in Ref. [29]. In the final analysis only events with 1-5 ions per bunch were considered. The Q value is then determined as:

$$Q_{21} = M_2 - M_1 = (R-1)(M_1 - m_e) + \Delta B_{21}, \tag{2}$$

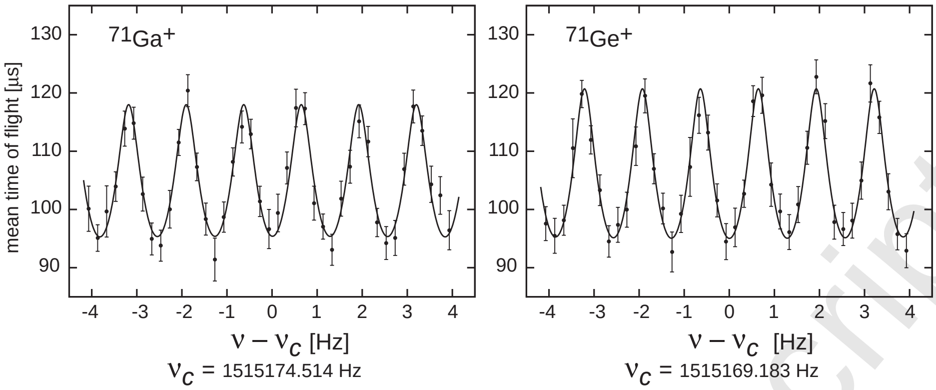

Figure 1: Time-of-flight spectra for the $^{71}Ge^{+}$,$^{71}Ga^{+}$ pair using a Ramsey-excitation pattern (25 on–750 off –25 on) ms. The solid lines represent a fit to the data using the theoretical line shape as described in Ref. [22].

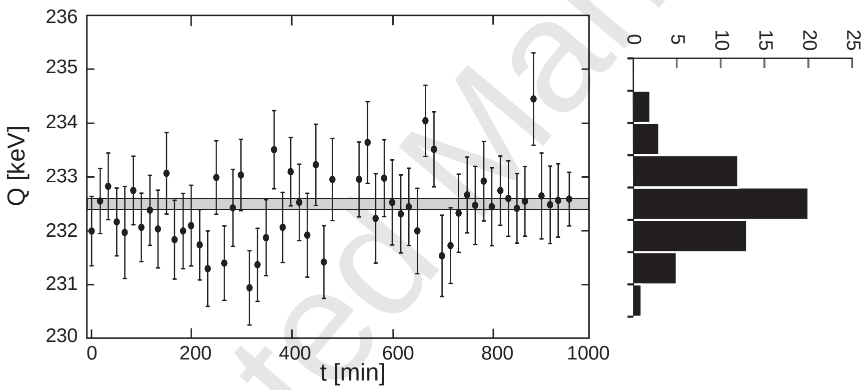

Figure 2: Sequence of the $^{71}\mathrm{Ge} - ^{71}\mathrm{Ga}$ mass difference measurements as a function of the elapsed time. The distribution of 56 individual data points indicates a near perfect normal distribution with a Birge ratio of 0.95. The bin size for this distribution was ±300 eV.

where m_e is the electron mass and M_2, M_1 are atomic masses of ^{71}Ge and ^{71}Ga, respectively, and the electron binding-energy difference $\Delta B_{21} = -1.9$ eV [30]. Figure 2 shows the sequences of the Q-value measurements as a function of the elapsed time for the $A = 71$ pair together with the distribution of the individual measurements. The final results are given in Table 1, which also contains the Birge ratio [16] for the measurement showing that the statistical error of 93 eV for the final Q value may even be overrated by $\approx 6\%$.

Table 1: Measured cyclotron-frequency ratio (here: $R-1$) for the ^{71}Ga /^{71}Ge isobars, the deduced Q value and the Birge ratio for the measurements appearing in Fig. 2.

isobaric pair (M_1/M_2)	$R-1$ (10^{-9})	Q (keV)	Birge ratio
^{71}Ga /^{71}Ge	3518.40 ± 1.49	232.443 ± 0.093	0.94

3. Results and Conclusion

The mass difference between the isobaric doublet ^{71}Ge and ^{71}Ga has been measured at the IGISOL/JYFLTRAP facility to 232.44 keV with an uncertainty of 93 eV. We note that the high precision is a result of (i) being able to simultaneously produce the two isobaric mass states and (ii) of exploiting the high mass-separation power of the JYFLTRAP system, realized by a combination of buffer-gas cooling and Ramsey cleaning.

The present $^{71}\mathrm{Ga}(\nu_e, e^-)^{71}\mathrm{Ge}$ reaction Q value is consistent with the previous ion-trap measurement of 233.5 ± 1.2 keV quoted in Ref. [11] and the value 232.64 ± 0.22 keV of the Atomic Mass Evaluation 2012 [31]. However, the present 93 eV uncertainty, which is more than an order of magnitude less than the one from the previous ion-trap measurement, further diminishes hopes for a simple explanation of the ^{71}Ga neutrino-capture rate discrepancy, like having made incorrect nuclear physics input assumptions.

From a new evaluation of the ft value [32] [$ft = 22341(62)$] the solar neutrino-capture rate quoted in Ref. [3] remains robust at a slightly increased value of 122.8 ± 3.6 SNU.

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