

中国激光

飞秒激光合成波长法测距的功率-相位转换误差修正研究

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摘要 针对飞秒激光合成波长法高精度绝对距离测量中光功率-相位转换效应引起的误差, 提出一种基于多项式拟合的误差修正方法, 以提高飞秒激光测量系统的测距精度。搭建类迈克耳孙干涉测量系统, 经过光电探测后得到飞秒激光模间拍频信号, 利用快速傅里叶变换解算拍频信号的相位差, 并研究相位差随光功率的变化。结合相位测距技术, 将测距结果与长度基准作参考, 采用基于最小二乘法的最优多项式拟合形成不同光功率下的测距校正表。实验中以四次谐波进行测量, 结果表明: 当光功率在 1~3 mW 变化时, 测距误差变化率约为 2.7 mm/mW, 通过校正技术, 在 110 mm 范围内测距残余误差从 ± 0.25 mm 下降到 ± 0.08 mm。该研究可将飞秒激光高精度测距技术应用到室外环境、复杂的工业环境甚至非合作目标等光功率变化较大的测量场合, 显著地拓展飞秒激光精密测量的应用范围。

关键词 测量; 合成波长法; 功率-相位转换; 模间拍频; 相位测距; 飞秒激光

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1 引言

随着航天科学技术和高端智能制造等领域的快速发展, 以精密编队飞行和数字化精密装配为代表的大尺寸精密测量应用对测距要求日益提高^[1-6], 飞秒光梳以其独特的时频特性在高精度绝对距离测量领域得到了广泛的应用^[7-13]。其中, 飞秒激光合成波长相位式绝对测距技术具有光路结构简单、无需锁定偏频等优点, 受到了广泛的关注^[7,9,11]。其基本原理是以稳频飞秒激光器作为光源, 搭建类迈克耳孙干涉仪, 利用超快光电探测器对飞秒激光参考脉冲和测量脉冲进行光电转换, 不同纵模之间经拍频后得到飞秒激光重复频率及其高次谐波的射频(RF)合成波长。基于快速傅里叶变换(FFT)或正交解调等相位测量技术, 获取这些合成波长对应的参考和测量信号相位差, 并结合相位法测距, 解算待测距离。然而, 光电探测器作为激光雷达中光信号转换为电信号不可或缺的器件^[14], 在光电转换过程

中存在功率-相位转换(PPC)效应, 即当光电探测器接收到的光功率变化时, 会引起相位差的变化^[9,11,15-21], 最终导致测距误差。Guillory 等^[15-16]利用多调制频率的调幅连续波相位测距技术, 研究了 InGaAs 光电探测器在不同光功率下的相位变化情况, 发现当光功率在 35.8~351.3 μW 范围时, 对应调制频率为 4261 MHz 的 RF 功率为 $-15 \text{ dBm} \sim +5 \text{ dBm}$, 此时 410 m 处测距误差以距离换算系数为 $36 \mu\text{m}/\text{dB}$ 随 RF 功率线性变化。Eliyahu 等^[17]通过搭建光电振荡器, 发现当光电探测器处于线性工作区时, PPC 系数约为 $0.04 \text{ rad}/\text{mW}$, 而当其接近饱和光功率时, PPC 系数接近 0, 此时 RF 信号的相位噪声最低。但是该方法要保证光电探测器工作在较大光功率下, 此时会产生较强的焦耳热, 载流子迁移速率降低, 渡越时间变长, 最终导致相位增大^[18]。此外, Taylor 等^[19]利用 1 GHz 重复频率的钛宝石锁模激光器作为光源, 通过相位桥接和时域冲激响应两种测量方法, 对高速 Positive-Intrinsic-

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Negative(PIN)型光电探测器的 PPC 效应进行了研究,发现在某些特殊的光功率下,PPC 效应很弱,此时即使光功率有微小抖动,相位也基本保持不变。Zhang 等^[20]在时域上建立了非对称三角波响应模型,对 PIN 型 InGaAs 探测器在飞秒激光拍频过程中的 PPC 效应进行了系统的研究,得到了不同频率微波信号的相位与光功率的解析表达式,为减小 PPC 效应和产生超低相位噪声、超高稳定度的微波信号提供了理论指导。但是,关于 PPC 效应对飞秒激光合成波长法测距误差的影响以及相应的补偿校正技术,目前尚缺乏系统的研究。

针对飞秒激光合成波长法相位测距中 PPC 效应引起较大测距误差的问题,本文提出一种基于多项式拟合的误差修正方法。首先,搭建飞秒激光测距实验系统,研究不同频率谐波信号的 PPC 效应,得到测量系统的最优实验参数。其次,以四次谐波(频率为 800 MHz)精测测尺为例,建立最优拟合模型,形成不同光功率下的测距校正表(LUT)。最后,以高精度线性平移台移动距离为参考,在 110 mm 范围内对未校正的测距结果和加入校正数据表后的校正结果进行比较,验证该方法的有效性。本研究可为飞秒激光高精度测距技术在室外环境、复杂工业现场测量等场合的应用提供在线实时校正,推进飞秒激光测距技术的工业化应用。

2 实验系统搭建

飞秒激光合成波长法测距的功率-相位转换测量实验装置如图 1 所示。重复频率为 200 MHz 的飞秒激光器^[22]其将重复频率锁定到原子钟(TD-3012R),频率稳定性(Allan 方差)在 1 s 间隔优于 10^{-11} 。激光器输出的中心波长为 1562 nm,光谱宽度为 31.8 nm,放大后的光功率为 56 mW,脉宽为 155 fs。输出激光直径经光纤准直器扩束到 3 mm,再经偏振分束器(PBS)分成两束偏振垂直的光束,一束为参考光,另一束为测量光,参考和测量光功率可通过旋转半波片(HWP)来连续改变。其中,参考光直接聚焦到参考探测器 PD_{ref},测量光经靶球后向反射器(RR)中心沿原路返回,两次经过四分之一波片(QWP)后偏振方向与原出射方向垂直,再经 PBS 和透镜聚焦到测量探测器 PD_{mea}。靶球安装在精密电动线性平移台(LTS, NRT150/M, Thorlabs, 美国)上,其行程为 0.15 m,重复精度为 1 μ m,绝对定位精度为 2 μ m。精细调节测量光路,使得测量光传播方向与平移台移动方向一致,减小余弦误差,以便在实际测量中将精密平移台的移动距离作为长度基准。两个全同的参考和测量探测器均为 PIN 类型的 InGaAs 光电探测器(FGA015, Thorlabs, 美国),反向偏置电压为 12 V,−3 dB 带宽约为 1.16 GHz,

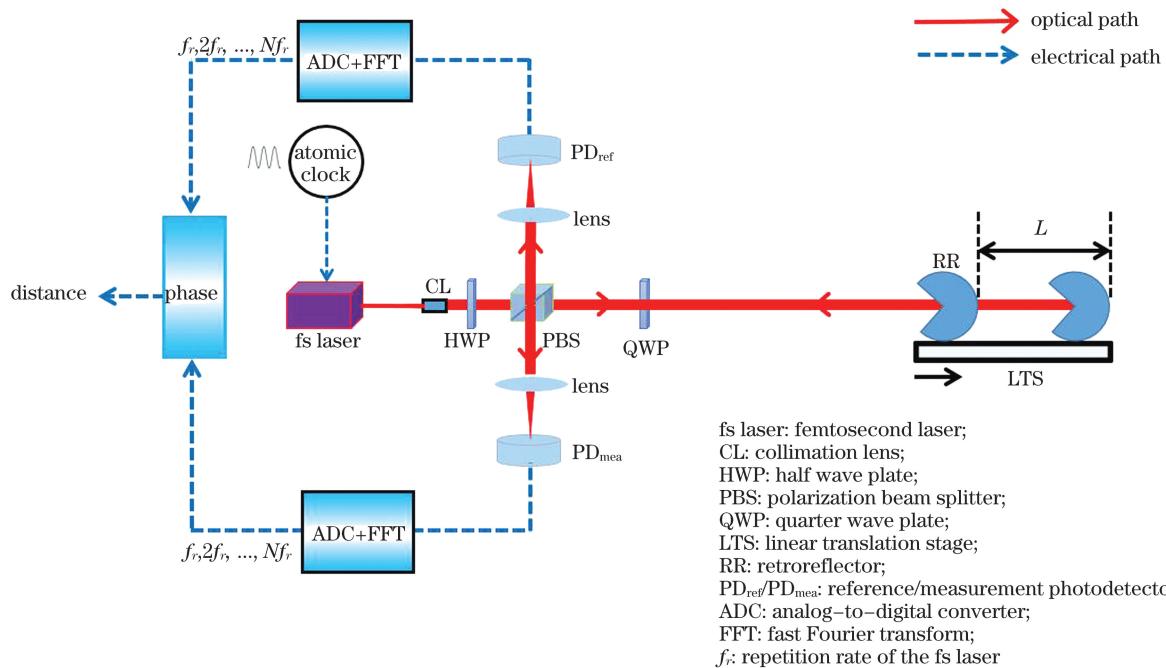


图 1 飞秒激光合成波长法测距的功率-相位转换测量实验装置图

Fig. 1 Experimental setup for power-to-phase conversion measurement of femtosecond laser synthetic wavelength method

1550 nm 响应度为 0.95 A/W, 最大入射光功率为 10 mW, 直径为 150 μm。采用焦距为 30 mm 的透镜可将参考和测量光束聚焦到直径 60 μm 以内, 以确保光功率全部入射到探测器。利用 PM100D 光电二极管功率计(探头 S122C, Thorlabs, 美国)测量光功率, 精度为 ±0.2%。在测量实验中, 以平移台上初始位置作为零点, 消除由光路部分和电子学部分引起的延时, 进而得到绝对距离值。

在信号处理部分, 利用高速数据采集卡对信号进行实时采集。采集卡包含 8 位模数转换器(ADC), 双路同步采样率为 2.5 GS/s, ADC 时间基准也溯源到原子钟。通过 FFT 可获取拍频信号 $f_r, 2f_r, \dots, Nf_r$ 的参考/测量信号相位差。每个独立测量点采样长度为 10 k, 采样时间为 4 μs, 总共测量 10 组信号, 解算了 10 组相位差用于统计分析, 其平均值作为相位差测量值, 标准差作为重复精度。获取不同拍频信号 Nf_r 相位差 $\Delta\varphi$ 后, 引入系数 α 来表征 PPC 效应^[17-20],

$$\alpha = \left| \frac{\Delta\varphi}{dP/P} \right|, \quad (1)$$

式中: $\Delta\varphi$ 表示光功率 P 附近变化单位光功率 dP 引起的相位差变化, 单位为 rad。显然, α 越小越好, 当 $\alpha=0$ 时, 表示没有 PPC 效应, 此时相位差不随光功率变化。

然后, 基于相位测距原理, 可解算出距离信息 L 为

$$L = \frac{c}{2n_g N f_r} \frac{\Delta\varphi}{2\pi}, \quad (2)$$

式中: c 为光在真空中的速度; n_g 为空气群折射率, 可由修正的 Edlén's 公式结合环境因素给出^[23]; f_r 为稳频飞秒激光器的重复频率。

3 分析与讨论

3.1 光电探测器参数优化

首先, 选择参考探测器作为研究对象, 靶球固定

在某个测量位置, 研究不同拍频信号 RF 功率与入射光功率的关系, 如图 2 所示。实验所用的 PIN 光电探测器最大光功率为 10 mW, 为了避免损坏探测器, 测试光功率最大为 9.5 mW。同时考虑过低光功率产生的 RF 信号较弱, 信噪比较低, 最低光功率为 0.75 mW。由图 2 可知, 所有的 RF 信号强度随着光功率的增大而缓慢增大, 然后趋于饱和, 且高频 RF 信号更容易饱和。特别地, 当截止频率为 1 GHz 时的饱和功率最低, 约为 2.3 mW(RF 功率 -1 dB 压缩点)。如果进一步增大光功率, RF 信号强度减弱。由此, 光电探测器对光功率的响应可分为三个区域^[21]。当光功率较低时, 探测器处于线性区, RF 功率与入射光功率的平方成比例, 呈抛物线型。这是由于光生载流子数量与光功率成正比, 光电转换后的 RF 峰值电压与光功率成正比, 而 RF 功率与峰值电压的平方成比例。进一步增大光功率, RF 功率增加的速率趋缓, 直至出现“平台”, 探测器进入饱和区。这可归结为 PN 结耗尽层的空间电荷屏蔽效应^[18-21]。此时, 大量的光生载流子在反向偏置电场和内建电场的作用下向 PN 结两边运动, 形成方向相反的电场, 当光功率较大时, 反向电场对外加偏置电场的屏蔽作用不能忽略, 导致载流子在空间电荷区迁移速率减小, 渡越时间变长。因此, 光生载流子随光功率缓慢增加, 导致 RF 功率缓慢增加。此外, 随着光功率的增加, PIN 光电探测器的响应时间变长, 响应带宽减小, 高频信号强度减弱。当光功率进一步增加时, RF 功率逐渐减小, 此时探测器处于过饱和区。这是由于载流子形成的反向电场屏蔽作用进一步增强, 使得单位时间通过电路的载流子减少, 也即光电流减小, RF 信号功率减小。当探测器处于非线性区(饱和区和过饱和区)时, 过高的人射光功率会引入谐波失真、相位失真和频率响应失真, 且易产生热效应, 额外引入的热噪声会导致相位

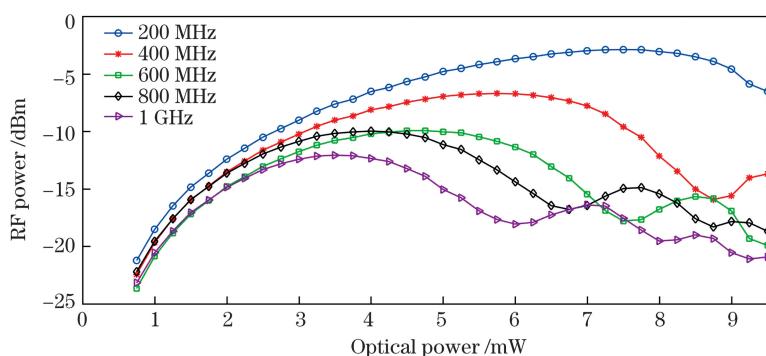


图 2 不同拍频信号 RF 功率与入射光功率的关系

Fig. 2 RF power of different beat notes as a function of incident optical power

测量误差^[18]。因此,测量时尽量使探测器处于线性工作区,即在2.3 mW以内。考虑到信噪比,实验中将参考探测器光功率固定为2 mW。

为了研究飞秒激光不同拍频信号的PPC效应,实验中将参考探测器光功率固定在2 mW,得到了不同拍频信号的相位差和由(1)式计算的PPC系数随测量探测器入射光功率的变化,如图3所示。图3(b)中 α 接近0时的光功率对应PPC效应最弱,即图3(a)中RF信号相位差达到极值时的位置。由图3可知,基频为200 MHz信号相位差随着光功率单调增加,即在整个测试光功率范围内 α 不为0,PPC效应无法消除。对于高次谐波,随着谐波级次的增加, α 为0的次数也逐渐增加,这与文献[20]的现象一致。然而,要消除PPC效应,入射光功率必

须不低于对应拍频信号的饱和光功率,例如频率为800 MHz信号PPC效应消失对应的光功率理论上为5.8、7.2、8.2、9.3 mW,远远高于由图2得到的800 MHz的线性饱和光功率(约为2.8 mW),因此会导致非线性失真。然而,图3(b)中对应上述光功率处,800 MHz的PPC系数并不为0,这是因为测量点数不够密集,曲线不平滑。为了选择合适的光功率,选取了3 mW以内PPC系数 α 与光功率的关系,如图3(b)插图所示。可以看出,所有的拍频信号在光功率不超过2 mW时, α 基本保持在较小的恒定值;当光功率高于2 mW后迅速增大,即PPC效应越来越显著。综合考虑线性工作区和PPC效应,实验中将光电探测器最优光功率设为2 mW是合理的。

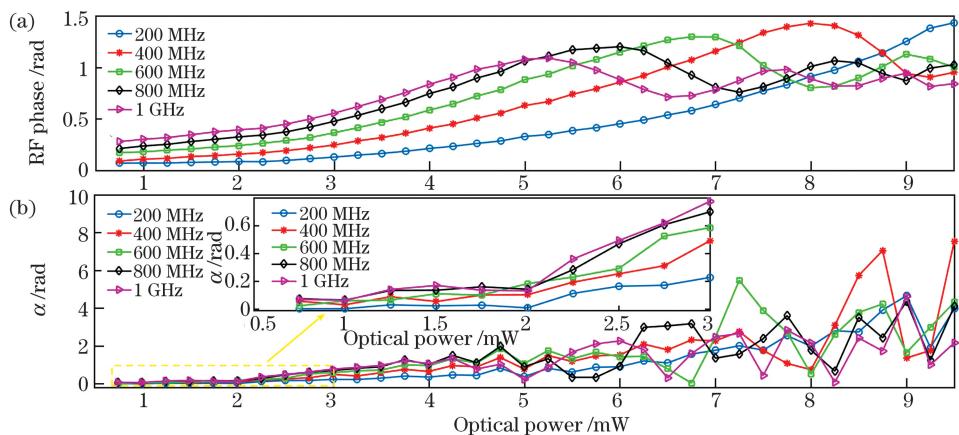


图3 不同拍频信号的PPC效应。(a)相位差和(b)系数 α 随测量探测器光功率的变化(插图表示3 mW以内光功率的PPC系数 α)

Fig. 3 PPC effect of different beat notes. (a) Phase difference and (b) coefficient α as a function of the incident optical power (inset in Fig. (b) shows the coefficient α while the optical power is less than 3 mW)

3.2 PPC效应校正

在大范围距离测量中,距离粗测可通过调节飞秒激光器重复频率或者利用其他辅助测距方式得到^[9,11],而最终的测距精度由精测测尺决定。由图2可知,在线性工作区,800 MHz信号功率比1 GHz信号功率高1.3 dB以上,具有更高的信噪比,实验结果表明,800 MHz信号作为精测测尺,其测距重复精度是1 GHz的2倍。因此,本文以800 MHz作为精测测尺,研究其PPC效应引起的测距误差及补偿校正。在测试实验中,零点位置的参考和测量探测器光功率均固定为2 mW,解算出此时800 MHz的相位差,作为初始相位。线性平移台上的靶球随平移台移动10 mm作为距离基准。在10 mm处,参考探测器光功率设置为2 mW,测量探测器光功率可通过旋转四分之一波片而连续改变,解算出不

同光功率下的相位差 $\Delta\varphi$ 。实验室条件下,温度为20 °C,湿度为49%,气压为101325 Pa,中心波长为1562 nm,由此可计算出群折射率 $n_g = 1.00026858$ 。真空光速 $c = 299792458$ m/s,由(2)式可计算出不同测量光功率下的距离。将解算出的距离与参考距离10 mm作比对,由此得到测距误差。如图4(a)所示,测量光在2 mW附近,解算出的距离随着光功率的增大而增大,变化率为2.7 mm/mW。其中图4(a)和(b)中虚线表示高精度线性平移台移动的10 mm基准距离。当测量探测器光功率为2 mW时,解算出的距离值与10 mm基准距离相差0.3 mm,而当测量探测器光功率为2.12 mW时,解算出的距离与基准距离相等。这说明尽管参考和测量探测器型号和批次相同,但是由于生产制造过程无法保持完全一致,所以两个探测器对光功率的响

应有些差别。

考虑到实际应用中,实时监测测量探测器的光功率比较困难,而在线性工作区(光功率<3 mW),800 MHz 测尺的 RF 功率与光功率一一对应,且呈抛物线型。当光功率在 1~3 mW 变化时,800 MHz RF 功率在 -19.55 dBm~-10.87 dBm 单调变化。因此,可根据采集到的波形 FFT 功率谱,得到测距结果与 RF 功率的关系,如图 4(b)所示。然后将测得结果与 10 mm 基准距离作对比,并基于最小二乘法的多项式拟合,获取最优拟合参数,得到测

距误差与 RF 功率的关系,进而进行误差修正。此时,无需实时监测光功率,仅利用获取的信号波形就可得到不同 RF 功率下的 LUT。图 4(c)为当测量光功率为 1~3 mW,对应 RF 功率为 -19.55 dBm~-10.87 dBm 时,分别采用二阶、三阶和四阶多项式拟合的 LUT,并与实验获取的校正数据相比,可以看出,四阶多项式拟合更接近实验数据。最终,在某一光功率下解算的距离值加上 LUT 中对应光功率的距离修正值,即为修正后的测距结果。

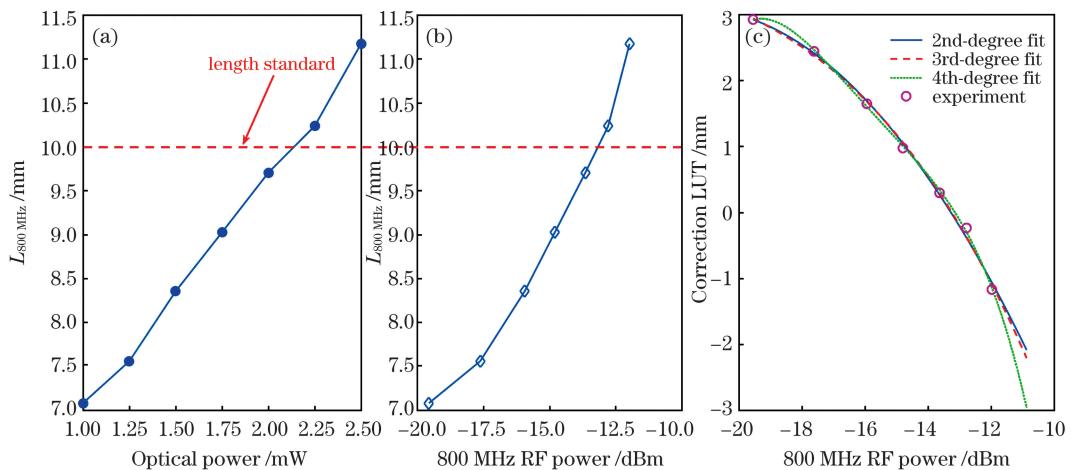


图 4 800 MHz 精测测尺解算的距离与光功率和 RF 功率的关系。(a)光功率; (b)RF 功率; (c)不同阶次多项式拟合的 LUT

Fig. 4 Relationship between calculated distance by the 800 MHz fine ruler and optical power and RF power. (a) Optical power; (b) RF power; (c) LUT fitted by different orders of polynomial

3.3 校正模型测试

为了验证本文提出的校正方法的有效性,在 10 mm 处,利用图 4(c)中的 LUT 对不同光功率下未加修正和加了修正的测距结果进行比较,如图 5(a)所示。可以看出,在光功率为 1~3 mW,对应 800 MHz 的 RF 功率为 -19.55 dBm~-10.87 dBm 时,未校正的测距误差为 -2.9~1.2 mm,而采用二阶、三阶和四阶多项式拟合校正后,测距误差明显减小。图 5(b)更加具体地展示了采用不同阶次多项式拟合校正后的测距结果。三阶拟合校正相对于二阶拟合校正,测距误差修正效果没有明显提升,均为 -0.15~0.1 mm。而采用四阶多项式拟合修正后,测距误差减小到 ±0.05 mm。尽管更高阶的多项式拟合可以进一步减小测量误差,提高测量精度,但是计算复杂度和数据量更大,不利于在线实时校正。因此,本文采用四阶多项式拟合的方法进行测距误差修正。

此外,参考和测量探测器光功率均设置为 2 mW,以测量系统零点为起始点,线性平移台总共

移动 110 mm,第一步移动 10 mm,剩下范围内移动步长为 20 mm。在移动过程中,由于气流扰动、探测器散粒噪声等,均会导致光功率抖动,进而引入测距误差。在平移台移动 110 mm 范围内,记录每个位置的 RF 功率,如图 6(a)所示。可以看出,在移动过程中测量探测器的 RF 功率存在 0.2 dB 的抖动,这将会导致距离偏差。利用 800 MHz 测尺解算每个位置的距离,比较未修正和基于四阶多项式修正后的距离值,并与线性平移台移动的参考距离作线性拟合,如图 6(b)和(c)所示。通过加入校正,残差从未校正时的 ±0.25 mm 下降到 ±0.08 mm,且线性相关系数 R^2 从未校正时的 0.999989 提高到 0.999998,斜率从 0.98655 提高到 0.99423,验证了该校正方法的有效性。校正后的斜率与 1 稍微有些差别,表明平移台的移动方向与激光传播方向存在微小角度偏移,即余弦误差。

3.4 展望

本文采用 Thorlabs 高精度线性平移台的移动距离作为距离基准,但是平移台本身存在误差,其绝

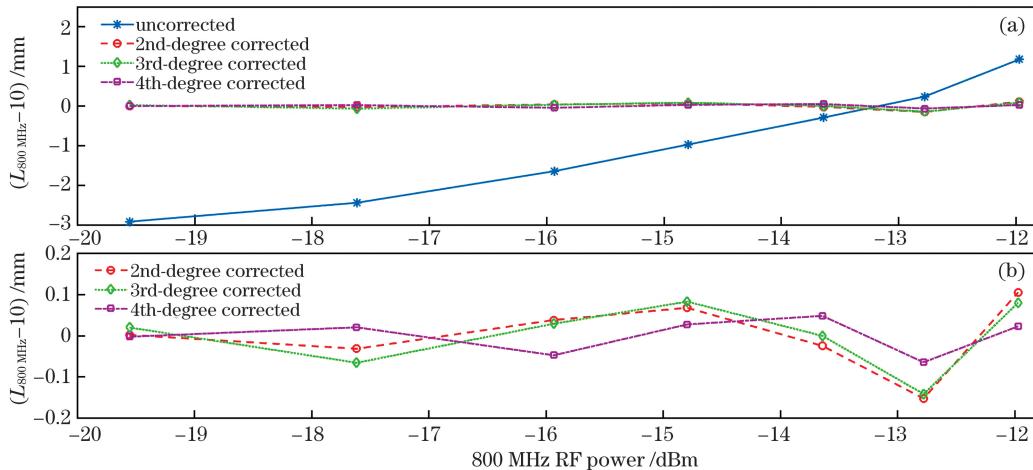


图 5 实验结果。(a) 10 mm 固定位置处 800 MHz 校正和未校正测距结果对比; (b) 不同阶数拟合校正后的测距误差
Fig. 5 Experimental results. (a) Comparison of 800 MHz corrected and uncorrected ranging results at a fixed position of 10 mm; (b) ranging error after fitting and correction of different orders

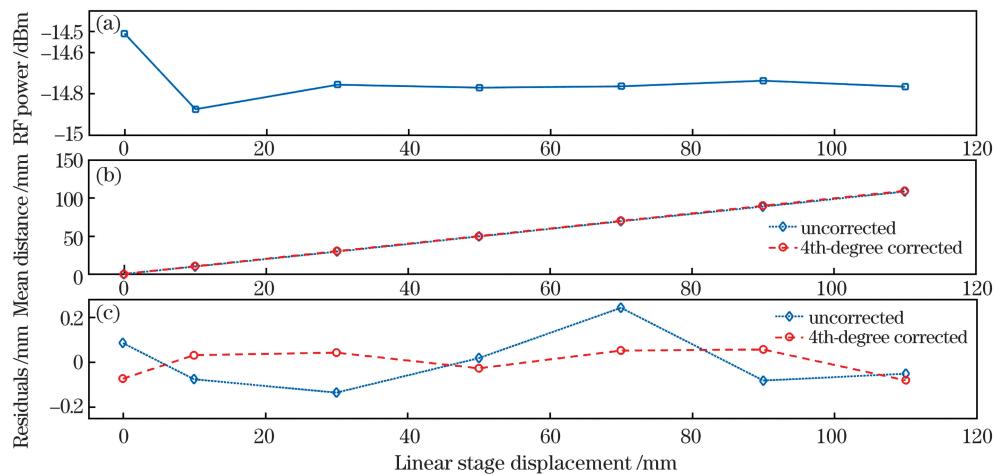


图 6 校正和未校正测距结果对比。(a) 800 MHz RF 功率随移动距离的变化; (b) 未修正和基于四阶多项式修正后的距离值与线性平移台移动的参考距离线性拟合; (c) 线性拟合后的残差
Fig. 6 Comparison of corrected and uncorrected ranging results. (a) 800 MHz RF power changes with moving distance; (b) uncorrected and corrected distance based on fourth-order polynomials are linearly fitted to reference distance of linear translation stage movement; (c) residuals after linear fitting

对定位精度为 $2 \mu\text{m}$,俯仰和偏航方向角度精度分别为 $873 \mu\text{rad}$ 和 $140 \mu\text{rad}$ (来源于官网),这将导致阿贝误差,110 mm 范围内会引起 $100 \mu\text{m}$ 的距离偏差。此外,尽管对光路进行了精细调节,平移台的移动方向与激光传播方向也会存在微小角度偏差,将会引起余弦误差。这些误差影响了测距校正表的准确性。为了获取更准确的测量结果和校准数据表,后续将去中国计量院,利用室内 80 m 大长度激光比长国家标准装置作为距离基准对飞秒激光测距系统的功率-相位转换误差进行校正补偿。

此外,尽管本文采用的校正技术是针对飞秒激光合成波长法相位测距,但是该技术具有更广的适

用性,主要体现在三个方面:1)该方法对其他波段的 PIN 和雪崩光电二极管(APD)同样适用。这是因为,本文的研究基于半导体空间电荷区光生载流子的运动得到 RF 信号的相位随着入射光功率的变化,而这是半导体器件光电探测器的基础,因此本文观察到的现象对其他类型光电探测器具有指导意义。2)本文采用飞秒激光模间拍频的 RF 信号进行合成波长相位测距,但是对于振幅调制连续波(AMCW)或相位调制等激光相位测距同样适用,这是因为激光相位测距不可避免地进行光电转换,而对于半导体光电探测器件,载流子的运动受到入射光功率的影响。3)本文在实验室内针对合作目标进

行测距研究,光功率变化较小,因此振幅-相位转换效应引起的测距误差较小。然而,对于室外环境、复杂的工业测试现场以及空间环境,光功率变化引起的相位误差对最终的测距结果影响巨大。此外,对于漫反射目标测量,回波功率随着距离剧烈变化,也会引入较大的测距误差。因此,本研究可将飞秒激光高精度测距技术应用到复杂的工业测试现场、室外测量甚至非合作目标,显著拓展飞秒激光的应用范围,例如大型工件三维形貌测量、大尺寸设备精密装配等。

4 结论

本文对飞秒激光合成波长相位式绝对测距中光功率-相位转换效应引起的测距误差进行了系统的研究,提出一种基于最小二乘法的最优多项式拟合误差修正方法,形成不同光功率下的测距校正表。实验结果表明,当光功率在1~3 mW变化时,测距误差变化率约为2.7 mm/mW,采用本文校正方法,在110 mm范围内测距残余误差从未校正时的±0.25 mm下降到±0.08 mm,验证了校正方法的有效性。同时,通过对不同光功率下探测器空间电荷区载流子的运动分析,验证了本文方法对其他PIN和APD探测器的通用性。此外,受限于实验室条件,本文校正方法采用Thorlabs线性平移台作为长度基准,存在明显的余弦误差、阿贝误差等,影响了测距校正表的准确性,后续将采用更高精度的长度基准进行误差校正。本研究可将飞秒激光高精度测距技术应用到室外环境、复杂的工业环境甚至非合作目标等光功率变化较大的大尺寸测量场合,显著拓展飞秒激光精密测量的应用范围。

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Correction of Power-to-Phase Conversion for Distance Error Measurement Using Femtosecond Laser Synthetic Wavelength Method

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Abstract

Objective The synthetic wavelength method based on a femtosecond optical frequency comb has been widely used in high-precision long distance ranging systems owing to the capability to measure absolute distances, traceability to the length standard and simple setup. However, optical power variations will cause phase shift variations in photodetection. This phenomenon, which is frequently referred to as the power-to-phase conversion (PPC) effect, will eventually lead to distance measurement errors, thus deteriorating the precision of the ranging system. The conventional methods, such as phase bridge measurement and impulse response measurement, usually focus on reducing the PPC effect and generating ultralow phase noise, ultrahigh stable microwave signals by intermode beating from a femtosecond frequency comb. However, it still lacks a comprehensive research about the influence of PPC on

the ranging errors of a femtosecond laser ranging system and the corresponding correction technique. In the present study, a polynomial fitting correction method is proposed to improve the precision of the ranging system. Combined with the phase ranging method, a correction look up table (LUT) is formed by referencing to a length standard and adopting the least-square based polynomial fitting. We believe that our work can extend the femtosecond laser based high-precision ranging technique to be applied to outdoors, complicated industrial environments or even non-cooperative targets, which significantly broadens its application area.

Methods In this study, a repetition-rate-locked femtosecond laser is used as the laser source. First, the Michelson-like interferometer is established, and optimal experimental parameters are determined by studying the PPC effect of different synthetic radiofrequency (RF) signals consisting of the repetition rate and its high-order harmonics via intermode beating of the femtosecond laser after photodetection. Then, using the fourth order harmonic as the fine ruler, phase shifts are extracted and investigated as a function of the optical power based on fast Fourier transform (FFT). Combined with the phase ranging method, a correction LUT is formed by adopting the least-square based polynomial fitting with different degrees. Finally, comparisons of corrected and uncorrected ranging results are made to verify the effectiveness of the proposed correction method. By comparing the distance errors after corrections with polynomial fitting of different degrees, we have determined that using the 4th degree correction method can obtain the best correction performance. In addition, by comparing corresponding residual errors of corrected and uncorrected distances versus linear stage displacements after applying linear fit in the measurement range, the proposed correction method is further proven to be very effective in improving the precision of the femtosecond laser ranging system.

Results and Discussions A custom-made, 200 MHz repetition-rate-locked all-polarization-maintaining femtosecond fiber laser referenced to a highly stable frequency standard is used in the ranging system. With the increase of incident optical power, we have investigated the RF power of different beat notes and identified three operation zones for the applied photodiodes (FGA015, Thorlabs), i.e. the linear regime for low optical power, the saturation regime and above saturation regime for high optical power (Fig. 2). The latter two are usually classified as the nonlinear regime. The results demonstrate all the beat notes are under the linear regime if the optical power is lower than 2.3 mW. Besides, we have also investigated PPC coefficients of different beat notes in detail (Fig. 3). The overall results show that the PPC effect remains at a relatively low level for all beat notes when the optical power is less than 2 mW. Considering the low PPC effect and high signal-to-noise ratio for high precision distance measurement, the incident optical power is chosen to be 2 mW. Then, using the 800 MHz (fourth order harmonic) RF signal as the fine ruler, we have formed a correction LUT under different RF power levels (from -19.55 dBm to -10.87 dBm) using polynomial fitting of 2nd degree, 3rd degree, and 4th degree by referencing the calculated distance results to a length standard of 10 mm (Fig. 4). By comparing the distance errors after corrections with polynomial fitting of different degrees, we have found the 4th degree correction method can achieve a higher precision. Specifically, the errors are reduced to $\pm 0.05 \text{ mm}$ for the 4th degree polynomial correction method while the range error correction results of the 2nd and 3rd degree polynomial correction are both -0.15 mm to 0.1 mm (Fig. 5). In addition, we have tested the effectiveness and feasibility of our correction method by comparing corrected and uncorrected distance results at different incremental displacements of a high precision linear stage. After linear fit of corrected and uncorrected distances versus linear stage displacement in the range of 110 mm, the residual errors can be significantly reduced from $\pm 0.25 \text{ mm}$ to $\pm 0.08 \text{ mm}$ (Fig. 6), and the linear correlation coefficient is increased from 0.999989 (uncorrected) to 0.999998 (corrected).

Conclusions Aiming at the error caused by the power-to-phase conversion (PPC) in high-precision absolute distance measurements using the femtosecond laser synthetic wavelength method, a 4th degree polynomial fitting correction method is proposed to improve the precision of the ranging system. In this study, a Michelson-like interferometer is established, and synthetic radiofrequency beat signals are achieved via intermode beating of the femtosecond laser after photodetection. Then, phase differences are extracted and investigated as a function of the optical power based on FFT. Combined with the phase ranging method, a correction LUT is formed under different optical power levels by adopting the least-square based polynomial fitting method. Experimental results show that using the fourth order harmonic, the measurement distance error has a slope of 2.7 mm/mW with the optical power ranging from 1 mW to 3 mW without correction, while the residual error range can be significantly reduced from $\pm 0.25 \text{ mm}$ to $\pm 0.08 \text{ mm}$ in 110 mm measurement range. This verifies the effectiveness of the proposed correction method. Meanwhile, we have qualitatively investigated the transport of electron-hole carriers in the intrinsic part of

the junction, indicating the generality of our correction method for other semiconductor photodiodes such as avalanche photodiodes (APDs) and positive-intrinsic-negative (PIN) photodiodes. Consequently, our present work demonstrates that the femtosecond laser based high-precision ranging technique can be potentially extended to outdoors, complicated industrial environments where the optical power variations are large, which will significantly promote its real industrial applications, such as advanced large-volume manufacturing, assembly and precise shape, and dimensional measurement of workpieces.

Key words measurement; synthetic wavelength method; power-to-phase conversion; intermode beating; phase ranging; femtosecond laser

OCIS codes 120.3940; 120.1880; 320.7100; 230.5160