

基于 LED 泵浦的聚合物光波导吸收特性

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摘要 对不同波段 LED 激发下, 聚合物 SU-8/聚甲基丙烯酸甲酯(PMMA)光波导进行了光吸收性能的研究。在中心波长为 310, 365, 405, 525 nm LED 以及 808 nm 激光器的泵浦下, 研究了聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 光波导对 1064, 980, 635 nm 信号光的吸收性能。实验结果表明: 聚合物 SU-8 波导在蓝紫光 LED 泵浦作用下光衰减较强, 光衰减会随着泵浦光波长的红移和波导尺寸的减小而变弱; 在截面尺寸为 $5\ \mu\text{m}\times 5\ \mu\text{m}$, 长度为 2 cm 的聚合物 SU-8 波导中, 当采用 1064 nm 激光器作信号源, 功率为 50 mW 的 310, 365, 405 nm LED 激发下, 光强衰减分别达 91.7%、48.3%、26.7%; 在 525 nm LED 和 808 nm 激光器激发下, 光强能够保持基本稳定; PMMA 波导在 LED 激发下光强无衰减现象。因此, 在蓝紫光 LED 激发下的聚合物 SU-8 光波导放大器的研究中, 应使用单模小尺寸波导、小功率 LED 泵浦来有效避免光强的衰减; 在 PMMA 光波导放大器中更易实现光信号的放大。

关键词 集成光学; 聚合物 SU-8; 聚甲基丙烯酸甲酯; 光波导; LED 泵浦; 光衰减

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1 引言

稀土掺杂聚合物光波导放大器利用在聚合物光波导中掺入的稀土离子在泵浦光作用下的受激辐射来实现信号光的放大作用。它作为一种有源器件, 可以和复用/解复用器、分束器和光开关等器件集成, 补偿光场在器件传输中的各类损耗。在聚合物材料中, SU-8 光刻胶具有制备工艺简单^[1]、只需一步光刻工艺就可以实现波导的优点; 聚甲基丙烯酸甲酯(PMMA)^[2]的透明性高、价格低廉。它们常常被作为稀土离子的掺杂基质来制备光波导放大器^[3-6]。聚合物光波导放大器通常需要一个泵浦源来产生稀土离子的粒子数反转, 在过去近 30 年的研究中, 绝大多数的报道集中选择半导体激光器作为泵浦源。2014 年, 吉林大学 Zhao 等^[6]将 Yb^{3+} 和 Er^{3+} 掺杂在聚合物 SU-8 中, 在 0.09 mW 功率的输入信号和功率为 212 mW 的 980 nm 激光泵浦下, 在 1525 nm 波长处获得了 10.4 dB 的光增益。2017 年, 深圳大学李彤等^[7]将 Er^{3+} 掺杂在 PMMA 中, 在输入信号功率为 0.1 mW, 1550 nm 波长处, 功率为

390 mW 的 980 nm 激光泵浦下获得了 3.6 dB 的相对增益。

相对半导体激光器作为泵浦源的端面耦合的泵浦方式, 采用低功率、低成本的 LED 作为泵浦光源是一个新的发展趋势。它可以有效解决大功率半导体激光器(200~400 mW)泵浦所造成的稀土离子能量上转换和聚合物波导的破坏性损伤问题, 并大大降低器件的商用化成本, 有望取代传统的半导体激光器的泵浦方式。2014 年, 伦敦大学 Ye 等^[8]将 Er^{3+} 掺入硅基材料中, 使用 3 mW 功率的 405 nm LED 作为泵浦光源, 获得了 3.3 dB/cm 的相对增益。2020 年, 厦门大学 Zhan 等^[9]将 Nd^{3+} 掺杂在 PMMA 中, 使用 25 mW 功率的 405 nm LED 泵浦, 通过理论计算可获得 6 dB 的光增益。

PMMA 和 SU-8 材料在近红外波段的吸收性能研究目前较为常见^[10-14], 但在紫外-可见光波段 LED 激发下, 这两种聚合物材料的吸收性能罕有报道。在 LED 泵浦源激发下, 聚合物母体材料对光源的吸收会直接影响稀土掺杂聚合物光波导放大器的增益性能, 因此, 对它的研究具有一定的意义。基于此, 本文分

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别采用聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 材料作为芯层,制备了聚合物无源光波导,对 4 种不同波长 LED 泵浦下的聚合物光波导的吸收特性进行了研究。

2 实验准备

2.1 聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 光波导的制备

分别采用 SU-8 3005 光刻胶和 PMMA 作为波导芯层材料, SiO₂ 作为下包层材料,制备了厚度为 5 μm,宽度分别为 4, 6, 8 μm 的矩形波导和截面尺

寸为 5 μm×5 μm,长度为 2 cm 的马赫-曾德尔结构波导。聚合物 SU-8 波导的制备较为简单,只需一步光刻即可完成,制备工艺流程如图 1 所示,在 2 μm 厚的 SiO₂ 的硅片上,旋涂一层 5 μm 厚的聚合物 SU-8 3005 材料,经过紫外曝光、显影即可形成波导图形。PMMA 波导的制备工艺流程如图 2 所示,经过旋涂 PMMA 芯层、坚膜、真空蒸镀铝掩模、光刻显影、反应离子刻蚀、显影去除铝掩模后形成波导图形。图 3 为波导截面扫描电镜图。

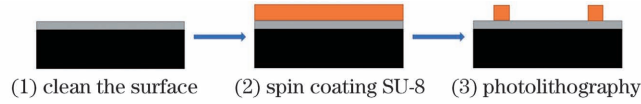


图 1 聚合物 SU-8 波导制备工艺流程

Fig. 1 Preparation process of polymer SU-8 waveguide

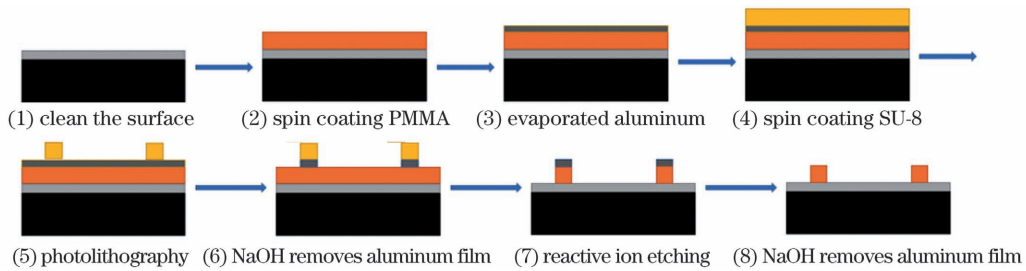


图 2 PMMA 波导制备工艺流程

Fig. 2 Preparation process of PMMA waveguide

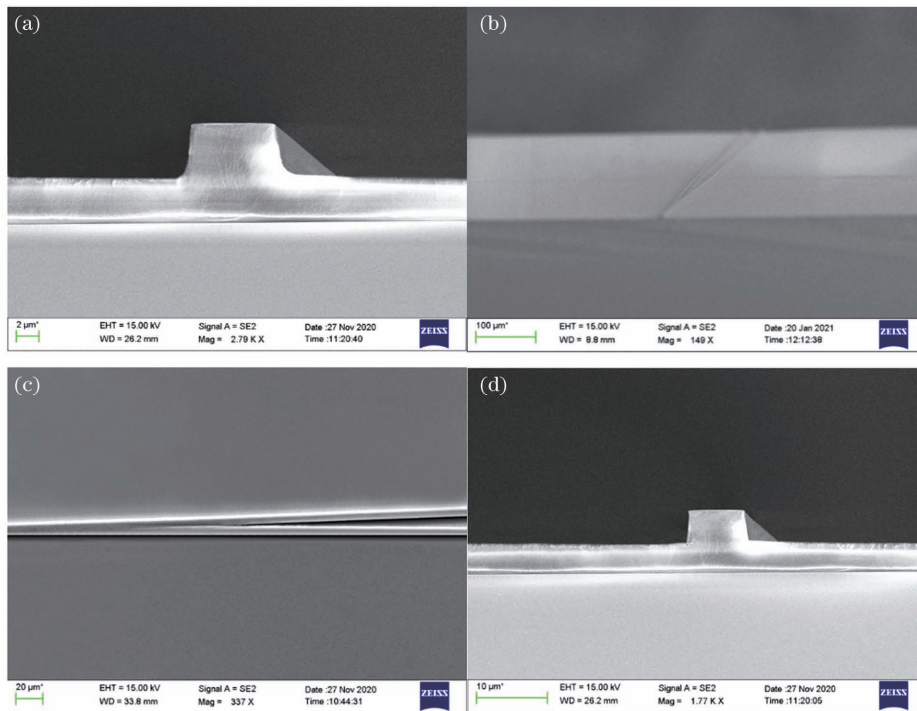


图 3 波导截面扫描电镜图。(a) 聚合物 SU-8 矩形波导截面图;(b) 聚合物 SU-8 马赫-曾德尔型波导截面图;(c) 聚合物 SU-8 马赫-曾德尔型波导平面图;(d) PMMA 矩形波导截面图

Fig. 3 Scanning electron micrographs of waveguide section. (a) Sectional view of polymer SU-8 rectangular waveguide; (b) sectional view of polymer SU-8 Mach-Zehnder waveguide; (c) plan view of polymer SU-8 Mach-Zehnder waveguide; (d) sectional view of PMMA rectangular waveguide

2.2 测试系统搭建

图 4 为实验的测试示意图,分别采用 1064, 980, 635 nm 波长的激光器作为信号源,选择中心波长分别为 310, 365, 405, 525 nm 的 4 种 LED 作为泵浦源,采用顶泵浦的方式对聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 波导进行激发。信号光由光纤耦合输入聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 波导,经过 LED 泵浦后由光纤耦合输入光谱仪 (FLAME-NIR-INTSMA25, 海洋光学), 并与 808 nm 激光器泵浦下的波导进行吸收性能的对比。

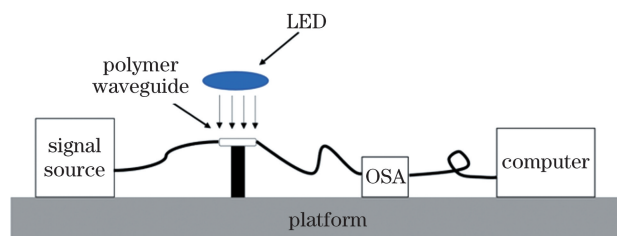


图 4 测试系统

Fig. 4 Test system

3 分析与讨论

3.1 聚合物 SU-8 波导的吸收性能研究

对于掺杂稀土铈、铈的聚合物材料,波长在 200~400 nm 时,可见一个紫外连续吸收带^[15],因此选择 310, 365 nm 波长的 LED 作为泵浦源;405, 520 nm 波长处分别对应铈离子($^4I_{15/2} \rightarrow ^2H_{9/2}$, $^4I_{15/2} \rightarrow$

$^2H_{11/2}$)和铈离子($^4I_{9/2} \rightarrow ^4G_{7/2}$)的本征吸收,因此考虑采用这 4 个波长的 LED 作为泵浦源,研究聚合物母体对不同波长泵浦光的吸收性能影响。图 5(a)为采用功率为 2 mW 的 1064 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在 310, 365, 405 nm 的 LED 和 808 nm 激光器泵浦下,当泵浦功率均为 50 mW 时,聚合物 SU-8 波导输出光强的变化情况。可知,波导对蓝紫光波段 LED 的吸收较强,对 808 nm 激光器的吸收相对较弱。在 310, 365, 405 nm LED 和 808 nm 激光器泵浦下,输出光强依次衰减了 91.7%、48.3%、26.7%、13.4%。图 5(b)为在 405 nm LED 泵浦下,聚合物 SU-8 波导输出光强随泵浦功率的变化情况。在 22, 106, 207, 519 mW 的泵浦功率下,光强分别衰减了 7.3%、20.5%、52.8%、66.3%,说明随着泵浦光功率的增加,聚合物 SU-8 波导对光的吸收也增强。聚合物 SU-8 光刻胶的分子结构对蓝紫光 LED 泵浦下波导的光强衰减有重要的影响。SU-8 采用环氧酚醛树脂为成膜材料,它对近紫外和 350~400 nm 紫外波长敏感^[16-17]。同时,泵浦光功率的增加会导致波导器件温度的上升,对光场在聚合物材料中的传输也有不利影响。因此,在基于聚合物 SU-8 材料的光波导放大器的实际应用中,应尽量采用小功率泵浦的方式来减小波导对紫外光吸收的影响。

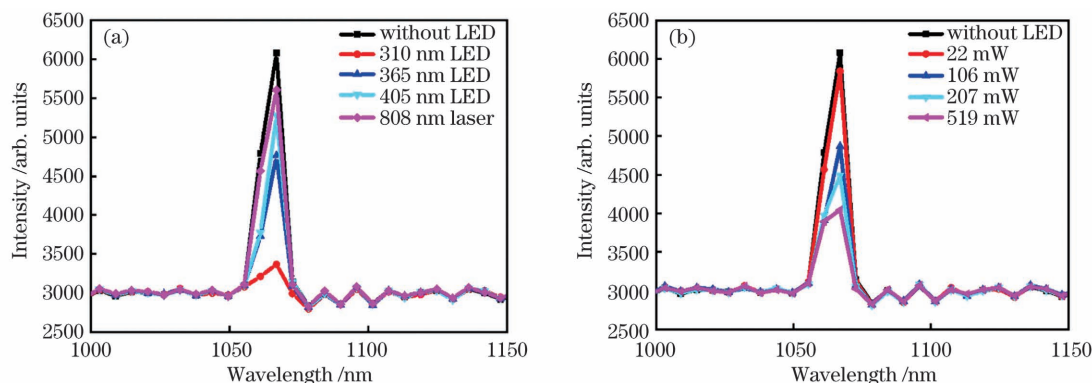


图 5 聚合物 SU-8 波导的输出光强的变化情况。(a)在不同波长的 LED 和激光器泵浦下;(b)不同功率的 405 nm LED 泵浦下

Fig. 5 Output optical intensity variation of polymer SU-8 waveguide. (a) Under LED with different wavelength and laser pumping; (b) under 405-nm LED pumping with different power

图 6(a)为采用功率为 2 mW 的 980 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在 310, 365, 405, 525 nm LED 泵浦下,聚合物 SU-8 波导输出光强的变化情况。与 1064 nm 波长作为信号源的情况相似,聚合物 SU-8 波导对蓝紫光波段 LED 的吸收较强,但对 525 nm 绿光波段 LED 几乎无吸收。在 310, 365, 405, 525 nm LED 泵

浦下,光强衰减依次为 70.8%、41.1%、24.2%、0.5%。图 6(b)为采用功率为 2 mW 的 635 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在 310, 365, 405 nm LED 泵浦,功率均为 50 mW 时,聚合物 SU-8 波导输出光强的变化情况。可以看出,在各波段 LED 泵浦下,635 nm 波长处的光强基本无明显的衰减现象。

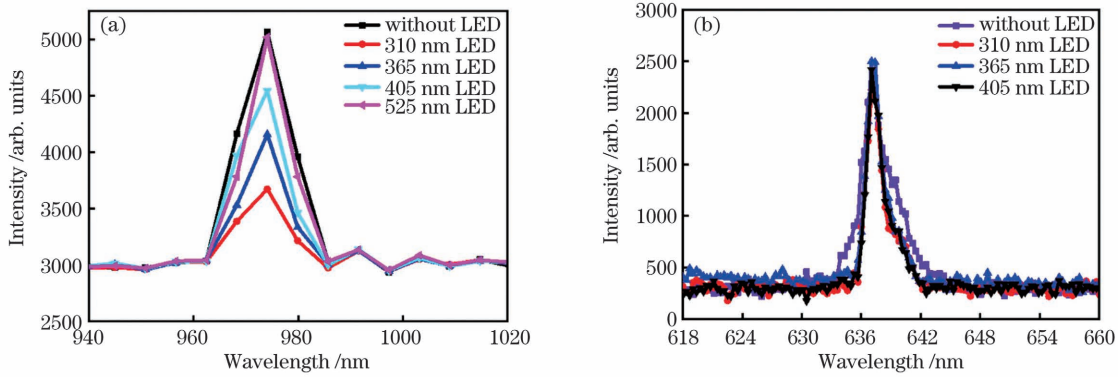


图 6 不同波长的 LED 泵浦下, 聚合物 SU-8 波导输出光强的变化情况。(a)980 nm 波长的信号光;(b)635 nm 波长的信号光
Fig. 6 Output optical intensity variation of the polymer SU-8 waveguide under LED pumping with different wavelength.

(a) 980-nm laser as signal source; (b) 635-nm laser as signal source

图 7 总结了不同波长的信号光在不同 LED 泵浦下的光强衰减情况。聚合物 SU-8 波导在蓝紫光 LED 激发下光强衰减较强, 光强衰减会随着泵浦光波长的红移而变弱; 在相同 LED 激发下, 采用 1064 nm 激光器作为信号源时, 聚合物 SU-8 对光的吸收强于 980 nm 激光器。当以 635 nm 波长光作为信号光源时, 光强几乎无衰减。

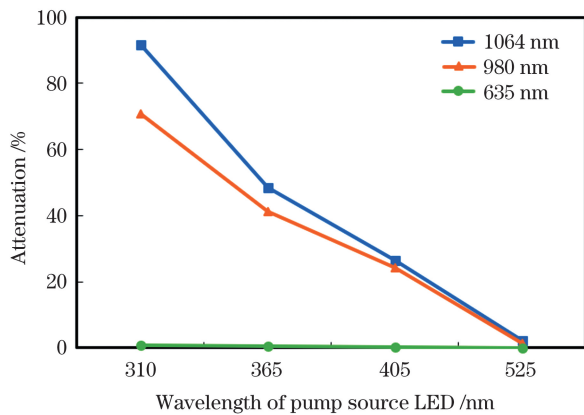


图 7 不同波长 LED 激发下, 不同信号源的光强衰减对比
Fig. 7 Comparison of optical field attenuation of different signal sources under LED pumping with different wavelength

3.2 波导结构对吸收性能的影响

由于聚合物 SU-8 波导在 310 nm LED 泵浦下的光衰减较为明显, 因此选择 310 nm LED 为泵浦源研究波导结构对蓝紫光 LED 的吸收性能。泵浦功率为 80 mW, 当输入功率为 2 mW 的 1064 nm 信号光时, 宽度分别为 4, 6, 8 μm 的波导对光的吸收如图 8 所示。波导厚度为 5 μm , 长度为 2 cm。可以看出, 随着波导宽度的增加, 输出光强衰减增大, 依次为 53.1%、65.1%、70.6%。

图 9 为在不同 LED 泵浦下, 在信号光 1064 nm

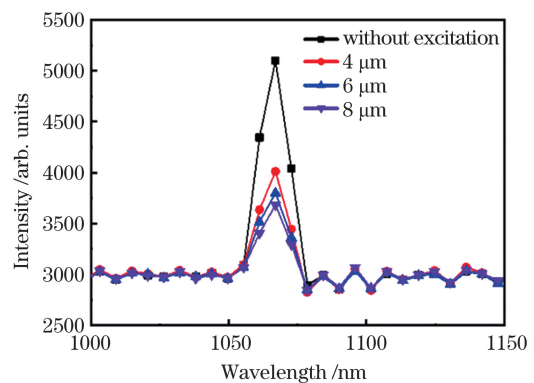


图 8 输出光强随波导宽度的变化情况
Fig. 8 Output optical intensity versus waveguide with different width

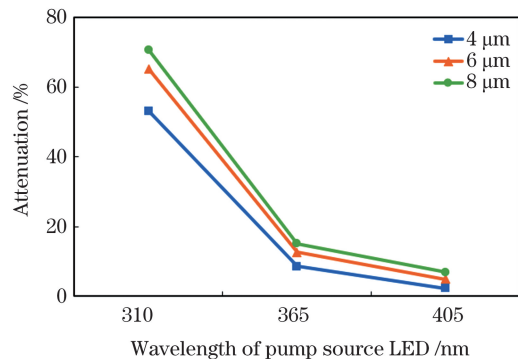


图 9 不同宽度波导的光强衰减对比
Fig. 9 Comparison of optical intensity attenuation of waveguides with different width

波长处, 波导宽度对光强衰减的影响。可知, 聚合物 SU-8 波导对光的吸收随波导宽度的增加而增加。在 365 nm LED 泵浦下, 光强的衰减依次为 8.6%、12.6%、15.1%; 在 405 nm LED 泵浦下, 衰减依次为 2.3%、4.9%、6.9%; 在 525 nm LED 和 808 nm 激光激发下, 光强几乎无衰减。这是由于聚合物 SU-8 波导对光产生吸收的主要原因在于 SU-8 的

环氧树脂结构对紫外光的吸收。在外界因素不变的情况下,单位面积光波导对相同波段蓝紫光的吸收量一定,由于波导宽度的增加,长度不变,在 LED 顶泵浦照射覆盖面不变的情况下,光波导与光照射的接触面积变大,从而使得该波导对光的吸收量也增加。因此,在基于聚合物 SU-8 材料的光波导放大器的应用中,应尽量采用单模小波导来减小光强的衰减影响,从而实现较高的增益。

3.3 基于聚合物 SU-8 的马赫-曾德尔结构的光波导光吸收性能

采用一步光刻法制备了波导截面尺寸为 $5\ \mu\text{m} \times 5\ \mu\text{m}$ 的马赫-曾德尔型结构波导,长度为 2 cm。当功

率为 2 mW 的 1064 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在 310, 365, 405, 525 nm LED 泵浦,功率均为 50 mW 时,马赫-曾德尔结构波导输出光强的变化情况如图 10(a) 所示。可知,在 310, 365, 405, 525 nm LED 泵浦下,光强衰减依次由强到弱,分别衰减了 98.9%、38.1%、24.1%、1.1%。除了聚合物 SU-8 材料自身吸收的影响之外,马赫-曾德尔型波导是一种干涉结构,由于热光等效效应,所引起的光学干涉因素对光强衰减的影响也是存在的。由图 10(b) 可知,当采用功率为 2 mW 的 635 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在不同波长 LED 泵浦下,在马赫-曾德尔波导中 635 nm 波长处的光强无衰减现象,与图 6(b) 的结果基本吻合。

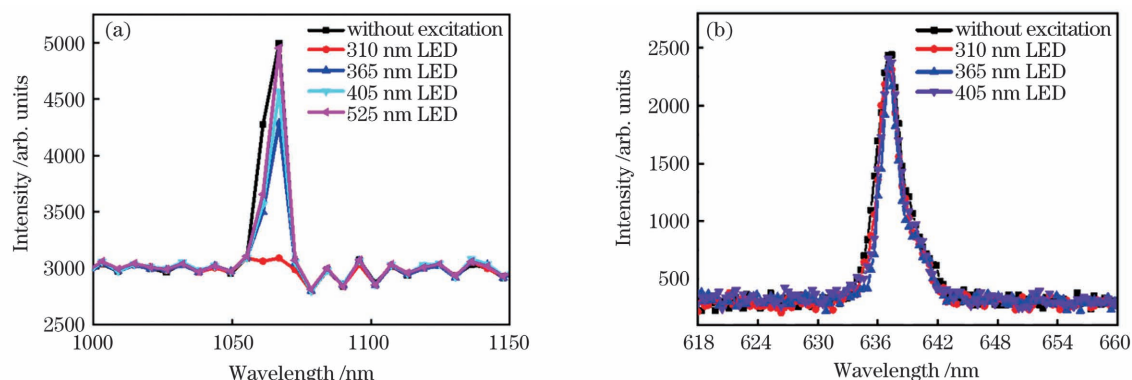


图 10 不同波长的 LED 泵浦下,马赫-曾德尔结构波导的输出光强变化情况。(a)1064 nm 波长的信号光;(b)635 nm 波长的信号光

Fig. 10 Output optical intensity variation of the Mach-Zehnder structure waveguide under LED pumping with different wavelength. (a) 1064-nm laser as signal source; (b) 635-nm laser as signal source

3.4 PMMA 波导的吸收性能研究

图 11(a)、(b)分别是功率为 2 mW 的 1064 nm 和 635 nm 激光器作为信号源时,在 310, 365, 405 nm 的 LED 泵浦,功率均为 50 mW 时,PMMA 波导输出光强

的变化情况。在各波段 LED 泵浦下,波导的输出光强无明显衰减,波形保持稳定,说明 PMMA 材料对 4 个波段的 LED 泵浦光基本无吸收,将其作为稀土掺杂光波导放大器的母体材料,更易实现光信号的放大。

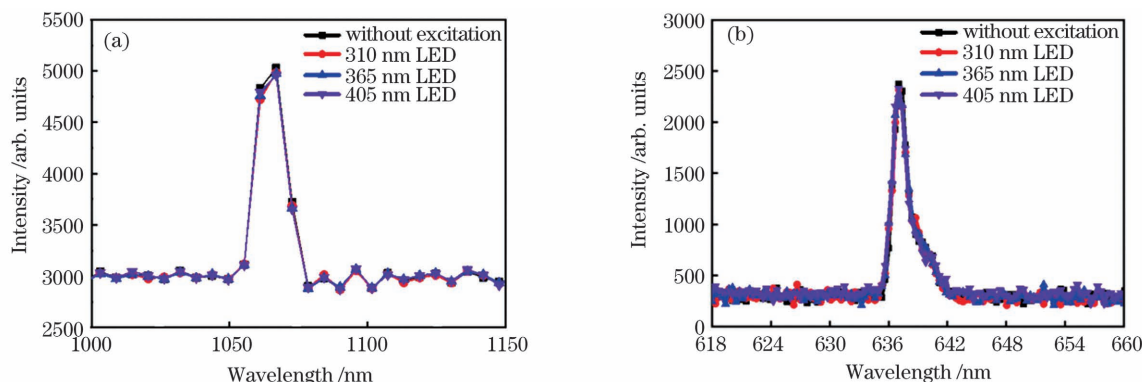


图 11 不同波长的 LED 泵浦下,PMMA 波导的输出光强的变化情况。(a)1064 nm 波长的信号光;(b)635 nm 波长的信号光

Fig. 11 Output optical intensity variation of PMMA waveguide under LED pumping with different wavelength. (a) 1064-nm laser as signal source; (b) 635-nm laser as signal source

4 结 论

对各波长 LED 泵浦激发下, 聚合物 SU-8/PMMA 光波导进行了光吸收性能的研究。实验结果表明: 聚合物 SU-8 波导在蓝紫光 LED 激发下, 光强衰减较强, 光强衰减会随着泵浦光波长的红移和波导尺寸的减小而变弱。因此在蓝紫光 LED 泵浦激发下的聚合物 SU-8 光波导放大器的实际应用中, 当以聚合物 SU-8 材料掺杂稀土离子时, 需要克服材料本身对蓝紫光 LED 吸收的影响, 应使用单模小尺寸波导、小功率 LED 泵浦来避免光场强度的衰减。而当采用 PMMA 作为波导时, 制备工艺相对繁琐, 无法通过一步光刻制备, 但是在光波导放大器的应用中, 可以忽视材料本身对 LED 泵浦光的吸收作用, 更易实现光信号的放大。

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Realizing Optical Absorption Properties of Polymer Waveguides using LED Pump Source

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Abstract

Objective The amplification function that describes an optical signal can be realized in rare-earth-doped polymer optical waveguide amplifiers based on the stimulated radiation of rare-earth ions when they experience excitation at the pump source. As an active device, polymer optical waveguide amplifier can be integrated with multiplexer/demultiplexer, beam splitter, optical switch, and other devices to compensate for various losses in the optical field that may occur during device transmission. To fabricate optical waveguide amplifiers, we typically use an SU-8 photoresist polymer and polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) as the doping matrices for rare-earth ions. Further, to ensure population inversion of the produced rare-earth ions, pump sources are usually required. A majority of the research spanning the past three decades has focused on selecting semiconductor lasers as the pumping sources. Compared with the end-coupled pumping method using semiconductor lasers as its pumping source, the use of a low-power and low-cost light emitting diode (LED) is a new development trend that can effectively solve the problems of up-conversion problems and polymer waveguide damage caused by high-power semiconductor laser pumping (200–400 mW) sources. Additionally, this development greatly reduces the commercialization costs involved in fabricating these devices and is expected to replace the traditional pumping method of semiconductor lasers. The absorption of the pump source by the polymer matrix material directly affects the gain performance of the rare-earth-doped polymer optical waveguide amplifier. However, SU-8 and PMMA materials are seldom reported to negatively impact absorption performance during the excitation of ultraviolet (UV)-visible LEDs. Based on this point, we utilized SU-8 and PMMA materials in a core layer and fabricated these materials via lithography and reactive-ion etching processes to form passive polymer optical waveguides. We demonstrated the absorption characteristics of polymer optical waveguides with pump sources derived from four different wavelengths of LEDs.

Methods Using a one-step lithography process, a rectangular SU-8 polymer waveguide and a Mach-Zehnder waveguide with a cross-section of $5\ \mu\text{m} \times 5\ \mu\text{m}$ were fabricated. A rectangular PMMA waveguide as core material was prepared via lithography and reactive-ion etching. Next, the morphology of these waveguides was characterized using scanning electron microscopy. Using a vertical top pumping mode, the absorbabilities of the SU-8 and PMMA polymer waveguides were measured at 1064, 980, and 635 nm wavelengths under the excitation wavelength of 310, 365, 405, and 525 nm for the LED-based approach as well as an excitation wavelength of 808 nm using the vertical top pumping mode.

Results and Discussions For the polymer SU-8 waveguide with a cross-section of $5\ \mu\text{m} \times 5\ \mu\text{m}$ and a length of 20 mm, the optical intensity attenuation reached $\sim 91.7\%$, 48.3% , and 26.7% at 1064-nm wavelength laser under the LED with excitation wavelength of 310, 365, and 405 nm and 50-mW pump power. The optical intensity could remain stable under the excitation wavelength of 525 and 808 nm using LED and laser, respectively [Fig. 5 (a)]. The optical intensity attenuation reached $\sim 70.8\%$, 41.1% , and 24.2% [Fig. 6(a)] at 980-nm wavelength laser under the LED with excitation wavelength of 310, 365, and 405 nm, respectively. There was no obvious attenuation of the optical intensity under laser pumping at 635-nm wavelength [Fig. 6(b)]. For an SU-8 polymer waveguide with a length of 20 mm, a thickness of $5\ \mu\text{m}$, and the widths of 4, 6, and $8\ \mu\text{m}$, the optical intensity attenuations of

approximately 53.1%, 65.1%, and 70.6%, respectively, were obtained at laser with wavelength of 1064 nm for LED with an excitation of 310 nm and 80-mW pump power (Fig. 8). Turning to the SU-8 polymer Mach-Zehnder waveguide, using a 50-mW LED-based pump source, the optical intensity attenuations of approximately 98.9%, 38.1%, and 24.1% were obtained at a 1064-nm wavelength laser for LED with excitation wavelength of 310, 365, and 405 nm, respectively. The optical intensity remained stable for an excitation wavelength of 525 nm using the LED-based approach [Fig. 10(a)]. There was no obvious optical intensity attenuation for the LED-based approach at 635-nm wavelength [Fig. 10(b)], which aligns with results obtained for the rectangular straight waveguide. Finally, for the PMMA polymer waveguide, the optical intensity remained stable for the excitation wavelength of 310, 365, and 405 nm using the LED-based approach (Fig. 11).

Conclusions In this study, we measure the optical absorption performance of SU-8 and PMMA polymer optical waveguides with excitation wavelength of 310, 365, 405, and 525 nm for an LED-based pump source, as well as an excitation wavelength of 808 nm for the traditional laser-based approach. Our experimental results show that when pumped by a blue-violet LED, the resulting optical intensity of the SU-8 polymer waveguide sharply decays at the wavelengths of 980 and 1064 nm. Additionally, we observe that the optical intensity attenuation weakens with a red shift of the center wavelength of the LED pump source and a decrease in the size of the polymer waveguide. For the SU-8 polymer waveguide with a cross-section of $5\ \mu\text{m} \times 5\ \mu\text{m}$ and a length of 20 mm, using a 50-mW LED-based pump source, we attain an optical intensity attenuation of approximately 91.7%, 48.3%, and 26.7% at laser source with wavelength of 1064 nm for the LED with excitation wavelength of 310, 365, and 405 nm, respectively. Conversely, both the 525-nm LED-based approach and the 808-nm traditional laser-based approach, the resulting optical intensity of the SU-8 polymer waveguide remains stable. Further, for the PMMA polymer waveguide, no obvious optical intensity attenuation was observed under the excitation of LEDs. Therefore, we conclude that in rare-earth-doped SU-8 polymer optical waveguide amplifiers pumped by blue-violet LEDs, single-mode and small-size waveguides with a low-power LED pump source should be used to effectively avoid optical intensity attenuation. Here, we note that it is easier to achieve the optical gain using a PMMA polymer as the host for the rare-earth solution when pumped by LEDs.

Key words integrated optics; polymer SU-8; polymethyl methacrylate; optical waveguide; LED pumping; optical attenuation

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