

中国激光

半导体激光器锁频系统的环境适应性研究

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摘要 为研究半导体激光器锁频系统的环境适应性, 所采用的锁频方案是基于饱和吸收光谱的调制解调技术。分析了三种典型的锁频光路方案: 消多普勒锁频(DFL)光路, 原子气室端面反射锁频(CRL)光路以及反射镜增反锁频(MRL)光路。这三种方案均采用锁定调节模块进行光放大, 通过调制解调技术将激光器锁定在饱和吸收峰上。在锁频基础上, 利用声光调制器产生激光冷却原子实验中冷却光所需的激光频率。通过改变温度、振动频率和振动幅度等环境参数, 测试了三种激光器锁频光路的频率稳定性, 并讨论了每种方案的环境耐受性。实验结果表明, DFL 方案的温度耐受性和抗振动干扰是最好的, CRL 和 MRL 方案次之, 说明 DFL 方案更适于复杂工作环境。然而, CRL 和 MRL 方案可简化光路、缩小光路尺寸, 便于激光单元的小型化和集成化。

关键词 激光器; 外腔式半导体激光器; 饱和吸收光谱; 频率锁定; 环境适应性

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1 引言

1962 年, 世界上第一台半导体激光器问世^[1], 极大地推动了其他科学领域的发展, 被认为是 20 世纪人类最伟大的发明之一。半导体激光器以其独特的优点, 在原子光学领域获得了广泛应用。然而, 在现代前沿物理应用中, 如超高分辨率光谱、精密测量、激光冷却与囚禁、光频标等, 对激光器本身性能(频率稳定性高、输出线宽窄等)要求非常高, 通常在自由运转下的激光器无论是其单色性还是输出线宽, 都达不到应用标准。尤其是冷原子干涉实验中, 由于⁸⁷Rb 原子的自然线宽约为 6 MHz, 因此要求半导体激光器在数小时甚至几天内频率稳定在几 MHz 甚至更小的范围内, 而自由运转的激光器由于慢漂和跳模等原因每天可能导致的频率移动范围可能达几个 GHz, 其中慢漂主要是周围环境对激光腔体、泵浦源等因素引起, 显然这是不能满足要求的, 这就需要对激光器的频率、功率进行稳定。研究人员提出了很多方法来提高激光频率、功率的稳定性, 其中最出色的是半导体激光器的主动稳频技术, 它

通过把激光频率与其他参考频率标准进行比对, 获得激光频率与参考频率标准之间的差值, 即鉴频信号, 然后通过反馈控制来校正激光的频率, 使之与参考频率标准保持一致。主动稳频技术包括: 外腔稳频法^[2]、法布里-珀罗(F-P)标准具法(Pound-Drever-Hall 技术^[3])、基于全光纤环形谐振腔的转移腔技术^[4]、原子分子线稳频(饱和吸收光谱^[5]、双向色性方法^[6]、基于低温稀土离子掺杂晶体中的光谱烧孔效应^[7]), 其中饱和吸收光谱稳频激光技术是实验室常采用的一种方案, 这种稳频技术成熟, 且具有很高的饱和吸收光谱信噪比, 使激光器的频率能够长期稳定在锁定值上。

但同时半导体激光器也是一种对环境要求非常敏感的电光转换器件, 电流、温度等因素的变化会引起输出波长的变化^[8]。对于普通的外腔式半导体激光器而言, 其电流引起的变化约为 0.01 nm/mA^[9], 温度引起的变化大约为 0.1 nm/°C^[8]。另外, 在精密测量实验研究中, 对环境的要求也特别高, 尤其是振动对实验结果的影响, 已成为精密测量研究中的重要制约因素^[10]。这就要求用于提高激光器性能

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的各种方案都需要有很强的环境适应性。

本文主要研究基于饱和吸收光谱和波长调制锁频原理的锁频光路的环境适应性。在实验室环境下,结合声光调制器(AOM)分别用三种不同的光路方案,对半导体激光器的频率进行锁定。然后,通过分别改变温度、振动幅度和振动频率等参数,测试这些环境参数对每一种锁频方案的频率稳定性影响。

2 实验原理和方案

本文以⁸⁷Rb原子的D2线为参考进行激光的频率锁定^[11]。对于⁸⁷Rb原子而言,超精细能级F=2→F'=3之间的跃迁是一个闭环跃迁,因此激光冷却原子实验中经常选择这两个能级之间的红失谐跃迁光作为冷却光。然而,在饱和吸收光谱中,F=2→F'=3共振峰信号较小,F=2→F'=2与F'=3交叉峰信号较大,所以通常选择将激光器锁定在这个交叉峰上,再进行移频,以产生冷却光。

波长调制锁频是目前在实验室最常见的一种锁频方式^[12]。这种方式基于调制-解调原理,将一般为数百至数千赫兹频率的电压,加在控制激光器光栅反馈角的压电陶瓷(PZT)上,实现激光器输出波长的小幅度调制。因此,饱和吸收光谱也受到了同样的调制。将这个受到调制的饱和吸收信号送入锁相放大器,对其进行解调,即可获得激光器与饱和吸收谱线的峰值之间的波长误差信号。将误差信号通过比例积分微分(PID)控制器反馈回激光器的PZT和注入电流,即可自动地将激光器波长稳定在饱和吸收谱线的峰值上。

在激光与原子相互过程中,需要用到多种激光的输出频率,有冷却光、探测光和再泵浦光。为了减少激光器的数量,需要对一束激光分出一部分光功率进行频率的移动,移动的量级在百兆赫兹量级;并

且在冷却原子过程中,还要对激光的频率进行扫描,扫描的频率量级也在几十兆赫兹。声光调制是利用声光效应将信息加载于光频载波上的一种物理过程,利用声光效应,可以实现对光的调制作用。AOM的衍射角会随着声波频率的变化而变化,所以当扫描AOM的驱动频率时,一级衍射光的传播方向也会跟着改变。但是采用双次通过AOM方式,一级衍射光经过反射镜重新返回到AOM进行第二次衍射,第二次衍射后的光路与最初的人射光重合。此时,对AOM的驱动频率进行调制的时候,衍射光的传播方向和位置均不会随着频率的变化而发生改变,这便是双次通过AOM的优点^[13]。实验中采用的半导体激光器是同一台来自德国Toptica公司研制的DL100,AOM是美国Crystal公司研制的3080-122和3200-124。

本文主要通过分析三种基于饱和吸收的半导体激光器锁频方案,希望能找到一种对环境适应性较强的锁频方案。

2.1 消多普勒锁频光路

消多普勒锁频(DFL)光路是实验室常用的锁频光路,在中性原子的激光冷却与囚禁实验中,通常以原子的特征吸收谱线作为频率标准,采用饱和吸收光谱技术,把激光器的频率锁定在吸收线的峰值上。图1(a)为DFL光路图,在该锁频光路中,主要采用两束探测光,其中一束探测光与泵浦光重合,产生饱和吸收信号。利用两个光电二极管(PD)分别采集两个探测光的信号进行差分之后得到消多普勒的饱和吸收谱线。然后将这个信号用LIR模块进行放大,反馈回激光器,进而控制激光器的温度和工作电流,最终将半导体激光器频率锁定在相应的吸收峰上。图1(b)为采用DFL光路在实验中得到的饱和吸收谱线。

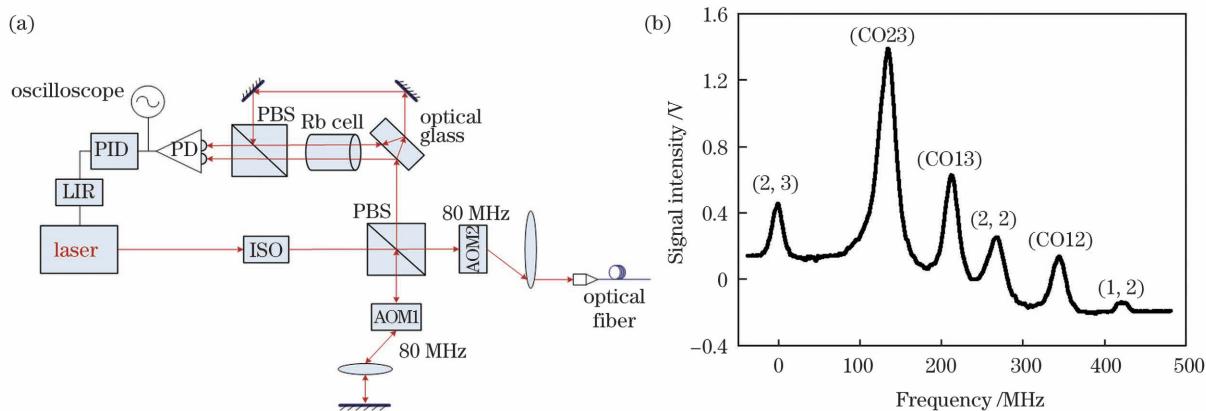


图1 消多普勒锁频光路。(a)光路图;(b)对应的饱和吸收谱线

Fig. 1 Anti-Doppler frequency-locked optical path. (a) Optical path diagram; (b) corresponding saturation absorption spectrum

该方案中激光先通过两次 AOM1 后进入铷原子气室, AOM1 的中心频率设定为 80 MHz, 所以锁定的激光频率 $f_{\text{Lock}} = f_{\text{Laser}} - 2f_{\text{AOM1}}$, 其中 f_{Lock} 是激光器的锁定频率。在该光路中, 激光器的频率 f_{Lock} 锁定在相对于 $F=2 \rightarrow F'=3$ 共振峰跃迁的红移 133 MHz 处。主光路上的冷却光需再通过一个 AOM2 移频, 使其产生所需的频率 $f_{\text{Trapping}} = f_{\text{Laser}} - f_{\text{AOM2}}$ 。因此, 通过对 AOM2 输入相应的射频驱动信号, 使激光频率达到与 $F=2 \rightarrow F'=3$ 共振峰跃迁红移 18 MHz(3Γ)的频移, 也就是冷却光所需要的频率。

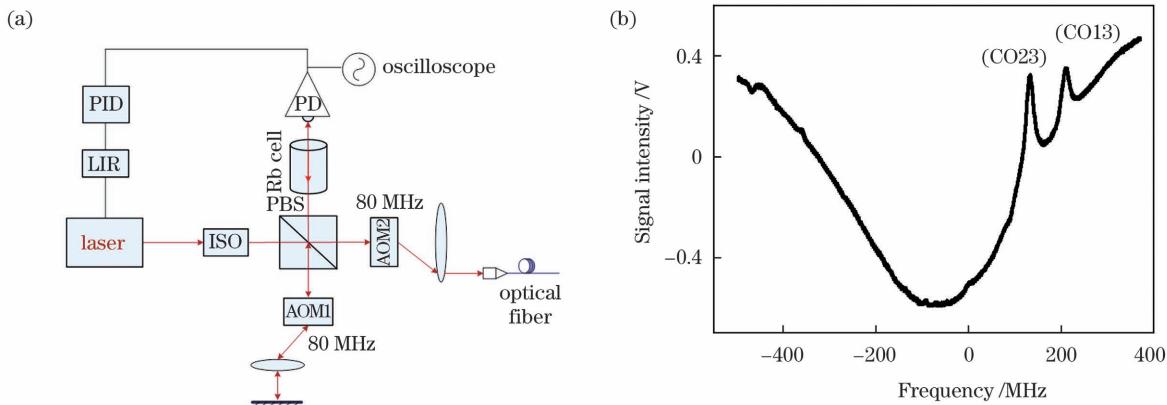


图 2 原子气室端面反射锁频光路。(a)光路图;(b)对应的饱和吸收谱线

Fig. 2 Cell-reflection locking optical path. (a) Optical path diagram; (b) corresponding saturation absorption spectrum

2.3 反射镜增反锁频光路

反射镜增反锁频(MRL)光路是对 CFL 的改进, 考虑到直接用原子气室的后端面反射, 反射效率低, 泵浦光的功率较弱, 使得饱和吸收信号不够明显。所以 MRL 在 CRL 的基础上进行了改进, 光从原子气室出射后经过反射镜反射再回到原子气室, 反射镜的反射率接近 100%, 再用 $\lambda/4$ 波片改变偏

2.2 原子气室端面反射锁频光路

原子气室端面反射锁频(CRL)光路的设计是因为考虑到饱和吸收光路中有较多的光学元件, 相对光路比较复杂, 可能对温度的耐受性较差, 并且对振动较敏感, 所以在 CRL 中, 选择用原子气室的后端面作为反射面, 取代了饱和吸收光路中的两个反射镜、一块玻璃砖和一个偏振分束器(PBS), 减少了光学元件, 希望能达到较好的环境耐受性。由于该光路中只用一束探测光, 所以饱和吸收信号包含了多普勒展宽。图 2(a)为 CRL 光路图, 其移频部分与图 1(a)相同。图 2(b)为采用 CRL 光路得到的饱和吸收谱线。

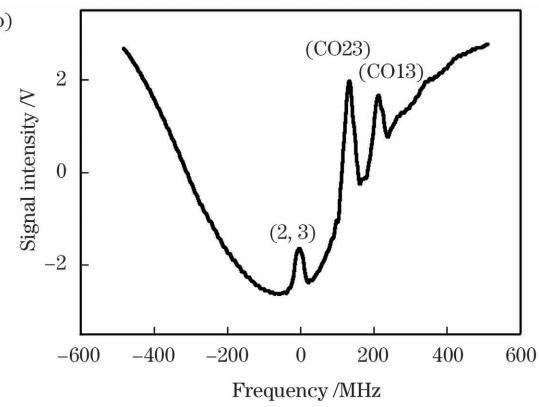
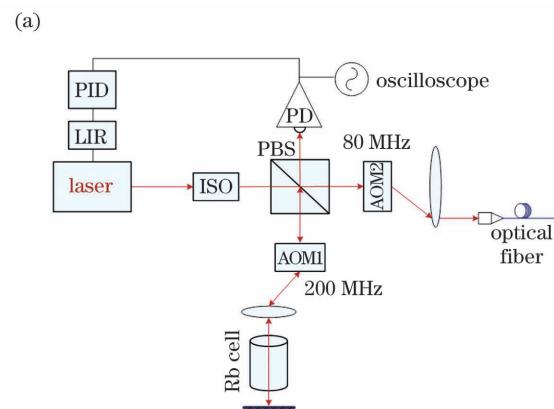
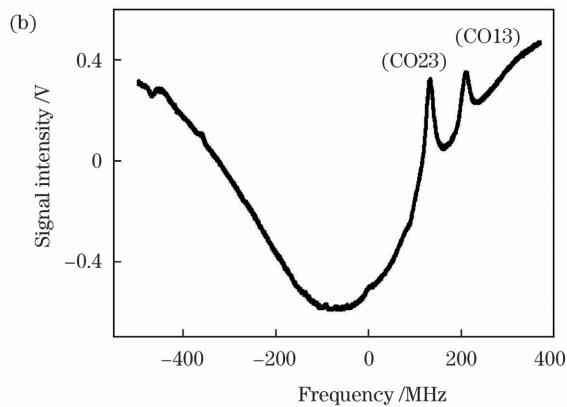


图 3 反射镜增反锁频光路。(a)光路图;(b)对应的饱和吸收谱线

Fig. 3 Mirror-reflection locking optical path. (a) Optical path diagram; (b) corresponding saturation absorption spectrum

3 环境适应性实验研究

3.1 温度实验

实验光路主要由外腔式半导体激光器和光学元件组成,其中,温度对激光器的输出波长和功率影响非常大^[14],所以我们有必要针对激光器的温度变化对锁定效果的影响进行研究。

在实验中,采用热源加热半导体激光器的外壳,同时监控锁定点的误差信号和温度。在锁定条件下,因为负反馈回路的存在,误差信号理论上可一直保持在零点附近。但是,随着温度不断升高,当达到某一临界温度时,激光器的PID电路再难以将激光频率的变化恢复到锁定点,此时锁定点的误差信号会出现突变,表明激光频率脱锁或者没有锁定在实验所需的峰值上。记录下脱锁时对应的临界温度,作为该锁频光路对温度耐受性的实验参考数据。

图4~6分别为DFL、CRL和MRL三种锁频方案的温度实验结果,其中(a)为激光器温度随时间的变化曲线,(b)为频率锁定点的误差信号随温度和时间的同步变化曲线。同时,为了减小偶然误差,每种方案分别进行了5次重复实验。由图4可知,DFL方案中,激光脱锁温度为33.2℃,锁定时间为214 s。五次的脱锁温度分别为33.2℃、33.4℃、33.1℃、32.6℃、32.4℃,因此,DFL光路的临界脱锁温度约为 $T=(32.9\pm0.4)$ ℃。由图5可知,CRL方案的脱锁温度为27.1℃,锁定时间为80 s。五次的脱锁温度分别为27.1℃、27.6℃、26.3℃、26.4℃、26.2℃,因此,CRL光路的临界脱锁温度约为 $T=(26.7\pm0.5)$ ℃。由图6可知,MRL方案的脱锁温度为28.7℃,锁定时间为89 s。五次的脱锁温度分别为28.7℃、27.9℃、28.3℃、28.5℃、28.7℃,因此,MRL光路的临界脱锁温度约为 $T=(28.4\pm0.3)$ ℃。

分析上述结果可知,激光器频率脱锁的临界温度最高为DFL方案,CRL与MRL方案相差不大,说明DFL的温度耐受性最好,CRL、MRL的温度耐受性相近。此外,图4~6中误差信号的变化幅度代表频率漂移的范围,从图中分析可知,在激光器锁定后,DFL方案的频率漂移相对最小,约为2%,代表频率的锁定最稳定;而CRL方案的频率漂移次之,约为6%,MRL方案的频率漂移相对最大,约为10%。

这是因为,虽然激光器的环境温度升高会导致其输出光频率和功率产生抖动,但是在DFL光路中,由于参考光的存在,且利用两个PD采集的信号

进行差分之后,这些干扰在很大程度上可被消除,最后进入PID的环境干扰因素较小,因此反馈回路可以更加准确地将激光器的频率锁定在吸收峰上。然而,随着温度进一步升高,达到临界温度,这时由温度引起的干扰超出了反馈回路能控制的最大值,那么负反馈会被破坏,导致激光器脱锁。对于CRL和MRL的光路,由于不存在参考光,其温度变化引起

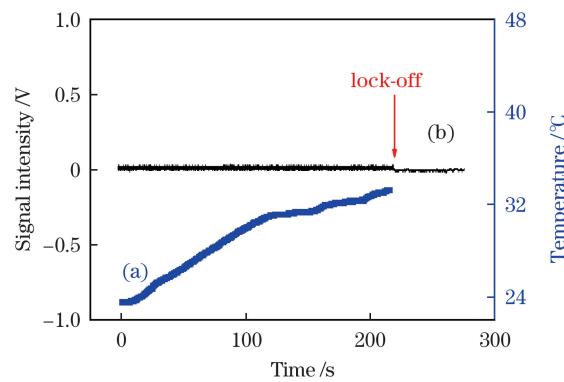


图4 DFL 误差信号随温度和时间的变化曲线
Fig. 4 Curves of DFL error signal with temperature and time

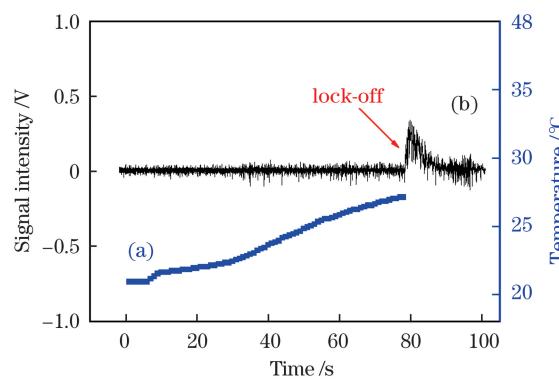


图5 CRL 误差信号随温度和时间的变化曲线
Fig. 5 Curves of CRL error signal with temperature and time

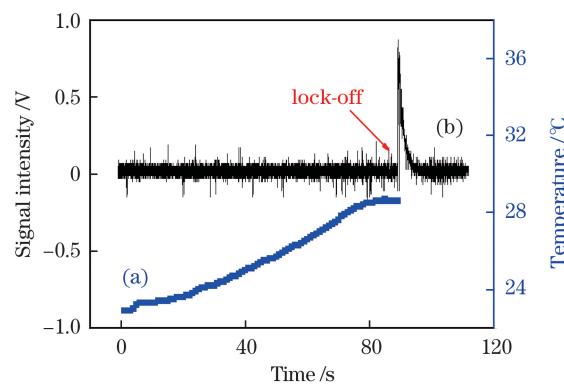


图6 MRL 误差信号随温度和时间的变化曲线
Fig. 6 Curves of MRL error signal with temperature and time

的干扰信号会直接进入 PID, 因此, 其温度耐受性弱于 DFL。

3.2 振动实验

在原子光学领域, 振动对实验结果有着很大的影响^[15], 如振动会导致光学元件的距离或位置发生改变, 进而会改变光的传输方向, 其中距离或位置的改变使得激光的相位受到影响, 光的传输方向改变会导致 AOM、PD 等对方向敏感的光学元件的输出光功率下降, 所以研究振动对锁频效果的影响十分必要。

本振动实验在光学平台上进行, 主要通过改变振动幅度和振动频率两个参数研究其对锁频光路的影响。需要指出的是, 在振动幅度这一参数对锁频光路的实验研究中, 我们采用信号发生器驱动安装于光学平台上的振动源使其产生振动, 由于通过振动源施加到光学平台所产生的振动幅度难以准确标定, 然而实验过程中信号发生器作用于振动源的驱动功率和光学平台产生的振动幅度是同步变化的,

而且信号发生器作用于振动源的驱动功率易于准确读取, 因此, 这里采用振动源驱动功率参数变化来研究锁频光路的影响等同于采用振动幅度参数变化对锁频光路的影响; 由于光学平台能有效阻隔高频信号, 故实验中只研究 0~300 Hz 的低频信号。每一次振动持续时间为 30 s。

本实验在研究振动幅度对锁频效果的影响时, 振动频率取 $f = 100$ Hz 不变, 低频信号在光学平台上振动较明显。图 7 为 DFL、CRL 和 MRL 三种方案的误差信号强度随振动源驱动功率变化的实验曲线。由图 7 可知, 随着振动源驱动功率的增大, 即振动幅度的增大, 误差信号没有出现大幅度的变化, DFL 抖动约为 1%, CRL 约为 0.3%, MRL 约为 10%, 激光器并没有出现脱锁的情况。综合分析这三种方案, MRL 误差信号抖动幅度最大; 其次为 DFL, 但是 DFL 抖动幅度基本不随振幅的增大而增大, 较稳定; 抗干扰性能最好的是 CRL。

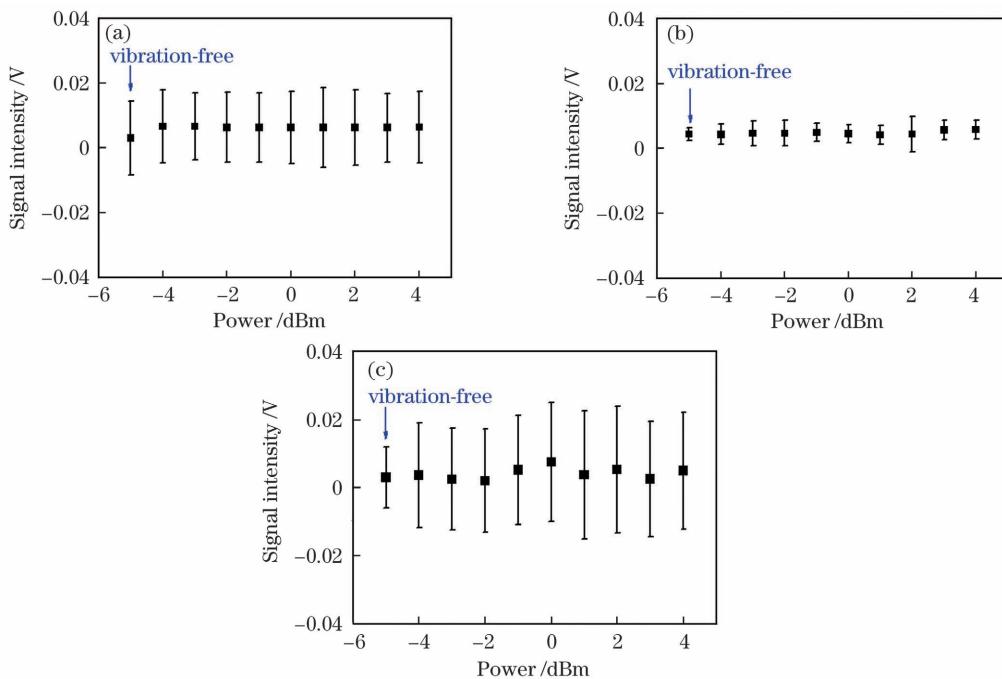


图 7 实验结果。(a) DFL、(b) CRL 和(c) MRL 误差信号强度随振动源驱动功率的变化曲线

Fig. 7 Experimental results. Curves of (a) DFL, (b) CRL, and (c) MRL error signal intensity versus driving power of vibration source

在研究振动频率对锁频效果的影响时, 为了防止振动源驱动芯片超负荷工作, 振动源驱动功率设为 0 dBm。如图 8 所示, 由于隔振平台的存在, 振动幅度对锁定效果的影响并不是太大。DFL 抖动约为 0.7%, CRL 抖动幅度最小约为 0.3%, MRL 变化较大, 约为 0.3%~0.9%, 误差信号没有出现大幅度跳变, 激光器没有出现脱锁情况。同时, DFL

的抖动幅度变化基本不随频率变化而变化, 较稳定。

通过对振动实验结果分析表明, 当振动频率和振幅改变时, 对 DFL 光路、CRL 光路的影响不大, 对 MRL 光路的抖动较大、影响明显。对于 DFL 来说, 由于参考光的存在, 振动噪声的影响被大大减弱了; CRL 的泵浦光的产生源于原子气室的弱反射, 其本身非常微弱, 饱和吸收信号很小, 噪声水平也

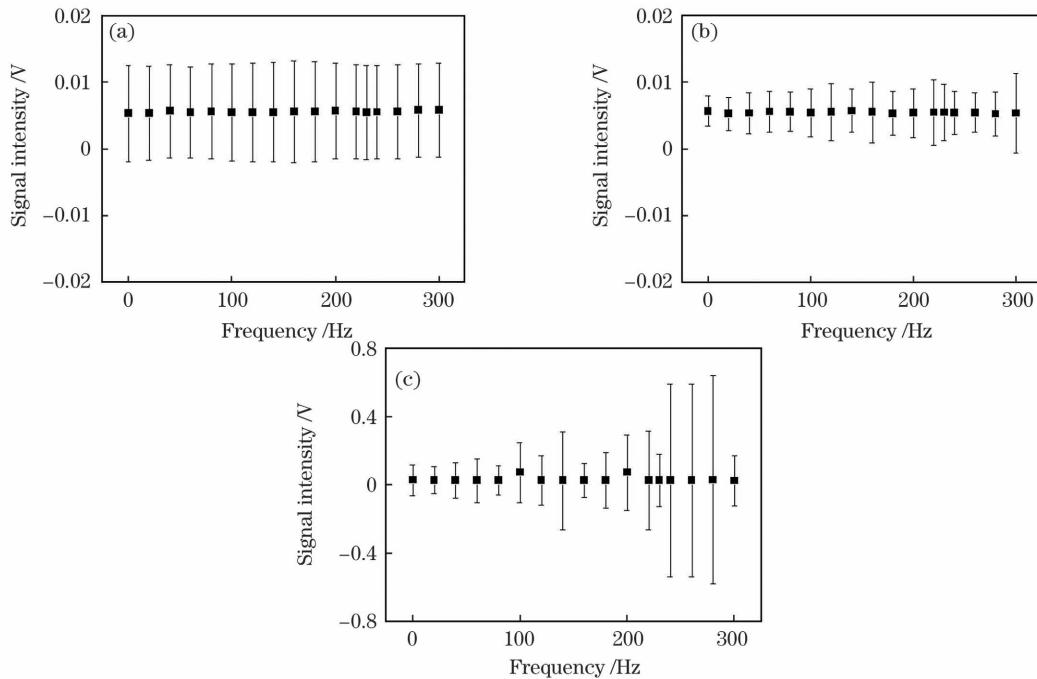


图8 实验结果。(a)DFL、(b)CRL和(c)MRL误差信号强度随频率的变化曲线

Fig. 8 Experimental results. Curves of (a) DFL, (b) CRL, and (c) MRL error signal intensity versus frequency

较小,所以误差信号的抖动较小,但稳定性弱于DFL;MRL的信号较强,且探测光来自反射镜的反射,振动造成的反射镜位置的微小变化对光谱信号影响非常大,相对而言噪声水平较大,稳定性较差。

4 结 论

基于饱和吸收光谱和波长调制锁频原理,本文分析了三种典型的激光频率稳定光路,并参考控制变量的实验思想,依次改变实验环境参数,包括温度、振动幅度和振动频率,评价每一种锁频方案的环境耐受性。通过实验结果综合分析得出如下结论:DFL方案的脱锁临界温度最高,抗振动性最好,故其环境适应性最好。

CRL和MRL这两种方案同样也具有一定的应用价值。因为DFL中探测光和泵浦光需要尽可能重合,这就要求光路中的两个反射镜的距离尽量远一点,实际光路占据的空间较大。所以,当光路尺寸受到限制时,DFL可能不适用。未来,我们需要考虑实际的限制因素,合理选择锁频方案。

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Environmental Adaptability of Frequency-Locked-Laser System

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Abstract

Objective In modern frontier physics application fields, such as ultra-high resolution spectroscopy, precision measurement, laser cooling and the trapping of atoms, and optical frequency standard, very high laser performance (excellent frequency stability, narrow output linewidth, etc.) is required. However, the monochromaticity and the linewidth of the free-running laser cannot meet the application requirements, so it is necessary to stabilize the frequency and power. A common method with good maturity and a high signal-to-noise ratio is the laser frequency stabilization technology based on saturated absorption spectrum and wavelength modulation frequency locking. Therefore, it can stably lock the laser frequency for a long time. However, the laser is a type of electro-optic converter that is very sensitive to the environment. The temperature and vibration significantly influence its frequency stability, which requires good environmental adaptability by the frequency stabilization scheme that is used to improve the laser performance. As a result, this paper focuses on the environmental adaptability of semiconductor laser lock-in systems. The frequency locking scheme is based on the saturated absorption spectrum modulation and demodulation technology. The findings may be useful in guiding the stability and the practical optical path design of semiconductor laser frequency locking.

Methods In the laboratory environment, we use three typical frequency locking schemes: doppler-free locking (DFL), cell-reflection locking (CRL), and mirror-reflection locking (MRL) optical path to lock the frequency of the semiconductor laser. The three schemes use a lock-in regulator (LIR) for optical amplification. Then, through the

modulation and demodulation technology to lock the laser on the saturation absorption peak. Meanwhile, the acousto-optic frequency-shifting optical path generates the laser frequency required for the experiment. Finally, we tested the environmental adaptability of the three schemes. The research method is to change some environmental parameters such as temperature, vibration frequency, and vibration amplitude to test the stability of the laser frequency and describe the environment tolerance of each scheme. A heater is used to heat the shell of the semiconductor laser in the temperature experiment, and the error signal and the temperature of the locking point are monitored. The vibration experiment is conducted on the optical platform. The influences of vibration amplitude (the driving power of vibration source) and vibration frequency on the three frequency locking schemes are studied. Because the optical platform can effectively block the high-frequency signal, only the low-frequency signal of 0–300 Hz is studied in the experiment. The duration of each vibration is set to 30 s.

Results and Discussions The temperature experiment shows that the laser unlocking temperature of the DFL scheme is 33.2 °C, locking time is 214 s, and frequency drift is approximately 2% (Fig. 4). In CRL, the unlocking temperature is 27.1 °C, locking time is 80 s, and frequency drift is approximately 6% (Fig. 5). In MRL, the unlocking temperature is 28.7 °C, locking time is 89 s, and frequency drift is approximately 10% (Fig. 6). This is because although the increase of the laser temperature leads to the fluctuation of the laser frequency and power, in DFL, because of the existence of the reference light and difference between the signals collected by two photodiodes, these interference signals can be greatly eliminated. Finally, the interference signal into the proportional integral derivative(PID) is weak. As a result, the feedback circuit can lock the laser frequency more precisely at the peak of the saturation absorption spectrum. However, as the temperature rises and reaches the critical mark, the temperature-induced interference exceeds the regulation ability of the feedback circuit. The negative feedback is destroyed, resulting in laser unlocking. Because there is no reference light for the CRL and MRL, the interference signal caused due to temperature change will enter the PID directly, making its temperature tolerance less than DFL. In the vibration amplitude experiment, the vibration frequency is set to 100 Hz. The fluctuation of the DFL optical path is relatively stable at approximately 1%, when the driving power of the vibration source increases from -4 dBm to 4 dBm; CRL fluctuates the least (approximately 0.3%), and MRL changes a lot (approximately 10%) (Fig. 7). In the vibration frequency experiment, the driving power of the vibration source is set at 0 dBm. The fluctuation of the DFL optical path is relatively stable at approximately 0.7%, when the vibration frequency increases from 0 Hz to 300 Hz; CRL has the smallest fluctuation (approximately 0.3%). MRL varies from 0.3% to 0.9% (Fig. 8). The results show that when the vibration frequency and amplitude change, the influence on DFL and CRL optical path is small and the influence on MRL is obvious. For DFL, the influence of noise caused due to vibration is greatly weakened due to the existence of reference light. For CRL, the pumping light comes from the weak reflection of the atomic gas cell, which is very weak. The fluctuation of the error signal is small due to the small saturated absorption signal and noise level, but the stability is weaker than that of DFL. The saturation absorption signal is relatively strong for MRL, and the probing light is reflected from the mirror. The small change in mirror position caused due to vibration impacts the spectral signal, increasing the noise and decreasing the stability.

Conclusions Three typical laser frequency locking schemes are studied using the experimental idea of controlling variables based on the principle of the saturated absorption spectrum and wavelength modulation frequency locking. The results show that DFL has the best temperature tolerance and antivibration interference, followed by CRL and MRL, indicating that DFL is more suitable for harsh environments. However, CRL and MRL also have certain application values. For example, because the probing and pumping lights in DFL need to coincide as much as possible, the distance between the two mirrors in the optical path must be as far as possible, and the actual optical path occupies a larger space. Therefore, DFL may not be applicable when the optical path size is limited. However, CRL and MRL have small optical path sizes and are easy to integrate and miniaturize for future laser units.

Key words lasers; external cavity diode laser; saturation absorption spectrum; frequency-stability; environment-adaptability

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