

VECSEL 热焦距测量以及角度调谐研究

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摘要 为了使半导体激光器输出高功率、高光束质量的激光,垂直外腔面发射激光器(VECSEL)应运而生。本文通过对激光器谐振腔的稳定条件进行计算,并结合实验估算出 VECSEL 中增益芯片的热透镜在泵浦功率为 31.3 W 时的热焦距在 45.7 mm 到 53.6 mm 之间。实验过程中观测到增益芯片的荧光光谱随观测角度变化的现象,并提出一种通过观测增益芯片在不同角度下的荧光光谱来直接估算 VECSEL 的调谐范围的方法,用所提方法测得增益芯片调谐范围为 995~1030 nm。

关键词 激光器;垂直外腔面发射激光器(VECSEL);热焦距;角度调谐;荧光光谱

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1 引言

20 世纪 70 年代室温半导体激光器问世,为激光行业的发展带来了巨大变革。虽然传统的半导体激光器可以实现高效率、高平均功率的运转,但是也存在缺点,这是因为传统的半导体激光器采用边发射的出光方式,输出光斑通常为具有高发散度的椭圆形,且带有严重的像散。因此,传统的半导体激光器一般不作为光源直接使用,而是整形后作为其他激光器的泵浦源。

1979 年, Soda 等^[1]提出了垂直腔面发射激光器(VCSEL)的概念。但 VCSEL 芯片的有源层厚度较小,增益较低,因此输出功率也比较低,而通过增大输出窗口来提高输出功率的方案又会使光束出现多横模^[2]。为了减小面发射半导体激光器的发散角,学者们设计出垂直外腔面发射激光器(VECSEL),但是电流泵浦的 VCSEL 和 VECSEL 均因电流泵浦的不均匀性而无法同时获得高功率和高光束质量的输出。

1997 年, Kuznetsov 等^[3]提出了光泵浦垂直外

腔面发射激光器(OP-VECSEL)。OP-VECSEL 可以在保持较好光束质量的同时,获得更高的输出功率。OP-VECSEL 具有发射波长范围大^[4-6]、方便锁模、易于生长、结构紧凑等优势。2012 年, Heinen 等^[7]使用 OP-VECSEL 实现了波长为 1028 nm, 功率为 106 W 的连续激光输出。在 2 μm 波段, Holl 等^[8-9]用 OP-VECSEL 实现了室温下功率为 17 W 的激光输出。此外,还有一些关于 OP-VECSEL 调谐特性的相关报道^[10-13]。

OP-VECSEL 也有不足,实际输出的波长相比于设计波长会略有不同,偏移量通常为几纳米;另外 VECSEL 增益芯片的导热率较低,在高功率泵浦下,增益芯片的热积累很严重。热问题在很大程度上限制了 VECSEL 的发展。增益芯片的热焦距在一定程度上决定了 VECSEL 的稳定性,因此了解增益芯片的热透镜效应对于 VECSEL 的实际应用有重要价值。在 VECSEL 的工艺和散热改进方面, Hou 等^[14]采用预金属化工艺使半导体薄片激光器的热阻得到了改善,并得到 27 W 的输出功率。Huo 等^[15]深入研究了 GaAs/AlAs 分布式布拉格反

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射器超晶格结构的热导设计原则,以精确分析 OP-VECSEL 的热行为。本文通过模拟谐振腔的稳定性条件,并结合实验,估计了所用增益芯片的热焦距。此外,本文还介绍了一种通过直接测量增益芯片的荧光光谱随角度的变化特性来估算 VECSEL 角度调谐范围的方法,并进行了角度调谐出光实验。

2 基本原理和实验

激光器在工作时,泵浦造成的热效应会使固体增益介质产生热梯度,从而导致增益介质的折射率分布不均匀,当高斯光束经过折射率分布不均匀的吸收介质时,该介质可视为光束的透镜。在激光器设计时,热透镜焦距的变化范围决定了激光器运转时稳定区域的大小。对于常见的激光晶体,可以通过棒状晶体的热焦距公式来粗略估计热透镜效应的等效焦距^[16]。但是半导体材料的情况与晶体有很大差别,无法使用传统的热透镜焦距计算公式^[17]。因此,在对 VECSEL 的增益芯片进行评估时,需要寻找新的热焦距评估方法。而利用激光谐振腔的稳定性条件可以很好地测量增益芯片的热焦距。在增益芯片和输出凹面镜组成的平凹腔中,可以将增益芯片等效为透镜。对含有热透镜的谐振腔分析一般采用等效腔的计算方法^[18]。当谐振腔的腔长一定时,将增益芯片的热透镜焦距 F 作为变量,可以计算出增益芯片的光斑半径 R 随 F 的变化曲线。当增益介质位于谐振腔的一端时,模拟得出的 R 随 F 的典型变化曲线如图 1 所示。可以看到,当泵浦功率增加时,对应的热透镜焦距减少,而随着热透镜焦距的减少,增益芯片上的激光光斑先减小后增大,而当激光光斑大于泵浦光斑时,由于衍射损耗增大,无法输出激光。此时,如果降低泵浦功率,可以恢复

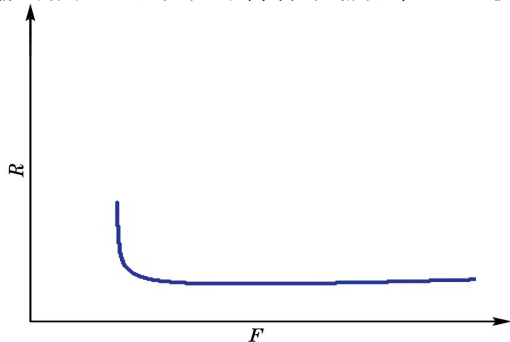


图 1 当增益介质位于有源谐振腔一端时,模拟得出的 R 随 F 的典型变化曲线

Fig. 1 Typical variation curve of R versus F obtained by simulation when the gain medium is located at one end of the active cavity

激光输出。因此,可以用泵浦光斑大小等效激光光斑大小,从而估算出激光消失时泵浦功率所对应增益芯片的热焦距值。

实验采用的增益介质是一块光泵浦的半导体器件,增益芯片通过铜焊接在镀金紫铜块上,紫铜块接水冷装置,增益芯片的尺寸为 $3\text{ mm} \times 3\text{ mm}$ 。泵浦源采用光纤耦合输出的半导体激光器(LIMO,中心波长为 808 nm ,芯径为 $400\text{ }\mu\text{m}$),泵浦源经准直、聚焦后,焦点位置的光斑直径约 $380\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ 。

图 2 为实验装置简图,激光谐振腔采用平凹腔,腔长为 45 mm ,泵浦光以 45° 入射,增益芯片和泵浦半导体激光器的水冷温度均设为 $18\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$,输出镜的半径 $R_{\text{lens}} = 500\text{ mm}$,在 1030 nm 处透过率 $T = 2\%$ 。当泵浦功率大于 28.36 W 时,输出功率随泵浦功率的增加而下降,且此时无法通过调节腔镜使功率升高;当泵浦功率超过 31.3 W 时,激光输出功率降为 0。此时降低泵浦功率,可恢复激光输出,并且可以恢复到之前各泵浦功率下的对应输出功率,输出情况如图 3 所示,输出的激光中心波长为 1031 nm 。随着泵浦功率的增加,激光输出的近场光斑直径由

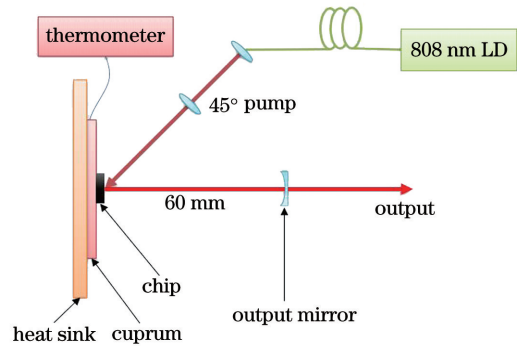


图 2 实验装置简图

Fig. 2 Sketch of experimental setup

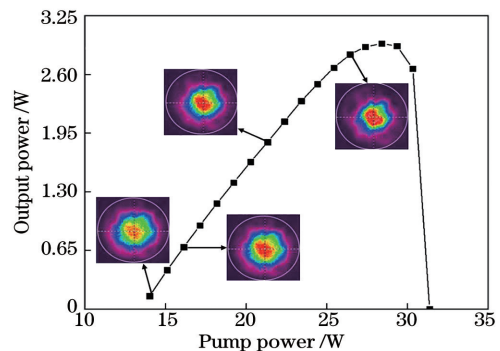


图 3 腔长为 45 mm 时,输出功率随泵浦功率的变化曲线以及不同输出功率下的近场光斑

Fig. 3 When the cavity length is 45 mm , the curve of output power changed with pump power and the near-field spots at different output powers

1.48 mm (BeamGage D4σX 测量值) 逐渐减小到 1.34 mm (BeamGage D4σX 测量值), 测量位置距离增益芯片约 230 mm。

改变输出镜的位置, 使得激光谐振腔的长度缩短为 40 mm, 其余实验条件不变。在最高输出功率条件下调整优化输出镜后, 使输出功率最高, 此时输出激光的泵浦功率阈值增加了 1.09 W, 测得的输出情况如图 4 所示。可以看到, 未出现输出功率下降的情况, 并且随着泵浦功率的增加, 激光输出的近场光斑直径几乎不变。

当谐振腔腔长为 45 mm 时, 采用图 5(a) 插图所示的谐振腔, M2 的曲率半径为 500 mm, 模拟得到的增益芯片上的光斑半径随热焦距的变化曲线如图 5(a) 所示。当增益芯片热焦距小于 53.6 mm 时, 激光基模光斑半径大于 190 μm。当谐振腔腔长为 40 mm 时, 采用图 5(b) 插图所示的谐振腔, M2 的曲率半径为 500 mm, 模拟得到的增益芯片上的

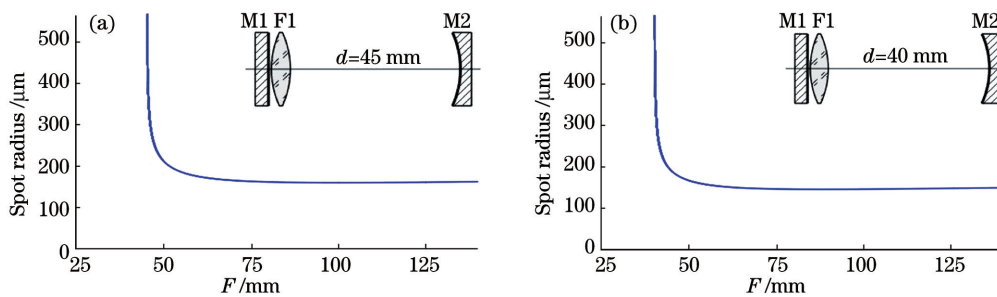


图 5 不同腔长时模拟得到的增益芯片上的光斑半径随 F1 热焦距的变化曲线。(a) 45 mm; (b) 40 mm
Fig. 5 Simulated curves of the spot radius on the gain chip changed with the thermal focal length of F1 under different cavity lengths. (a) 45 mm; (b) 40 mm

此外, 还研究了 VECSEL 中增益芯片的荧光光谱随观测角度的变化情况。实验中泵浦源光路设置及增益芯片位置与图 2 完全相同, 不同之处是将输出镜位

置的镜片撤去而仅保留镜架, 仅观察荧光特性。经过观测发现, 以增益芯片表面法线方向为基准线, 观测角度不同时, 观测到的荧光光谱峰值也不同。图 6(a) 为实

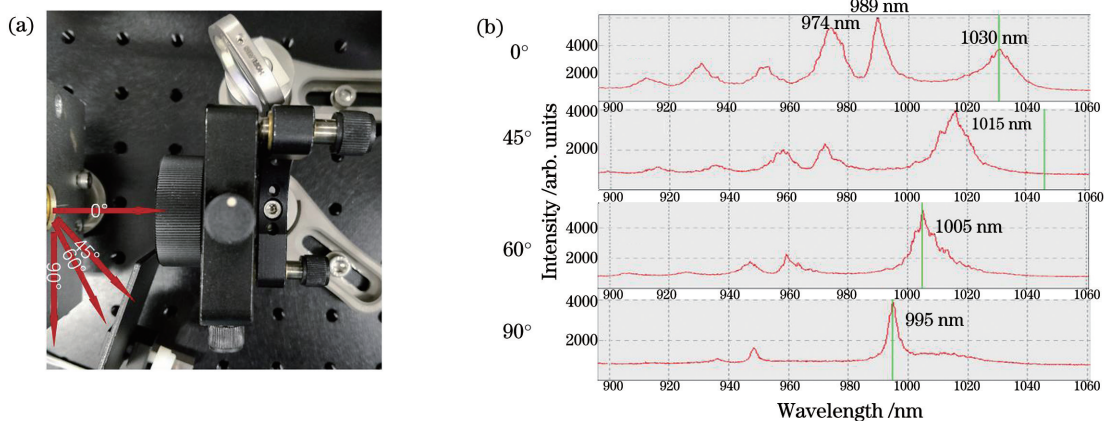


图 6 增益芯片荧光光谱的观测方位和结果。(a) 荧光波长观测角度示意图; (b) 0°、45°、60°、90° 的荧光光谱对比图
Fig. 6 Observation orientation and results of the fluorescence spectra of the gain chip. (a) Schematic of the fluorescence wavelength observation at different angles; (b) comparison of the fluorescence spectra at 0°, 45°, 60°, and 90°

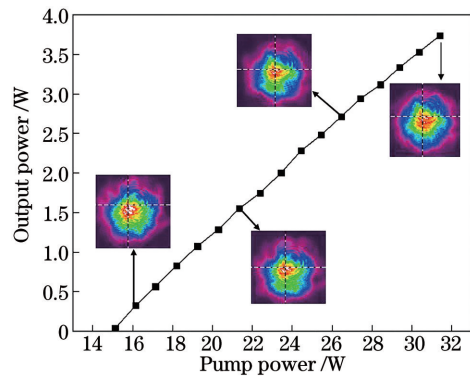
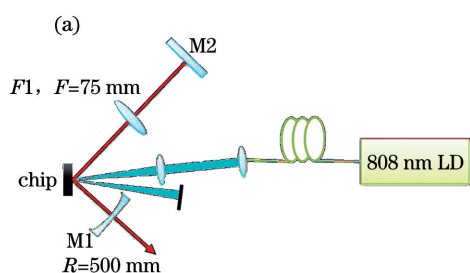


图 4 腔长为 40 mm 时输出功率随泵浦功率的变化曲线以及不同输出功率下的近场光斑
Fig. 4 Curve of output power changed with pump power when the cavity length is 40 mm and the near-field spots at different output powers

光斑半径随热焦距的变化曲线如图 5(b) 所示。当增益芯片的热焦距小于 45.7 mm 时, 激光基模光斑半径大于 190 μm。

验实物图,当改变观测角度时,波长为连续变化。荧光谱峰值从 0° 时的 1030 nm 连续变化到 90° 时的 995 nm,取 0° 、 45° 、 60° 、 90° 的光谱进行对比,结果如图 6(b) 所示。

为了验证角度变化对于 VECSEL 发射激光波长的影响,将结构变为图 7(a) 所示的模式。受到器



件大小的限制,将泵浦光耦合透镜换为长焦透镜,此时泵浦光斑直径增加到 $630 \mu\text{m}$,为了减小谐振腔本身带来的影响,V型腔的一端改用一个 $4f$ 成像系统,V型腔两端分别与增益芯片轴向成 45° 角。当泵浦功率为 23.37 W 时,输出功率为 0.477 W,激光波长为 1015 nm,输出曲线如图 7(b) 所示。

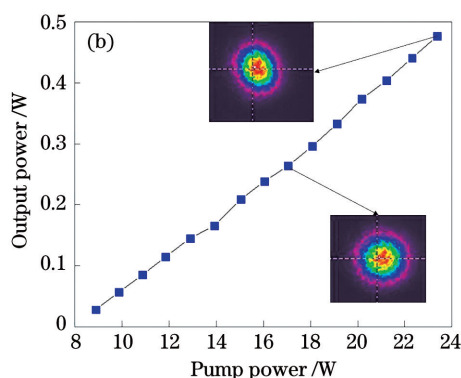


图 7 VECSEL 采用 V 型腔出光的示意图和输出曲线。(a) 系统设置图;(b) V 型腔输出曲线和光斑

Fig. 7 Schematic and output curve of VECSEL using V-shaped cavity. (a) System setup diagram; (b) V-cavity output curve and spots

3 分析与讨论

对比实验中采用的两种谐振腔装置,可以估算特定泵浦功率下的热透镜焦距。VECSEL 使用平凹谐振腔,腔长为 45 mm,当泵浦功率大于 28.36 W 时,输出激光的功率随泵浦功率的增加而快速下降,可能的原因有两个:1)增益芯片上的基模光斑变大,随着衍射损耗的增加,激光输出迅速降低;2)随着泵浦功率的增加,半导体器件内部的热翻转效应导致激光功率迅速下降。对比另一组实验,当谐振腔的腔长为 40 mm,泵浦功率为 31.3 W 时,输出激光功率可以达到 3.74 W,而且此时并未出现输出激光功率随着泵浦功率的增加而下降的现象。因此,可以排除是热翻转导致之前的 VECSEL 输出激光功率下降,而是不同泵浦功率下热焦距的变化导致激光输出功率变化。由实验和计算结果可以推断出:当泵浦光斑的直径为 $380 \mu\text{m}$ 、泵浦功率为 31.3 W 时,实验使用的增益芯片热焦距在 45.7 mm 到 53.6 mm 之间。实验中也存在不足,例如在测量增益芯片热焦距时,激光器腔长连续变化,使得测量精度更高,但是由于激光谐振腔对于对准精度的要求较高,因此实验采用两个不连续的腔长估计热焦距。另外,由于腔内的谐振光束在增益芯片上的光斑大小是通过泵浦光斑大小来限制,因此在估算热焦距方面不可避免地存在一定的误差。

通过观测到的增益芯片的荧光波长随观测角度变化的数据,推断出 VECSEL 的调谐范围约 35 nm。由于增益芯片存在窗口层,因此提出这种通过直接观测增益芯片在不同角度下的荧光光谱来推断 VECSEL 的调谐范围的方法。所提方法可以代替传统的插入滤波元件再搭建调谐光路的方法来预测 VECSEL 的调谐范围。通过 V 型腔的角度变化来对输出的激光波长进行调谐也印证了所提方法的可行性。

4 结 论

对于 VECSEL 进行研究的目的是利用现有成熟的半导体工艺技术来制造出更多样的激光光源。在这一研究探索过程中,对于增益芯片热焦距的了解有助于设计更稳定的 VECSEL,因此,本实验对于增益芯片热焦距的测量可以给研究者提供一个定量的参考。根据实验现象和模拟计算结果,推断出当泵浦光斑直径为 $380 \mu\text{m}$ 、泵浦功率为 31.3 W 时,所使用的增益芯片的热透镜焦距在 45.7 mm 到 53.6 mm 之间。相对于激光晶体的薄片,VECSEL 中增益芯片的热效应更为显著。本实验还提出一种通过观察增益芯片荧光光谱随观测角度的变化来估计 VECSEL 的调谐范围的方法,用同一块增益芯片测得在 0° 时激光波长为 1031 nm, 45° 时激光波长为 1015 nm。

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VECSEL Thermal Focus Length Measurement and Angle Tuning Research

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Abstract

Objective The invention of semiconductor lasers has brought about a huge impetus to the laser industry. Traditional edge-emitting lasers can work with high efficiency and high average power, but the poor beam quality limits their widespread adoption. The invention of vertical cavity surface emitting lasers (VCSELs) improved the output of a semiconductor laser to a circular spot but with limited output power. Subsequently, vertical external cavity surface emitting lasers (VECSELs) emerged featuring a smaller divergence angle. Still, the power scaling capability and beam quality optimization could not be achieved at the same time due to the inhomogeneous electric current pump. Next came the optically pumped VECSELs. For conventional lasers, pumped laser crystals usually have a thermal lens effect. The range of focal length of thermal lens determines the scope of the stable area when the laser is operating. The gain chip of the vertical cavity surface emitting laser is a semiconductor material, so the focal length of the thermal lens cannot be directly calculated by the crystal thermal lens focal length formula. To evaluate the thermal lens effect of the gain chip, we estimate the thermal focal length of the gain chip. In addition, the tunable output range is an important parameter to characterize the output properties of the laser. In this article, we also propose a method for estimating the angle tuning range of the VECSEL by directly measuring the angle-dependent characteristics of the fluorescence spectrum of the gain chip. Furthermore, we conducted an angle tuning experiment to verify this method.

Methods To measure the thermal focal length of the gain chip, we use the stability conditions of the laser cavity to determine the thermal focal length of the gain chip. During the experiment, we ensure that the thermal rollover phenomenon does not occur and the length of the resonator is fixed. The thermal focal length of the gain chip gradually decreases with increasing pump power until the active resonator meets the stability conditions, and the output of VECSEL plunges. When the cavity length of the resonator is reduced, the output power of the shortened one does not decrease at the same pump power. The thermal focal length range of the gain chip at this pump power can be estimated later by simulation calculations. Additionally, the gain chip is pumped without an output coupler to investigate its angle-dependent characteristics of the fluorescence spectra and the angle tuning properties are further confirmed in a resonator.

Results and Discussions The VECSEL in our experiment employs a plane-concave resonator with a 45 mm cavity length. When the pump power is more than 28.36 W, the output power decreases rapidly with increase in pump power (Fig. 3). There are two possible reasons. The first is that the mode size on the gain chip becomes larger, and the laser output decreases rapidly with the increasing of diffraction loss. The second possible reason is the onset of rollover inside the semiconductor device as the pump power increases, which also leads to a rapid decrease in output power. Compared with another set of experiments, when the cavity length is 40 mm and the pump power is 31.3 W, the output power can reach 3.74 W. There is no similar phenomenon where the output power decreases with the increase of pump power (Fig. 4). Therefore, the possibility of thermal rollover causing the previous VECSEL output power to dip can be ruled out. This decline can be considered as the output power change caused by the variation of the thermal focal length under enhanced pump power. From the experimental and calculation results, it can be inferred that when the pump spot diameter is 380 μm and the pump power is 31.3 W, the thermal focal length of the gain chip used in the experiment is between 45.7 mm and 53.6 mm. Based on the observed results which show that the fluorescence wavelength of the gain chip changes with the observation angle, it is inferred that the tuning range

of the VECSEL is about 35 nm(Fig. 6).

Conclusions To obtain high power and high beam quality laser through state-of-the-art semiconductor technology, VECSELs were developed. In this paper, the thermal focal length of a gain chip is estimated by the calculation of a laser resonator combined with experiments. The phenomenon of a fluorescence spectrum of a gain chip that varies with the observation angle is reported. A method is proposed to directly estimate the tuning range of a VECSEL by observing the fluorescence spectra of the gain chip at different angles.

Key words lasers; VECSEL; thermal focal length; angle tuning; fluorescence spectra

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