

用于 U 波段高效放大的高锗掺铋光纤

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摘要 掺铋(Bi)光纤由于其超宽带近红外发光性能引起了广泛关注,然而实现U波段高效放大的高锗(Ge)掺铋光纤在国内依然尚未研制成功,这是因为在掺铋光纤中实现高掺锗是一项极具挑战的工艺难点,同时如何实现Bi向Ge相关铋活性中心高效转化也是一个难题。基于改进的化学气相沉积技术,制备了一种纤芯GeO₂摩尔分数约为42%的高锗掺铋光纤。其吸收测试结果显示,在1650 nm处出现明显的Ge相关铋活性中心的吸收峰。通过单级放大系统表征了其放大性能,在1670 nm处实现了26.3 dB的最高增益,增益效率达0.165 dB/mW。

关键词 光纤光学; 高锗掺铋光纤; 改进的化学气相沉积; U波段; 放大

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1 引言

随着5G网络的大范围部署及规模化应用,全球网络数据流量飞速增长。人工智能、自动驾驶、元宇宙和扩展现实等技术的兴起对现有光纤通信网络的数据传输能力提出了更高的要求,亟需对其进行升级换代以应对未来的挑战。目前,光纤通信网络使用的光纤放大器主要是掺铒光纤放大器(EDFA),然而其增益带宽仅覆盖了石英光纤低损耗传输波段中的常规C波段和一部分L波段,这严重限制了商用通信波段的进一步扩展^[1-4]。充分利用C波段和L波段以外的通信波段是提升光纤网络通信容量的有效办法^[5],例如U波段,因此开发可在U波段工作的有源光纤放大器具有重要意义。

自Dianov等^[6]在2005年成功制备出第一根可实现信号放大的掺铋光纤以来,掺铋光纤的增益波段得到了充分扩展,可覆盖O波段、E波段、S波段和U波段,这种超宽带发光特性吸引了大量研究人员开展掺铋光纤的研制工作^[7-8]。铋原子的外部电子对周围配位场环境高度敏感,表现为其掺铋光纤的吸收和发射特性受玻璃基质组成的显著影响,通常可以通过Al、P和Ge元素的共掺杂来调节其发光性质,这为掺铋光纤呈现不同发光波段提供了条件^[9-12]。其中锗铋共掺光纤较为特殊:当GeO₂的摩尔分数低于10%时,仅在E和S波段表现出强烈发光特性,其发光中心为Si相关铋活性中心(Si-BACs);而当GeO₂的摩尔分数高于20%时,在锗铋共掺光纤中出现Ge相关铋活性中心(Ge-BACs),其与Si-BACs共存,使得锗铋共掺光纤

在E、S和U波段均显示出发光特性^[13]。目前,国际上各研究机构对锗铋共掺光纤已进行了许多研究,主要分为低锗掺铋光纤^[14-16]和高锗掺铋光纤^[17]。据报道,采用低锗掺铋光纤分别在单通道单向泵浦放大结构和双通道双向泵浦放大结构中实现了30.36 dB^[18]和约40 dB^[19]的最大增益。目前,仅俄罗斯科学院光纤光学研究中心(FORC)成功制备了高锗掺铋光纤,基于单通道双向泵浦放大结构在1710 nm处实现了23 dB的最大增益,其最大单位泵浦增益效率为0.1 dB/mW^[20]。国内关于锗铋共掺光纤的研究也取得了一定成果,中国科学院上海光学精密机械研究所在2023年采用双向泵浦放大结构实现了11.2 dB的最大增益^[21]。2024年,华中科技大学刘少坤等^[22]成功制备出高吸收的低锗掺铋光纤,并在单通道单向泵浦放大结构中实现了33 dB的最大增益。然而,国内尚未出现高锗掺铋光纤成功制备的相关报道,因此高锗掺铋光纤的研制对于我国相关光器件的国产化具有重要意义。

本文成功制备了用于U波段放大的高锗掺铋光纤(若无特殊说明,后文中所述“BDF”即指该光纤),其GeO₂的摩尔分数高达42%。在吸收谱中1650 nm处出现了Ge-BACs的吸收峰,其吸收系数为0.59 dB/m。采用单通道前向泵浦放大结构对该BDF的增益性能和增益效率进行了表征,在1670 nm处获得了26.3 dB的最大增益,最大单位泵浦增益效率达0.165 dB/mW。

2 光纤基本参数

本文采用改进的化学气相沉积(MCVD)法结合溶液掺杂技术制备了BDF。BDF的芯/包层直径在进行拉

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丝工艺时被设置为 $4.5\ \mu\text{m}/125.0\ \mu\text{m}$ 。通过预成型分析仪测得折射率差 (Δn) 约为 0.0545, 折射率剖面如图 1(a) 所示。采用光学显微镜观察光纤端面, 如图 1(b) 所示。通过电感耦合等离子体质谱法 (ICP-MS) 测得 Bi 元素的质量分数约为 0.02%。采用电子探针显微分析仪 (EPMA) 测得纤芯 GeO_2 的摩尔分数最高约为 42%, 并

对纤芯中 GeO_2 含量的径向分布进行了线扫描, 采用中心处 Ge 含量的最大值进行了归一化处理, 结果如图 1(c) 所示。采用光纤分析仪, 根据截断法测试该 BDF 的吸收谱, 结果如图 2 所示。通过软件 COMSOL Multiphysics 仿真计算得到本文高锗掺铋光纤在 1600~1700 nm 处的总色散系数为 16.7~19.6 ps/(nm·km)。

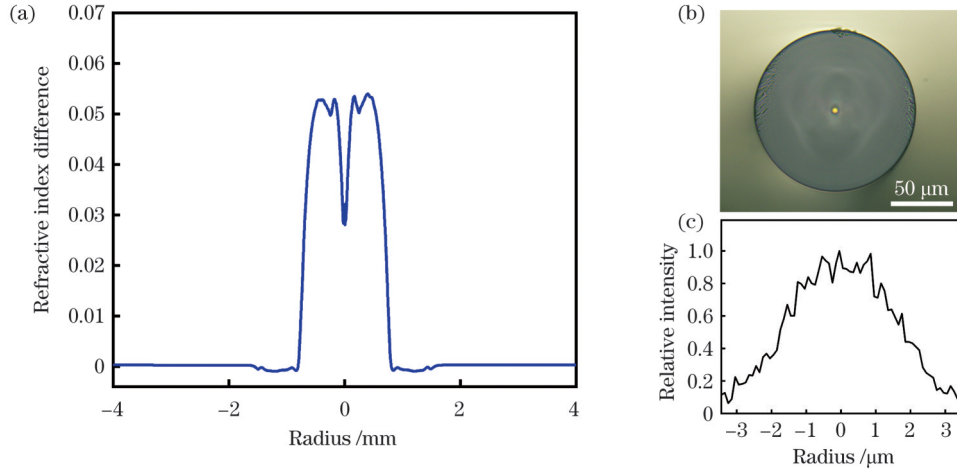


图 1 光纤的基本参数。(a) 预制棒的折射率剖面; (b) 光纤端面图; (c) 光纤纤芯区域 Ge 的径向分布

Fig. 1 Basic parameters of optical fiber. (a) Refractive index difference profile of preform; (b) end face image of fiber; (c) radial distribution of Ge in fiber core area

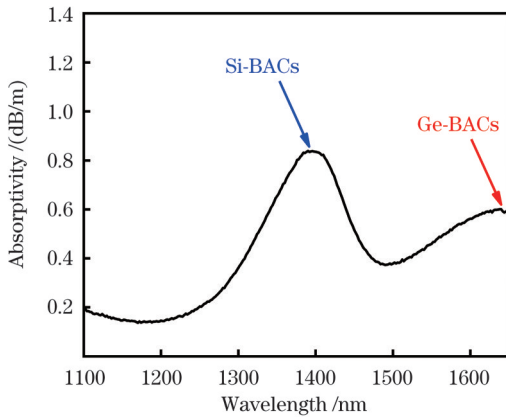


图 2 吸收谱

Fig. 2 Absorption spectrum

在光纤制备过程中掺入 Ge 元素可以有效提高其折射率, 通常在石英玻璃中掺入 GeO_2 会使其折射率增加 0.0013^[23]。考虑到 BDF 中的掺杂元素只有 Bi 和 Ge, 而 Bi 元素的含量极低, 对折射率的影响可以忽略。因此, 我们可以通过图 1(a) 所示的折射率差和 GeO_2 的摩尔折射率增量估算出 GeO_2 的摩尔分数约为 42%,

这与 EPMA 的测试结果相符, 进一步佐证了本文 BDF 实现了 GeO_2 的高含量掺杂。此外, 可以看到, 折射率剖面中间有明显的凹陷, 这是反应管塌缩时 GeO_2 的大量挥发导致的。

研究表明, 当 BDF 中的锗含量足够高时, 才可以得到明显的 Ge-BACs 吸收峰, 且该吸收峰的高度随锗含量的提高而提高。从图 2 可以看到, 吸收谱上出现两个分别位于 1400 nm 和 1650 nm 处的特征吸收峰。其中, 1400 nm 对应 Si-BACs 的特征吸收峰, 而 1650 nm 对应 Ge-BACs 的特征吸收峰。此外, 我们计算得到 1650 nm 和 1400 nm 处的吸收比为 70%, 该比值与文献[13]报道的结果相符。这些结果不仅再次佐证了本文 BDF 中的 GeO_2 含量, 也说明 BDF 实现了 Bi 向 Ge-BACs 的有效转化。

3 实验方案

为了充分表征 BDF 的放大性能, 我们搭建了一个单级放大系统, 如图 3 所示。在放大系统中, 我们采用一个覆盖 1595~1670 nm 区域、间距约为 5 nm 的 16 通

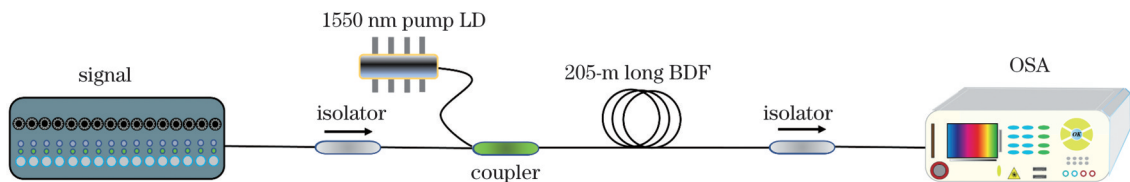


图 3 单级放大结构

Fig. 3 Single-stage amplification structure

道梳状光源提供信号,每个通道的输出功率可以独立控制。在增益测试之前,调整每个通道的输出功率,通过光谱分析仪(OSA)监测耦合器输出端的光谱,以确保进入BDF的总输入信号功率被调节为-30 dBm,并且16个波长的功率基本保持一致。将隔离器分别放置在光源的输出端口和光谱分析仪的输入端口,以保护测试仪器。OSA用于记录信号频谱并计算增益和噪声系数(NF),光谱扫描分辨率被设置为0.2 nm。耦合器用于组合信号光和泵浦光,使用1550 nm激光二极管(LD)提供正向泵浦,其实际进入BDF的泵浦功率约为800 mW。优化光纤长度使1670 nm增益达到最大,放大系统中BDF的使用长度被设置为205 m。

4 实验结果与讨论

图4显示了205 m长BDF在单级放大系统中的增益测试结果。考虑到BDF的增益峰通常位于1700 nm附近,而本文所用的梳状光源提供的信号波长只能到1670 nm,这导致1670~1700 nm范围内的增益性能无法被直接表征。为了合理预测BDF在1670~1700 nm范围内的增益性能,在图4(a)中展示了输入信号光谱和1520~1700 nm范围内的输出光谱,其中 $P_{p-1550\text{ nm}}$ 为1550 nm泵浦光功率, P_s 为输入信号功率, L 为BDF长度,且无输入信号的1670~1700 nm区域用阴影标识,在图4(b)中该区域标注为预测区域。由图4(a)可以

看到,输出光谱中1550 nm附近存在明显的剩余泵浦光,对输出光谱1520~1580 nm范围内的功率进行积分计算,得到剩余泵浦光功率约为37 mW。光纤长度优化至最大增益长度后依然存在显著的剩余泵浦光,我们认为这与BDF的吸收发射截面和发光能级结构有关,在饱和泵浦条件下,上能级的粒子无法被迅速消耗,使得光纤对泵浦光的实际吸收远小于图2展示的小信号吸收。尽管还有残余泵浦光未被光纤吸收,但205 m已是BDF在该放大系统中获得最大增益的最佳长度,继续增加光纤长度反而会降低增益性能。此外,这些剩余泵浦光分布在1520~1580 nm范围内,并不会影响到1595~1670 nm范围内的增益测试结果。从图4(a)还可以看到,放大的自发辐射(ASE)功率随波长的增加而增加,且在1590~1670 nm范围内ASE功率越高时增益越高,这一点可以通过输出信号功率与输入信号功率的差值得知。同时,由图4(b)可以清楚看到,增益随波长的增大而变大,同时噪声指数减小。因此,鉴于ASE和增益的增长趋势,我们可合理推测1670~1700 nm范围内的增益继续保持增长的趋势,如图4(b)中虚线所示。此外,由图4(b)可以看到,1670 nm处的实测增益为26.3 dB,1700 nm处的预测增益可达32 dB以上。这些结果表明本文BDF具有优异的放大性能,然而BDF使用长度明显高于文献[13]所用的50 m,这是由于本文BDF的吸收率过低。后面我们将进一步优化制备工艺,提高BDF中Ge-BACs

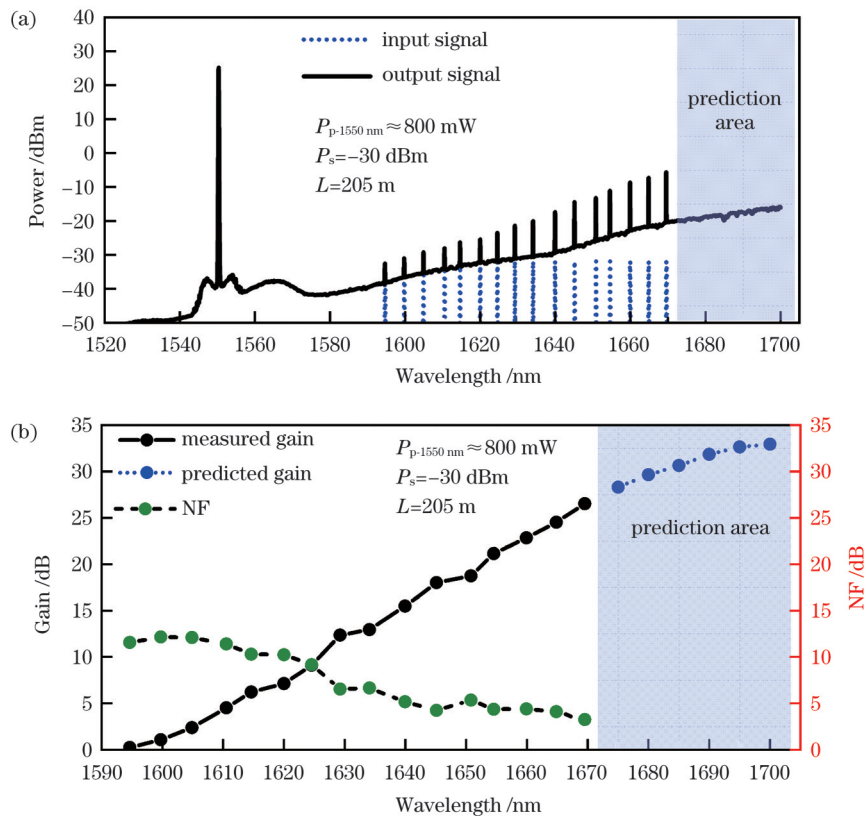


图4 增益测试结果。(a)输入信号光谱和输出光谱;(b)掺铋光纤的增益和噪声谱

Fig. 4 Gain test results. (a) Input signal spectrum and output spectrum; (b) gain and noise spectrum of bismuth-doped fiber

的浓度,从而缩短BDF的使用长度。非线性效应与光纤长度及信号功率有关,尽管本文光纤长度达205 m,但是信号功率相对较低,还不足以产生明显的非线性效应。为了研究本文光纤放大器中非线性效应的影

响,我们对输入信号谱和输出谱进行局部放大比较(图5),输出信号相比输入信号没有明显展宽,输出信号两侧也未发现新的信号峰,这说明未产生明显的非线性效应。

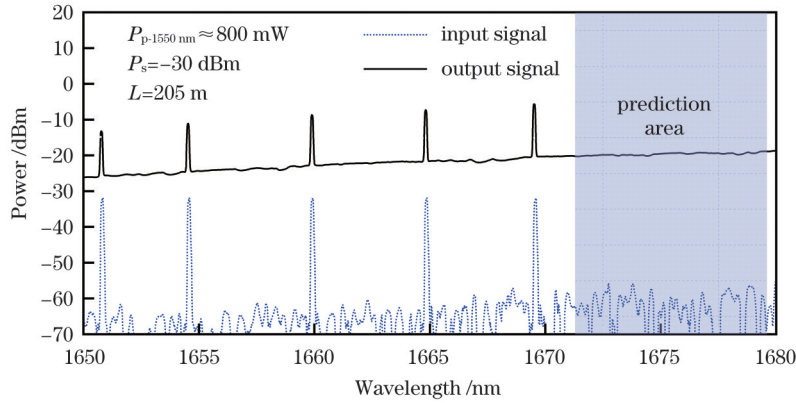


图5 1649~1680 nm范围内的输入信号谱和输出谱

Fig. 5 Input signal spectrum and output spectrum at 1649–1680 nm

为了进一步说明BDF的增益效率,测试了BDF在不同泵浦功率下的增益水平及在不同输入信号功率下的泵浦转换效率(PCE),结果分别如图6(a)、(b)所示。由图6(a)可以看到,随着泵浦功率的增大,1670 nm处的增益逐渐增大并趋于饱和,在此过程中增益的增长速率逐渐降低。通过计算增益与泵浦功率的比值,可知最大增益效率(G)可达0.165 dB/mW,这高于目前掺铋光纤在U波段的最高增益效率0.1 dB/mW^[13]。由增益变化曲线与横轴的交点可知,当1550 nm泵浦光功率超过~28 mW时,1670 nm处开始出现正增益,而文献[13]中该泵浦功率高于100 mW。比较结果表明,本文BDF中的整体损耗处于较低水平,这也为该BDF实现更高的增益效率提供了可能。

我们采用了功率分配比例为1/99的耦合器来组合信号光和泵浦光,其中信号光通过1%(功率占比)臂进入,这导致实际可用的最大信号总功率不超过-10 dBm,因此我们仅测试了输入信号功率为-37 dBm~-10 dBm时的PCE,结果如图6(b)所示。由图6(b)可以看出,PCE随着输入信号功率的增大而增大,当输入信号功率增加至-10 dBm时PCE未出现饱和现象,表明PCE仍可随输入信号功率的增大而进一步增大,此时PCE为0.45%。与文献[13]中相同输入信号功率下的PCE(约1.4%)相比,本文BDF的PCE处于较低水平,这主要是因为受可用信号波长的限制,本文在计算PCE时仅对1590~1670 nm范围内的输出信号功率进行了积分,而具有更高增益效率的增益峰所处的区域未被纳入计算。

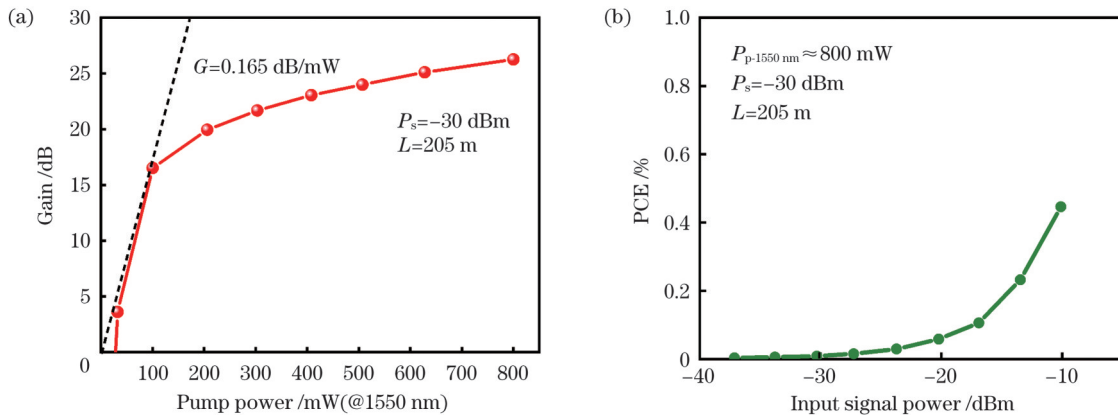


图6 增益效率。(a) 1670 nm处的增益与泵浦功率的关系;(b)不同输入信号功率下的泵浦转换效率

Fig. 6 Gain efficiency. (a) Gain at 1670 nm versus pump power; (b) pump conversion efficiencies under different input signal powers

5 结 论

基于MCVD工艺结合溶液掺杂技术,制备了GeO₂摩尔分数为42%的BDF。在单级放大系统中,

采用1550 nm前向泵浦光(泵浦功率约为800 mW)和-30 dBm的输入信号功率,205 m长的BDF在1670 nm处实现了26.3 dB增益,增益效率达0.165 dB/mW。依据ASE和增益随波长的增大而增大的趋势,我们预

测该 BDF 在 1700 nm 处可实现超 32 dB 的增益,在接下来的工作中我们将采用相关波长信号进行测试验证。

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High-Germanium Bismuth-Doped Fibers for U-Band Efficiency Amplification

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Abstract

Objective With the widespread deployment and large-scale application of 5G networks, global network data traffic is rapidly increasing. The rise of technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous driving, metaverse, and extended reality has presented higher requirements for the data transmission capabilities of existing fiber-optic communication networks, and upgrading them to meet

future challenges is now urgent. Currently, erbium-doped fiber amplifiers (EDFAs) are widely used in fiber communication networks due to their excellent gain performance. However, the gain bandwidth of EDFAs covers only the conventional C band and a portion of the L band in the low-loss transmission band of silica fibers, which severely limits the further expansion of commercial communication bands. Utilizing communication bands other than the C+L bands is an effective means of improving the communication capacity of fiber-optic networks. Therefore, the development of high-Ge bismuth-doped fiber (BDF) amplifiers that can operate in the U band is of great significance. To date, only the Fiber Optic Research Center (FORC) of the Russian Academy of Sciences is capable of manufacturing high-Ge BDFs for U-band efficiency amplification. Therefore, developing high-gain and highly efficient BDFs for U-band amplification while overcoming foreign technological barriers and achieving the localization of related optical devices are all necessary.

Methods In this study, a BDF is prepared using the modified chemical vapor deposition (MCVD) method combined with solution doping technology. The refractive index profile is measured using a preform analytical instrument. An optical microscope is used to observe the end face of the fiber. The mass fraction of Bi is measured using inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) and is found to be approximately 0.02%. An electron probe micro-analyzer (EPMA) is used to test the mole fraction of the core GeO_2 , which is as high as 42%, and the radial distribution of the GeO_2 in the core is measured using a line scan. The absorption spectrum of the BDF is measured using a fiber analyzer based on the truncation method. The total dispersion coefficient of the BDF in this study is 16.7–19.6 ps/(nm·km) in the range of 1600–1700 nm, as derived from a simulation conducted using COMSOL Multiphysics software. A single-stage amplification system is then constructed using a 205-m long BDF, and a 16-channel comb-shaped light source covering 1595–1670 nm with a spacing of approximately 5 nm is used to provide the input signal; the input signal power is then adjusted to -30 dBm. A 1550-nm laser diode (LD) is used to provide forward pumping, where the actual pump power that enters the BDF is ~ 800 mW.

Results and Discussions Figure 4 shows the gain test results of the 205-m long BDF in a single-stage amplification system. Because the gain peak of a high-Ge BDF is typically located near 1700 nm and the long-wavelength range of the signal provided by the comb light source used in this study can reach only 1670 nm, the gain performance at 1670–1700 nm can not be directly characterized. To reasonably predict the gain performance of the BDF at 1670–1700 nm based on a test of its gain performance at 1595–1670 nm and an output spectrum at 1595–1700 nm, the input-signal and output spectra at 1590–1700 nm are shown in Fig. 4(a). It shows that the amplified spontaneous emission (ASE) power increases with wavelength, and the gain is higher at wavelengths with higher ASE power in the range of 1590–1670 nm. In addition, Fig. 4(b) shows that the gain increases with wavelength, and the noise figure (NF) decreases accordingly. Considering the growth trend of the ASE and gain, we can reasonably speculate that the gain between 1670 nm and 1700 nm will continue to increase, as shown by the dotted line in Fig. 4(b). Figure 4(b) also shows that a measured gain of 26.3 dB is obtained at 1670 nm, and the predicted gain at 1700 nm exceeds 32 dB. The gain levels of the BDFs at different pump powers and pump conversion efficiencies (PCEs) under different input signal powers are tested, as shown in Figs. 5(a) and 5(b), respectively. Figure 5(a) shows that the gain at 1670 nm increases and gradually saturates as the pump power gradually increases. A calculation of the ratio of the gain to pump power reveals that the maximum gain efficiency can reach 0.165 dB/mW.

Conclusions In this study, a high-Ge BDF with a core GeO_2 mole fraction of $\sim 42\%$ is prepared through the MCVD method combined with solution doping technology. In a single-stage amplification system under the 1550 nm forward pump light (pump power of approximately 800 mW) and input signal power of -30 dBm, the 205-m long BDF achieves a gain of 26.3 dB at 1670 nm with a gain efficiency of 0.165 dB/mW. In addition, based on the growth trends of ASE and gain with increasing wavelength, we predict that the BDF can achieve a gain of over 32 dB at 1700 nm.

Key words fiber optics; high-germanium bismuth-doped fiber; modified chemical vapor deposition; U band; amplification