

光学学报

高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度在线测量技术及其应用研究进展

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摘要 高功率光纤激光器中的热效应是影响激光器稳定运行的重要因素。为了增加高功率光纤激光器的稳定性, 对高功率光纤激光器的纤芯温度进行测量至关重要。本文首先介绍了利用光纤光栅与光频域反射技术测量增益光纤纤芯温度的方法, 分析了不同光纤激光器与放大器纤芯温度分布的测量结果。而后介绍了纤芯温度分布式在线测量方法在高功率光纤激光器热效应与非线性效应调控等方面的应用, 为高功率光纤激光器性能提升研究提供了参考。

关键词 高功率光纤激光器; 纤芯温度测量; 光纤传感; 光频域反射技术

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1 引言

自激光发明以来, 高功率激光器在工业加工、医疗、国防等领域展现了广阔的应用前景, 成为激光研究的重要方向。而光纤激光器以其输出光束质量好、能量转换效率高、散热能力强、结构紧凑、高鲁棒性的独特优势, 已成为高功率激光器的主流技术方案之一^[1-3]。目前, 单根光纤已突破万瓦级的功率输出^[4-5], 但是由于能量的损耗及量子亏损等, 高功率光纤激光器中产生的废热已严重制约激光输出功率的提升^[6-9], 并且增益光纤内部的高温能够显著影响高功率光纤激光器的性能, 降低光纤激光器的稳定性, 并导致激光器中的模式不稳定效应^[10-16], 带来光纤激光器光束品质的下降。理论研究表明, 模式不稳定效应伴随着由纤芯中热光效应引起的动态光栅而产生, 高阶模与基模在动态光栅的作用下互相耦合, 引起光纤激光器光束质量下降^[11, 17-20], 制约高功率光纤激光器功率的进一步提升。因此, 为了保证高功率光纤激光器的稳定运行, 避免增益光纤的热损伤, 提升输出光束的品质, 对增益光纤纤芯的温度进行在线监测具有重要意义。

在高功率光纤激光器的发展过程中, 研究人员采用了多种温度测量方法来监测光纤激光器的温度变化, 如使用温度计、热电阻或热电偶对光纤进行接触式温度测量, 或者利用红外热像仪测量光纤发出的红外

辐射来实现光纤温度的探测^[21]。但以上光纤温度测量方法只能探测光纤表面的温度, 不能反映光纤内部纤芯的温度变化状态。而在高功率光纤激光器中, 光纤内部纤芯的温度比光纤表面的温度提供了更多光纤激光器的关键信息。首先, 高功率光纤激光器中的热效应主要来源于增益光纤纤芯内激光放大过程中的量子亏损效应^[22-23], 使纤芯成为光纤激光中温度最高的区域。其次, 纤芯中的热效应改变了纤芯材料的折射率分布, 进而影响纤芯内的激光传输, 导致模式不稳定效应的发生, 降低光纤激光器的输出光束质量。受光纤涂覆层耐热性能的制约, 普通商用光纤的涂覆层长时间稳定的最高温度一般为 80 °C^[24], 而光纤熔点等关键温度位置处的长度一般在亚厘米量级。因此, 采用合适的测量方法满足增益光纤纤芯的温度测量需求更为重要。本文将首先介绍利用不同传感技术测量高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度的方法, 并对不同纤芯温度测量方法展开分析。然后, 介绍纤芯温度测量在高功率光纤激光器中的应用, 为高功率光纤激光器的性能提升研究提供借鉴与参考。

2 高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度测量方法及应用

光纤纤芯的温度变化会改变材料的折射率与结构参数, 进而对反/散射光的相位或光谱产生影响, 通

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过测量光纤内反/散射光参量的变化,可以探测光纤纤芯内温度的变化,该方法即为光纤传感技术。光纤传感技术可以分为离散点式光纤传感与分布式光纤传感两类,离散点式光纤传感可以测量光纤中特定分立位置的温度变化,分布式光纤传感可以探测光纤纤芯内任意位置的温度变化。目前,研究人员已利用以上两类技术对高功率光纤激光器中增益光纤纤芯的温度进行了测量研究,下面分别对两类方法进行介绍。

2.1 离散点式温度测量

离散点式光纤传感技术主要基于光纤光栅温度传

感原理,即通过在传感光纤中刻写光纤布拉格光栅(FBG)的方式来感知和测量纤芯的温度变化^[25-27]。光纤布拉格光栅是一段由短光纤构成的折射率周期调制的反射器。当一束宽带光注入光纤光栅时,根据布拉格衍射原理,光栅将入射光中对应波长的光反射回去,而透射其余的光,光纤折射率和光栅周期共同影响着反射光的中心波长。当光纤的温度发生变化时,光纤光栅的折射率和周期会发生相应的变化,使反射光的中心波长发生漂移。通过监测反射光中心波长漂移的大小,可以测得光纤光栅的温度变化,利用光纤光栅测量温度的典型结构如图1^[28]所示。

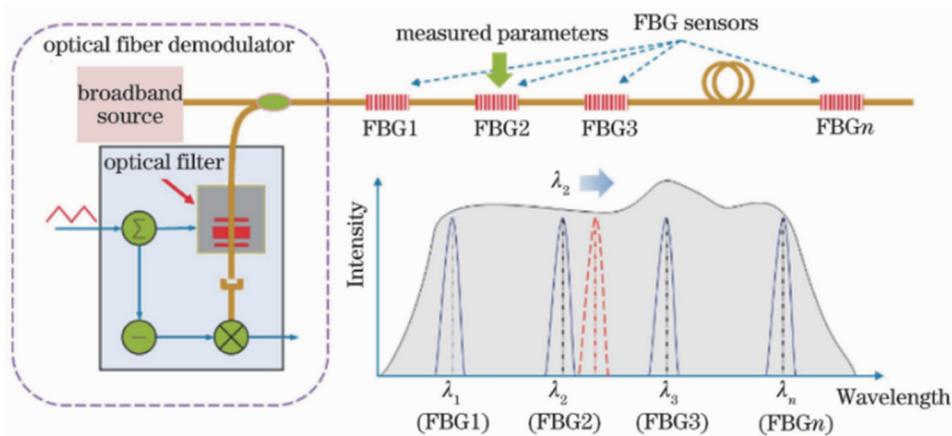


图1 光纤光栅测量纤芯温度的工作原理^[28]

Fig. 1 Schematic diagram of fiber core temperature measurement by fiber Bragg gratings^[28]

利用光纤光栅测量离散温度与应力的传感技术在光纤传感领域得到了广泛的应用。例如,光纤光栅可以对桥梁、隧道、边坡、大坝的结构健康与安全进行监测^[29-32],以及对智能电网的温度进行监测^[33],并能够实现大范围高精度的温度测量。2019年,西安交通大学的Huang等^[34]利用光纤激光器中的布拉格光栅对高温环境进行了测量。在将光纤布拉格光栅放置在1100 °C的环境下进行退火后,光纤激光器中的布拉格光栅能够测量1000 °C的温度。2020年,斯坦福大学的Knall等^[35]利用慢光布拉格光栅测量了光纤纤芯中50 mK的温度变化,证明了光纤光栅测量光纤纤芯温度变化的高灵敏度。

近年来,研究人员将光纤光栅传感技术应用于光纤激光器增益光纤的纤芯温度测量中。2014年德国耶拿大学的Leich等^[36]利用光纤光栅温度传感技术测量了光纤激光器增益光纤纤芯的温度。该团队在一段掺镱光纤纤芯内部刻写了光纤光栅,其增益光纤利用改进的化学气相沉积(MCVD)技术在实验室中拉制而成,其中Yb₂O₃的掺杂摩尔分数为0.35%,并掺杂了Ce以及比例为1:1的P/Al。在利用相位掩模版刻写光栅之前,对光纤进行了预载氢处理,以增加光纤的光敏特性。利用该掺镱光纤搭建了光纤激光器,以此研究增益光纤纤芯内部的热效应与光子暗化效应。实验

中使用的泵浦源为输出功率250 mW的波长976 nm的激光二极管(LD),掺镱增益光纤的长度为10 cm。在掺镱光纤上刻写了四个布拉格光栅来测量四处位置的温度,光纤光栅的反射中心波长为1550 nm,实验装置如图2所示。研究发现,测量中光纤最大温度变化可达145 K,光纤的预载氢大幅影响增益光纤在加载泵浦光时的温度,测量结果可以用来进一步研究增益光纤的泵浦吸收特性与光子暗化效应。

2018年,国防科技大学的Zhou等^[37]基于高反光栅与π相移光栅搭建的光纤激光器测量了纤芯内部的温度,实验装置如图3所示。由于激光器的输出波长由

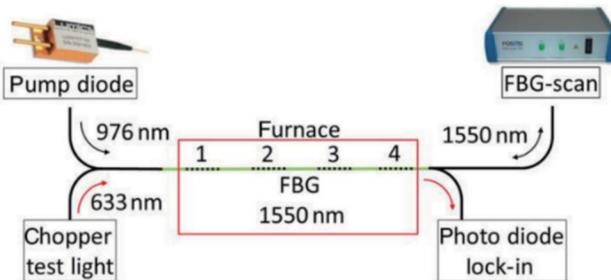


图2 利用光纤光栅测量光纤激光器纤芯内部温度的实验装置图^[36]

Fig. 2 Experimental setup for measuring internal temperature of fiber laser cores by FBGs^[36]

高反光栅和 π 相移光栅的中心波长决定,当光栅纤芯的温度发生改变时,激光器的输出波长发生漂移。通过测量激光器输出波长的漂移量,可以计算出不同泵浦功率下激光器纤芯的温度。在对高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度测量前,首先对光纤温度变化与光栅中心波长漂移量的对应关系进行了标定。纤芯温度测量结果如图4所示,随着激光器泵浦功率的增加,光纤纤芯的温度不断升高。由于 π 相移光栅的透射谱宽随着泵浦功率的增加而展宽,且环形腔的增益随着泵浦功率的增加出现非线性变化,使光纤激光器纤芯的温度与泵浦功率出现非线性的对应关系。当激光器的泵浦功率增至9 W时,光纤激光器纤芯的温度由18 °C升至27 °C。

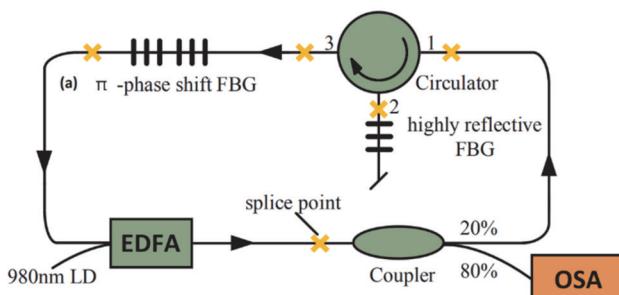


图3 利用高反光栅与 π 相移光栅搭建的光纤激光器示意图^[37]

Fig. 3 Schematic diagram of the fiber laser based on highly reflective FBG and π -phase shift FBG^[37]

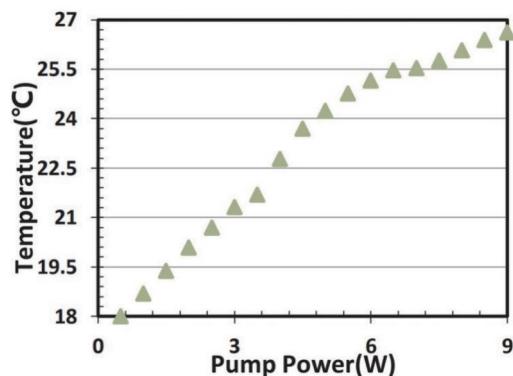


图4 不同泵浦功率下光纤激光器的纤芯温度测量值^[37]

Fig. 4 Measured temperature of the fiber core in fiber laser at different pump powers^[37]

2020年国防科技大学的Hu等^[38]利用复合光栅测量了高功率光纤激光器中高反光栅处的纤芯温度,如图5所示。复合光栅为在光纤的同一位置处分别刻写两个不同中心波长的光纤光栅。在该实验中,复合光栅中的一个光纤光栅为高功率光纤激光振荡器提供反馈,另一个光纤光栅传感光纤的温度变化。光纤激光器的增益介质为7 m长的掺镱光纤,中心波长为1064 nm。传感光纤的中心波长为1550 nm,利用该传感光栅,测量得到该光纤激光器在输出功率为15 W时,高反光栅处的最高温度达到60.1 °C。

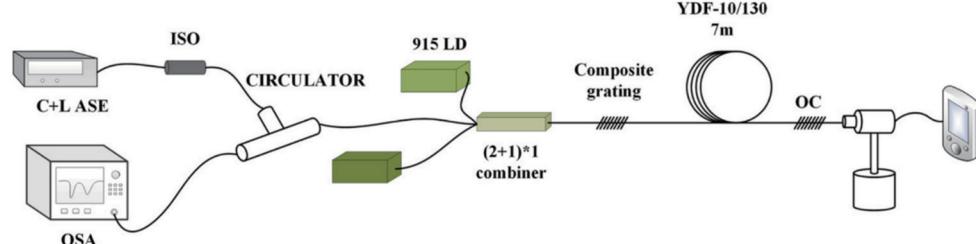


图5 利用复合光栅测量高反光栅温度的实验装置图^[38]

Fig. 5 Experimental setup for measuring the temperature of high reflection grating by composite grating^[38]

基于光栅传感的纤芯温度测量方法能够实现对纤芯内部温度的测量。然而该测量方法却只能测得离散位置处的温度,无法实现连续分布式温度测量,遗漏了较多光纤关键位置的温度信息,不能较好地表征高功率光纤激光器的纤芯温度特性。另外,在增益光纤中刻写光纤光栅,改变了增益光纤纤芯的结构,会影响高功率光纤激光器的输出特性。增益光纤中的光纤光栅会使局部光纤温度过高,降低了高功率光纤激光器的可靠性。因此要实现高功率光纤激光器纤芯的连续分布式温度测量还需要寻求更加合适的测温方法。

2.2 分布式温度测量

分布式光纤传感技术通过探测光纤中的后向瑞利散射、拉曼散射、布里渊散射光来测量光纤纤芯的温度信息,其测量过程不需要改变增益光纤的工作状态,为高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度测量提供了另一种

途径。在光纤温度发生变化后,光纤中后向散射光的频谱会产生漂移。通过测量后向散射光的频谱移动值,可以得到光纤纤芯的分布式温度变化量。根据传感原理的不同,分布式光纤传感技术可分为光时域反射法(OTDR)^[39-42]和光频域反射法(OFDR)^[43-46]。其中,OTDR技术通过测量脉冲散射回光的传输时间获取光纤的位置信息,该技术传感距离能够达到千米量级,但空间分辨率由脉冲光宽度决定,一般在m量级,适用于测量长距离光纤中的损耗与温度信息^[47-48]。OFDR的基本原理为将线性扫频光输入干涉仪中,使待测光纤中不同位置处的散射光频不同,干涉信号中的频率信息反映了光纤的位置信息^[49]。该技术的传感距离受限于扫频光源的相干性,通常不超过100 m,其空间分辨率可以达到毫米量级,且温度测量精度高,测量时间短,适用于短距离光纤中高空间分辨率

的温度测量^[50]。高功率光纤激光器的分布式温度测量具有测量光纤长度相对较短,空间分辨率要求较高,测量精度要求较高,测量时间要求较短等特点。因此,在分布式光纤传感技术中,和OTDR技术相比,OFDR技术更适于高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度的分布式在线测量。目前,国内外已经初步开展了利用OFDR温度传感技术对高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度进行在线测量的研究,其中以耶拿大学和国防科技大学为代表。

2015年,耶拿大学的Beier等^[51]测量了10 W输出功率量级下单模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度变化分布,

实验装置如图6所示。在该放大器中,增益光纤纤芯直径为7 μm,包层直径为125 μm,激光中心波长为1070 nm,泵浦方式为空间耦合后向泵浦结构。测量系统使用的探测光波长为1.3 μm,经过波分复用器(WDM)以及泵浦倾泻(MS)后进入到增益光纤中。温度测量结果如图7所示,随着激光输出功率的不断提高,增益光纤纤芯的温度也不断提高。由于光纤的圆形盘绕,光纤温度沿光纤纵向出现周期性波动。在最高14 W的输出功率下,纤芯温度变化沿增益光纤呈现出较为明显的上升趋势,这种趋势与后向泵浦方式有关。

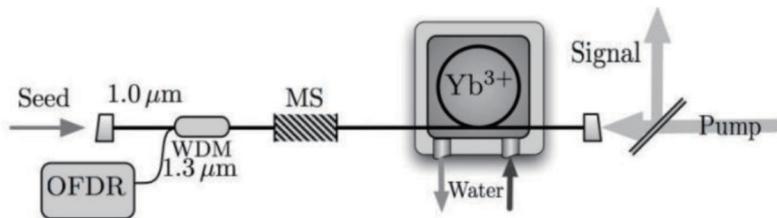


图6 单模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度测量装置图^[51]

Fig. 6 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in single-mode fiber laser amplifier^[51]

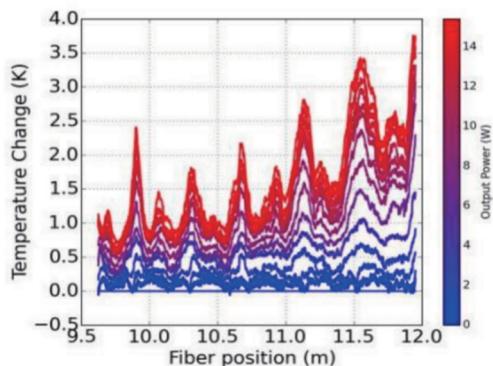


图7 单模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度测量结果^[51]

Fig. 7 Measurement results of core temperature in single-mode fiber laser amplifier^[51]

同年,耶拿大学的Beier等^[52]再次报道了百瓦级少模光纤激光放大器的温度测量结果。实验装置如图8所示,该放大器使用的增益光纤纤芯直径为20 μm,内包层直径为400 μm,采用空间耦合后向泵浦的结构,种子光波长为1070 nm,OFDR发出的探测光波长为1.3 μm,两束光波通过波分复用器共同耦合进掺镱增

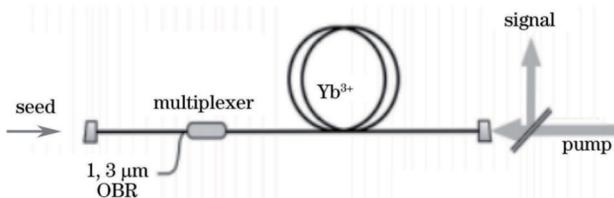


图8 百瓦级少模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度测量实验装置图^[52]
Fig. 8 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in hundredwatt-level few-mode fiber laser amplifier^[52]

益光纤中。探测光波在增益光纤中产生后向瑞利散射,后向瑞利散射光再次通过波分复用器后进入到OFDR测量仪中,通过分析后向瑞利散射光波,便可得出增益光纤纤芯温度随光纤位置的分布。由于OFDR所用的探测光与光纤激光放大器中的泵浦光、信号光的波长互不相同,因此三者之间互不影响,OFDR的温度测量不会影响放大器的正常运行。图9展示了不同泵浦功率下少模增益光纤纤芯的温度变化分布。从结果可知,随着泵浦功率的提高,增益光纤纤芯的温度变化也不断提高,沿光纤纵向没有展现出明显的温度变化规律。另外,增益光纤中的某些点随着泵浦功率的提高而急剧升高,从而出现较多的温度峰值,这与光纤温度分布的经验认识不相符。因此,将OFDR应用到光纤激光器纤芯温度测量中难度很大,想要获取真实的温度数据,仍存在很多问题。

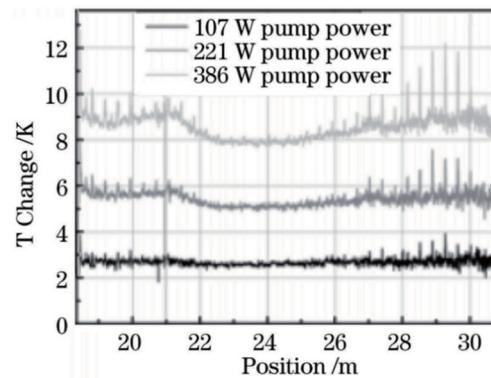


图9 百瓦级少模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度分布测量结果^[52]

Fig. 9 Measurement results of core temperature distribution in hundredwatt-level few-mode fiber laser amplifier^[52]

2017年,耶拿大学的Beier等^[53]报道了千瓦级少模光纤激光放大器的纤芯温度变化分布情况,实验装置如图10所示。光纤激光放大器的增益光纤纤芯直径为25 μm,包层直径为400 μm,长度为10 m,同样使用了空间耦合后向泵浦的方式,被测量的增益光纤放置在不流动的水池中进行冷却处理。图11展示的是纤芯温度测量结果,随着输出功率的不断提升,纤芯温

度不断升高,沿光纤纵向,离泵浦光输入位置越近,纤芯温度越高。在增益光纤最后0.5 m区域内出现了异常的温度波动和失真情况。产生该现象的潜在原因有两个:1)在增益光纤的末端接入了进行冷却的光纤端帽,冷却环境中的振动影响了增益光纤温度测量结果的准确性;2)探测光或激光的末端反射光影响了温度测量,导致该区域的温度测量不准确。

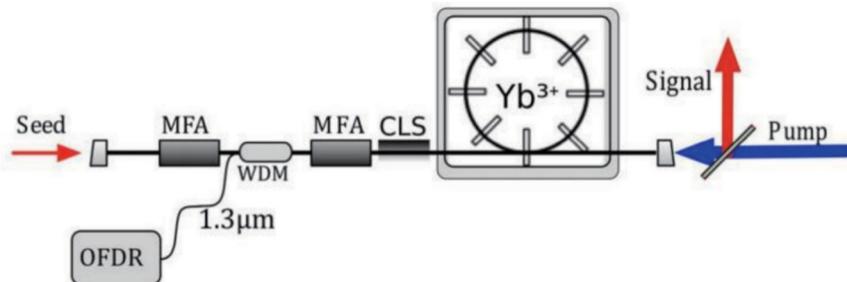


图10 千瓦级少模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度测量实验装置图^[53]

Fig. 10 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in kilowatt-level few-mode fiber laser amplifier^[53]

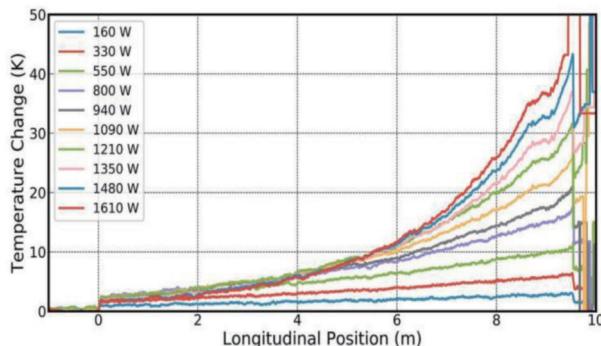


图11 千瓦级少模光纤激光放大器纤芯温度测量结果^[53]

Fig. 11 Measurement results of core temperature in kilowatt-level few-mode fiber laser amplifier^[53]

耶拿大学利用OFDR技术开展了高功率光纤激光器的温度测量研究,得到了增益光纤纤芯的分布式温度变化。但其对高功率光纤激光器温度测量方法的研究仍不成熟,首先,耶拿大学所测得的为增益光纤纤芯温度变化量,没有得到增益光纤纤芯温度的绝对值。其次,其所测量的结构为光纤激光放大器,没

有实现光纤激光振荡器中光纤纤芯的温度测量。再次,耶拿大学的光纤激光器采用空间结构,只能测量光纤激光器中增益光纤的温度变化,没有得到光纤激光器全链路及关键部件的温度信息。最后,对增益光纤重要位置处温度信息存在测量不准确的问题,其测量方法还有待进一步改进。基于此,国防科技大学通过改进数据处理算法,在测量过程中将产生的应力变化作为噪声基底移除,利用解耦光纤的温度与应力变化、标定光纤温度系数、优化光纤盘绕以及降低末端反射及回光干扰等多种方式,改进了OFDR技术测量高功率光纤激光器温度的方法,进而研究了不同结构、不同泵浦方式的光纤激光振荡器与放大器的纤芯温度分布。

2020年,国防科技大学的Lou等^[54]研究了不同泵浦波长下光纤激光振荡器中增益光纤纤芯的温度分布,是对于高功率光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度测量的首次报道。实验装置如图12所示,激光器由中心波长为1080 nm的高反光栅与低反光栅组成,由于光纤激光振荡器比光纤激光放大器具有更强的主激光回光干

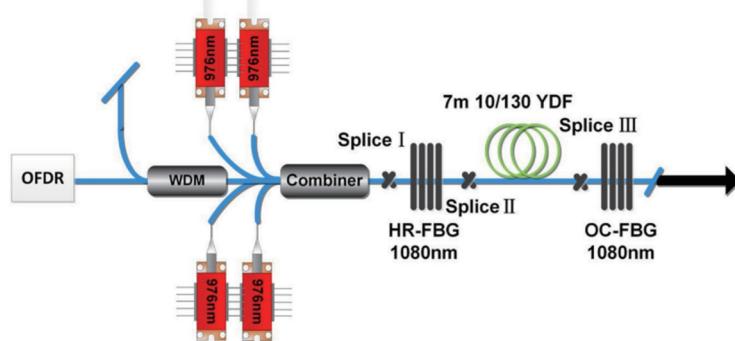


图12 光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度测量实验装置图^[54]

Fig. 12 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in fiber laser oscillator^[54]

扰,该项研究通过提高光纤熔接质量、降低端面反射、级联波分复用器等方法,优化了OFDR技术抗杂散光干扰的性能。同时,在温度测量之前,首先对散射光频移量与光纤温度的关系进行了标定,从而能够测量光纤温度的绝对值。研究发现,虽然对于相同的信号光输出,采用915 nm波长泵浦的方案比采用976 nm波长泵浦的方案能产生更多的量子亏损^[55-56],

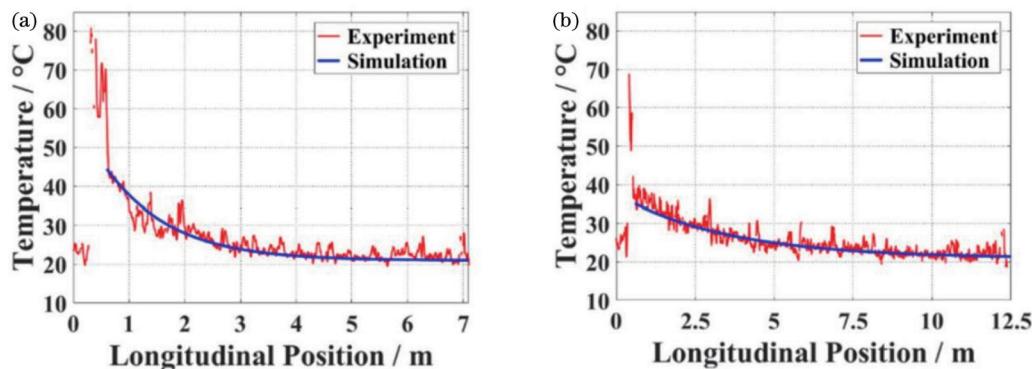


图13 (a)976 nm和(b)915 nm泵浦波长的光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度分布比较^[54]

Fig. 13 Comparison of the fiber core temperature distribution in fiber laser oscillator with (a) 976 nm and (b) 915 nm pump wavelength^[54]

2021年,国防科技大学报道了千瓦级少模光纤振荡器的温度测量结果^[57]。实验装置如图14所示,由OFDR线性扫频光源发出的1550 nm探测光先后经过三个级联的高功率波分复用器(WDM)和一个模场适配器(MFA),最终通过(6+1)×1高功率合束器的信号臂进入到光纤激光振荡器中。图15展示了激光振荡器输出功率为1474 W时的纤芯温度分布,其中温度最高的位置为高反光栅与增益光纤之间的熔点;而合

但根据镱离子的吸收特性,同一光纤对于915 nm泵浦光的吸收系数只有对976 nm泵浦光吸收系数的约1/3,使得915 nm泵浦方案的最高热负载和平均热负载均低于976 nm泵浦的方案,增益光纤纤芯温度测量结果如图13所示,实验测量值与理论预测值一致。

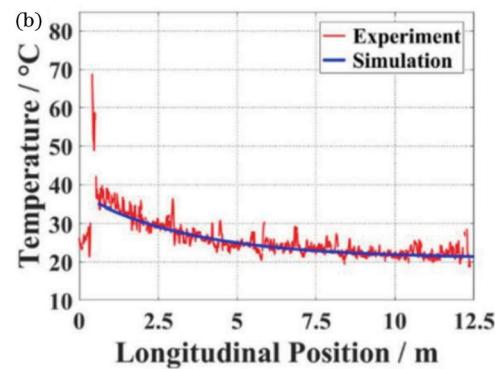


图13 (a)976 nm和(b)915 nm泵浦波长的光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度分布比较^[54]

束器与高反光栅之间的熔点温度相对较低。因此,高反光栅与增益光纤之间的熔点是高功率光纤激光振荡器的关键温度位置。相比于耶拿大学对光纤激光放大器增益光纤纤芯的温度测量,该项研究不仅测量了增益光纤纤芯的温度分布,还实现了光纤激光振荡器所有光纤元件绝对温度的分布式测量,能够对光纤激光器的完整链路实现温度监测。

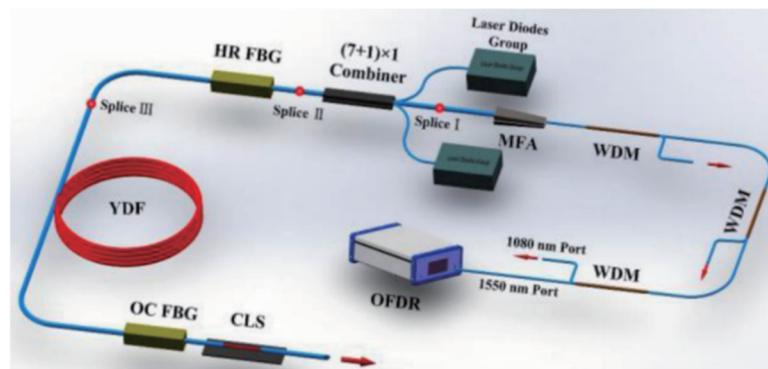


图14 千瓦级少模光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度测量实验装置图^[57]

Fig. 14 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in kilowatt-level few-mode fiber laser oscillator^[57]

基于改进的OFDR测温方法,可以测量不同泵浦方式下高功率光纤激光器的温度分布。例如,分布式侧面泵浦技术是优化高功率光纤激光器温度分布的一个很好的技术解决方案。但对于分布式侧面泵浦光纤激光器中增益光纤纤芯温度测量的研究仍然较少。国防科技大学的Lou等^[58]搭建了如图16所示的侧面泵浦光纤激光器,并利用OFDR技术测量了该光纤激光器增益光纤纤芯的温度分布,证实了侧面泵浦在降低

增益光纤热负载方面的优势,测量结果如图17所示。研究发现,利用分布式侧面泵浦的方式,可以使增益光纤中产生的废热均匀分布在光纤的各个位置。在相同输出功率下,和单向泵浦方式相比,双向泵浦可以降低增益光纤的整体温度。

2.3 高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度测量的应用

2.3.1 光纤熔点的质量评价

2023年,国防科技大学基于OFDR技术测量高功

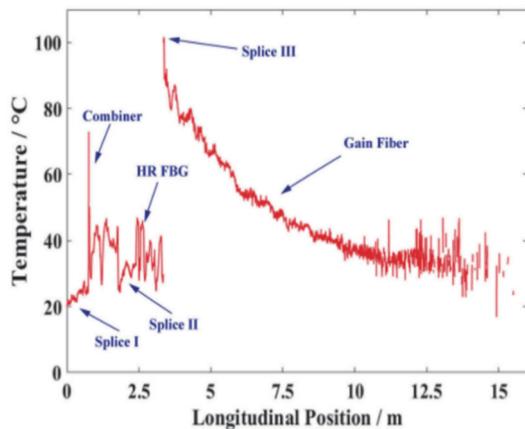


图 15 千瓦级少模光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度测量结果^[57]
Fig. 15 Measurement results of core temperature in kilowatt-level few-mode fiber laser oscillator^[57]

率光纤激光器中熔点温度的结果,检验了所提出的增益光纤熔点质量评价方法^[59]。在高功率光纤激光器中,光纤熔点处易产生较高的温度,并可能导致光学放电现象,造成光纤激光器的永久性破坏。在熔点质量定量评价模型中,通过引入熔接产热因子,可以计算出不同功率下熔点的温度。利用OFDR技术的高空间分辨率特性,可以实现对高功率光纤激光器熔点温度特性的实时监测。将不同输出功率下熔点温度测量数据,代入光纤熔点温度物理模型,计算得出熔接产热因子。实验温度测量值与理论模型预测值一致,如图18所示。测量结果说明,所提出的增益光纤熔点质量评价方法能够较好地预测熔点处的温度特性。

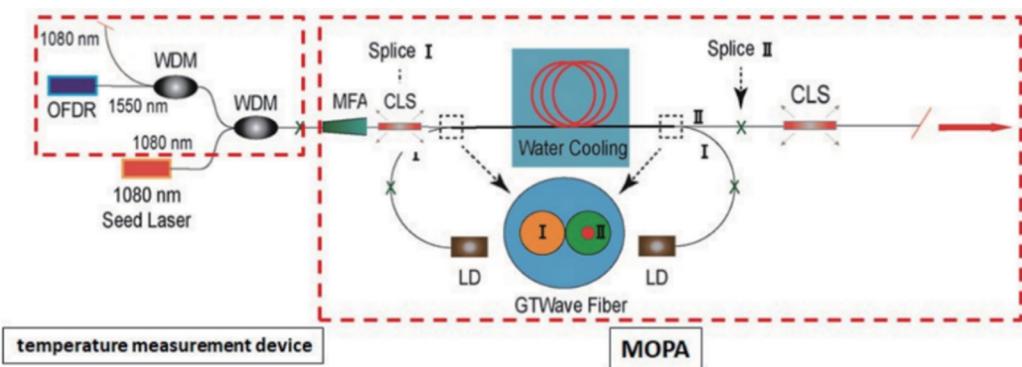


图 16 侧面泵浦光纤激光器纤芯温度测量实验装置图^[58]
Fig. 16 Experimental setup for core temperature measurement in side-pumped fiber laser^[58]

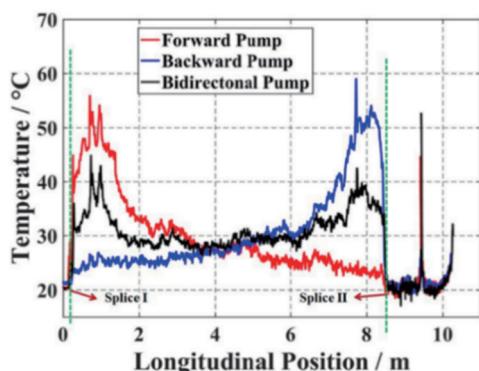


图 17 不同泵浦方式下增益光纤的温度分布^[58]
Fig. 17 Temperature distribution of the gain fiber with different pump schemes^[58]

2.3.2 受激布里渊散射效应的调控

增益光纤的温度分布可直接影响高功率光纤激光器中的受激布里渊散射效应,受激布里渊散射效应所产生的斯托克斯光沿光纤后向传输,不仅携带了大量能量,降低激光器的输出功率,还对激光系统的部件产生严重危害。因此,抑制高功率光纤激光器中的受激布里渊效应至关重要。布里渊频移量和纤芯温度有关,对光纤施加温度调制,可展宽布里渊增益谱,进而

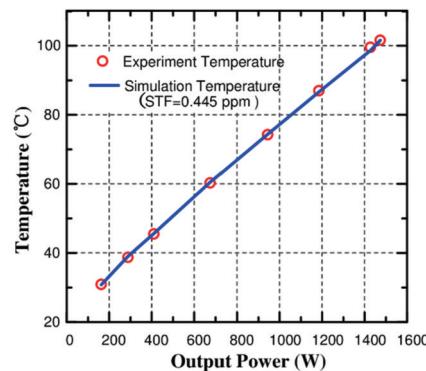


图 18 高功率光纤激光器某熔点的熔接产热因子^[59]
Fig. 18 Splice thermogenic factor of a fusion point in high power fiber laser^[59]

提高受激布里渊散射效应的阈值^[60-62]。但由于光纤与外界环境之间复杂的热传递特性,环境温度与光纤纤芯温度数值不同,难以实现光纤纤芯温度的准确调控。利用OFDR技术测量增益光纤纤芯的温度,研究人员能够对增益光纤的温度进行精准调控。2020年,基于此方法,国防科技大学的Lou等^[63]对增益光纤施加温度调制,使增益光纤产生如图19所示的温度梯度,将受激布里渊散射的阈值提高了3.5 dB。

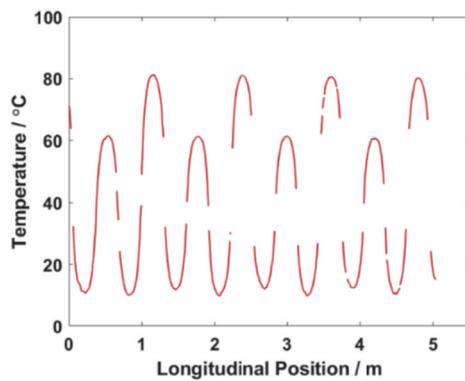
图19 基于OFDR技术的增益光纤纤芯调制温度测量曲线^[63]

Fig. 19 Modulated temperature of the gain fiber measured by OFDR^[63]

2.3.3 高功率光纤激光器中热效应的有效管理

对光纤激光器纤芯温度分布的准确测量,还可以促进高功率光纤激光器中热效应的有效管理。将光纤中产生的废热及时排除,是降低高功率光纤激光系统温度的有效方法。光纤冷却最直接的方式是将光纤紧密地附着在水冷板上,冷却水在激光增益介质周

围循环,以增加高功率光纤激光系统的热传导,将热量通过水冷板排到外界^[64-65]。然而,由于0℃以下的温度很难用水冷却的方法来实现,因此研究高功率光纤激光器的深冷态性能不易实现。研究人员采用一些特殊的方法可以将光纤冷却到0℃以下,例如直接用液态氮或液态氦将增益光纤保持在低温状态^[66]。液化气虽然可以提供更宽的温度范围,但不便于灵活地调节温度,成本较高。针对以上问题,国防科技大学在2022年提出利用热电冷却的方式降低增益光纤的温度。图20显示了分别用热电冷却与水冷板的方式将温度设置在20℃,利用OFDR技术温度测量方法,测量得到的相同激光输出功率下光纤纤芯的温度分布。结果显示热电冷却方式比传统水冷板的冷却性能更好^[67],增益光纤纤芯温度最低可降至-30℃。同时,此项研究可以将高功率光纤激光器中分立器件的纤芯温度分别进行调控与测量,解耦不同光器件与物理机制对高功率光纤激光器性能的影响,如半导体泵源波长漂移、泵浦功率大小,Yb离子吸收、发射截面等因素的影响,对于研究低温下高功率光纤激光器的性能具有重要意义。

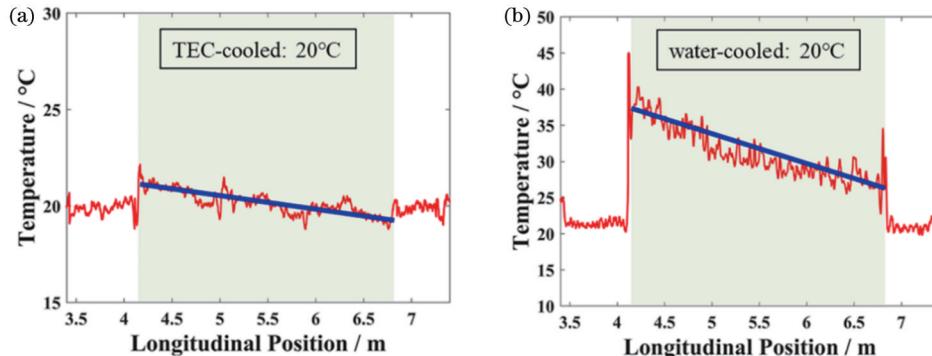
图20 (a)热电冷却和(b)水冷板20℃制冷条件下光纤纤芯温度分布^[67]

Fig. 20 Fiber core temperature distribution by (a) thermoelectric-cooled and (b) water-cooled at 20 °C^[67]

由于对高功率光纤激光器纤芯的温度测量研究仍然较少,其应用价值尚未完全展现。未来高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度的在线测量研究可以从以下方面展开。首先,对光纤激光器纤芯温度在线测量设备进行集成,建立高功率光纤激光器损伤预警及诊断系统。在激光器实时运行过程中,对全链路的纤芯温度进行实时在线监测,特别是对于光纤熔点等关键位置处的温度,利用温度测量数据及熔点致热因子评价模型对熔点的熔接质量及安全状态进行评估,一旦温度超过预设值或出现危险点,发送预警信号并及时切断光路。其次,将高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度在线测量结果应用于光纤激光器结构的设计优化中,通过测量不同增益类型、不同光纤盘绕方式、不同结构、不同制冷方式下光纤激光器的温度分布,建立高功率光纤激光器纤芯产生与散热模型,不断优化高功率光纤激光器设计方案。

3 结束语

本文介绍了高功率光纤激光器纤芯的温度测量技术与应用。利用光纤光栅可以测量增益光纤中离散点的温度变化,但难以获得光纤连续的温度分布。采用分布式光纤传感技术中的光频域反射法,可以获得高功率光纤激光器中增益光纤的温度变化趋势,耶拿大学测量了光纤放大器中纤芯的温度变化,但没有实现光纤激光振荡器中全链路光纤纤芯温度绝对值的测量,且在测量信噪比与关键位置处温度测量的可靠性方面还有待进一步提高。针对以上问题,国防科技大学基于改进的OFDR技术建立了光纤激光器全链路纤芯温度分布式在线测量方法,测量了高功率光纤激光振荡器纤芯温度分布的绝对值。该纤芯温度测量技术为光纤激光器运行状态的实时监测与调控提供了一种有效方法,国防科技大学将其在熔点质量评价方法

的检验、受激布里渊散射的抑制以及光纤激光器的热管理等方面进行了应用,初步展示了高功率光纤激光器纤芯温度测量技术的研究价值,并有望推广到对模式不稳定效应等其他制约光纤激光器性能提升因素的研究中,为高功率光纤激光器性能的提升提供帮助。

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Real-Time Temperature Measurement of High-Power Fiber Laser Core and Its Applications

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Abstract

Significance In the past few years, high-power lasers have shown great potential in the application of industrial processing, medical treatment, national defense, and other fields. Fiber lasers have become a mainstream technical solution to high-power lasers due to their unique advantages of excellent output beam quality, high energy conversion efficiency, good heat dissipation capacity, compact structure, and high robustness. Currently, a single fiber laser can reach the output power of 10 kW. However, due to energy loss, quantum defect, and other factors, the waste heat generated in high-power fiber lasers has seriously restricted the further improvement of laser output power. The performance of the high-power fiber laser is significantly affected by the high temperature inside the gain fiber, which reduces the stability of the fiber laser, and results in mode instability effect and degradation of the output beam quality. Theoretical studies have shown that the mode instability effect is accompanied by dynamic gratings caused by the thermo-optical effect in the fiber core. The high-order mode and fundamental mode are coupled with each other under the interaction of dynamic gratings, causing degraded output beam quality and further restricting the power improvement of high-power fiber lasers. Therefore, the thermal effect in high-power fiber lasers is an important factor that determines laser operation stability. It is very important to measure and monitor the temperature of the fiber core in the laser for improving the stability of the high-power fiber laser and avoid the thermal damage of the gain fiber.

Progress The refractive index of the fiber core is affected by the temperature of the fiber material to change the phase or spectrum of the reflected/scattered light. By measuring the phase or spectrum change of the reflected/scattered light in the optical fiber, the temperature change in the optical fiber core can be detected. Fiber Bragg grating (FBG) is a reflector composed of short fiber with refractive index period modulation, and it can be employed to measure the fiber core temperature with discrete points. To study the thermal effect and photon darkening effect in the gain fiber, Leich *et al.* adopted four FBGs to measure the fiber core temperature in the gain fiber. The research group at the National University of Defense Technology also measured the fiber core temperature by the π -phase shifted FBG and composite grating in 2018 and 2020, respectively, which realized the real-time temperature monitoring of the gain fiber. However, FBG can only measure the fiber temperature at discrete locations and cannot achieve continuous distributed temperature measurements. It misses lots of temperature information at key locations and cannot comprehensively characterize the fiber core temperature of the high-power fiber laser. Therefore, researchers from the University of Jena measured the distributed temperature of the fiber core by optical frequency domain reflectometry (OFDR), which is a distributed temperature sensing method with extremely high spatial resolution. The temperature of fiber lasers with single mode output, several hundred-watt output, and kilowatt output power was characterized in 2015 and 2017, respectively. However, their study did not measure the absolute temperature of the fiber core in the fiber laser. Thus, researchers from the University of Defense Technology optimized the OFDR method to measure the temperature of high-power fiber lasers by decoupling the temperature and stress changes of the fiber, calibrating the temperature coefficient of the fiber, optimizing the fiber winding, and reducing the end reflection. The temperature of fiber laser amplifiers and oscillators with kilowatt output power was measured based on the optimized OFDR method. Since there are still few studies on the temperature measurement of the fiber core in high-power fiber lasers, the corresponding applications have not been fully demonstrated. The current applications include the quality evaluation of the splice point, and thermal management and nonlinear effect suppression in high-power fiber lasers, providing references for further research on high-power fiber lasers.

Conclusions and Prospects Fiber sensing method is an important tool to monitor the temperature of the fiber core in high-power fiber lasers. FBG can only measure the temperature at discrete locations, and the OFDR method can measure the distributed fiber core temperature with high spatial resolution. With several applications of thermal management and nonlinear effect suppression, the fiber core temperature characterization shows great potential in the performance improvement of high-power fiber lasers.

Key words high-power fiber laser; temperature measurement of fiber core; fiber sensing; OFDR