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基于石墨烯全光调制的主/被动调Q光纤激光器 (特邀)

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摘 要:报道了一种基于石墨烯全光调制器的主/被动调Q光纤激光器。石墨烯调制器不仅可以作为 激光腔中的被动调Q器件,还可以作为全光调制器件。引入另一束被周期性调制的激光通过石墨烯调 制器,以改变石墨烯在激光腔内的饱和吸收特性实现对激光脉冲的调制。该石墨烯调Q激光器具有全 光纤结构、重复频率精确可控等优点。在不改变激光器泵浦功率的情况下,通过主动改变调制光的重 复频率,获得了与调制光重复频率一致的调Q脉冲输出。此外,调制器采用不同透过率的石墨烯薄膜获 得了不同的调制深度,调制深度越大,输出脉冲的重复频率变化范围越大(最大范围为31.6~92.6 kHz), 并且精确可调。这对选用合适调制深度的石墨烯调制器具有重要的参考意义。 关键词:石墨烯全光调制;主/被动调Q;脉冲重复频率;调制深度;光纤激光器 中图分类号:TN248 文献标识码:A doi:10.3788/gzxb20225110.1014004

0 引言

调Q作为一种将连续光转换为脉冲光,从而获得高脉冲能量和高峰值功率的技术^[1],广泛应用于材料加 工、生物医学、非线性频率变换等领域^[24]。调Q脉冲主要依赖于腔内Q因子动力学,所以根据是否对腔内 Q因子主动操纵分为被动调Q和主动调Q。被动调Q通常是在腔中采用不同的方法来实现可饱和吸收效应 从而充当一个自操作调Q器,如非线性偏振旋转(Nonlinear Polarization Rotation, NPR)^[5]和真实可饱和吸收 材料(Saturable Absorber, SA)^[6-14],而后者被认为更简单有效。常用的可饱和吸收体包括化学染料、半导体可 饱和吸收镜^[7]、黑磷^[8]、石墨烯(Graphene)^[9,12]、碳纳米管^[10,11]、过渡金属二硫化物^[13]和其他二维材料^[6,14]等。 虽然被动调Q激光器结构简单,但其输出脉冲的重复频率仅依赖于泵浦功率的大小,一般不能通过调整其 他参数而改变[15]。此外,即使在调节泵浦功率大小的情况下也很难精确控制其重复频率,且若想获得较高 的重复频率而不断增加泵浦功率则会导致材料的SA性能退化甚至被击穿。相比于被动调Q,主动调Q可 以利用外部驱动调节激光器的Q因子,因此可以灵活地控制重复频率的变化。更重要的是,在产生的脉冲 和注入的信号之间可以很容易实现时间同步。传统的主动调Q激光器由电光调制器¹⁶¹或声光调制器¹⁷⁷调 制,但是这些调制器因为其工作带宽窄^[18,19]而需要针对工作波长进行特殊设计,这限制了不同波长的光脉冲 同步,获得的脉冲宽度也不是非常稳定^[20]。为此,近几年提出了石墨烯电光调制器获得主动调Q^[21],然而这 些主动调制器都打破了全光纤结构且结构比较复杂,并且具有成本较高、器件设计难度大、时间响应较慢等 缺点。基于此,目前迫切需要一种在宽波长范围使用的光调制器,并且可获得脉冲频率精确可调、具有全光 纤结构的激光器。

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从石墨烯全光调制器^[22, 23]中受到启发,当调制光的光子能量(*hω*>2*E*_f,*E*_f为石墨烯的费米能级)激发石 墨烯中载流子,导致相应能级带间跃迁达到泡利阻塞,以调节激光腔内Q因子,从而调节激光器的输出。 另外,石墨烯不仅可以作为可饱和吸收体和非线性元件应用于光纤激光器领域,它的光学宽带响应还可 以使其广泛应用于光调制器等领域,且石墨烯易与光纤系统集成。REN Aibing等^[24]和LI Duidui等^[25]将覆 盖石墨烯薄膜的熔融拉锥光纤作为调制器,使用自搭的调Q激光器为主动调制光,分别获得重复频率为 30.32~101.29 kHz和41.1~50.5 kHz的输出脉冲。然而,重复频率变化范围不同的脉冲依赖于全光调制器 的调制深度,但到目前为止,还没有相关文献报道。

本文将不同透过率的石墨烯薄膜放置于光纤跳线头中间作为全光纤调制器件,将该调制器熔接进谐振 腔内实现了稳定的被动调Q脉冲。同时引入主动调制结构简单的1310nm激光经过石墨烯调制器对掺铒 激光进行全光调制,获得了全光纤主/被动调Q激光输出。该激光器不仅可以获得窄脉宽和稳定的脉冲输 出,还可以在不改变泵浦功率的情况下改变脉冲的重复频率。这在非线性变频、多色泵浦探测光谱等领域 有非常重要的应用。此外,还研究了不同调制深度的石墨烯调制器对输出脉冲重复频率和脉宽变化范围的 影响,研究发现,调制器的调制深度与脉冲重复频率变化范围成正比,与脉宽变化范围成反比。这为调Q激 光器选取合适的石墨烯薄膜提供了参考。

1 材料制备与表征

混合匀胶制成的可饱和吸收膜具有制备方法简单、质量高、使用灵活,且易与光纤系统相结合等优点。 本实验中,将聚乙烯醇(Polyvinyl Alcohol,PVA)加入石墨烯溶液中以制备Graphene-PVA可饱和吸收膜,制 造过程如图1。首先将2mg的石墨烯粉末(购自阿拉丁公司)溶于40mL的去离子水中,通过破碎机破碎搅 拌后,加入2gPVA,用磁力搅拌机加热至75℃搅拌成胶状溶液。待胶状溶液冷却后,将溶液均匀旋涂于培 养皿或载玻片表面,之后通过匀胶机开始离心甩胶。甩胶结束后,待其自然风干,此时便可制得石墨烯薄 膜。通过图1中制得薄膜的颜色看出,薄膜不是完全均匀的。这是因为在离心甩胶过程中,培养皿中的离心 惯性力不相等,使其在培养皿壁形成了堆叠,再者培养皿的底部高低也不均匀。本文选择了颜色深度不同 的三块石墨烯薄膜,将其夹在跳线头中间形成了石墨烯全光调制器件,如图2所示。



图 1 石墨烯薄膜的制作流程 Fig. 1 The production process of graphene film

功率相关的非线性传输是评价饱和吸收体性能的关键参数。因此,使用图2所示的双臂装置分别检测 了三块石墨烯薄膜(A、B、C)的可饱和吸收特性。将中心波长为1040 nm基于NPR技术的皮秒锁模脉冲激 光器^[23](Nonlinear Polarization Rotation Fiber Laser, NPRFL)作为光源,其重复频率和脉宽分别为28.8 MHz 和11 ps。利用可变光衰减器(Variable Optical Attenuator, VOA)控制激光器的输出光强,使光强便于调节。 使用 50:50 的光耦合器(Optical Coupler, OC)将光分为光强相等的两束光,一束经过石墨烯薄膜后被功率 计(Power Meter, PM1)检测, 另一束直接被 PM2 检测。通过计算它们的比值得到透过率。



图 2 非线性吸收特性测试实验双臂装置 Fig. 2 Nonlinear absorption characteristic test experimental device

三块石墨烯薄膜的饱和吸收实验结果分别对应于图 3(a)~(c),使用 SA 的典型非线性透射函数拟合实验数据。此函数取决于入射光强度,透过率 T 与输入光强 I 的关系为^[26]

$$T = 1 - \left(\frac{\alpha_{\rm s}}{1 + I/I_{\rm sat}} + \alpha_{\rm ns}\right) \tag{1}$$

式中, *a*_s是调制深度, *I*_{sat}是饱和强度, *a*_{ns}是非饱和吸收。可以看出, 蓝色的实验数据点与红色的拟合曲线吻 合较好。通过对实验结果的拟合, 发现石墨烯薄膜(A、B、C)的调制深度分别为 33.5%、18.1% 和 8.7%, 对应 的饱和强度分别为 40、5.4、3.5 MW/cm²。可以看出颜色较深的石墨烯薄膜的调制深度和饱和强度更大。这 是因为颜色较深的薄膜石墨烯含量较高, 当激光打入薄膜, 石墨烯会吸收更多的光子去激发价带中电子跃 迁到导带中, 使其拥有更高调制深度的潜力(本文实验也验证了这点), 但同时也意味着更高的插入损耗。 因此, 石墨烯含量更高的薄膜实现饱和需要更强的光。



Fig. 3 Nonlinear characteristic curves of graphene films

2 实验装置

实验中利用石墨烯薄膜作为全光调Q器件,研究了调Q激光器的输出特性。主/被动调Q光纤激光器的设置如图4,由波长为1310 nm的主动调制光和波长为1560 nm的被动调Q掺铒环形腔光纤激光器(Erbium-Doped Fiber Laser, EDFL)组成。工作波长为1310 nm的调制装置由1310 nm的激光二极管(Laser Diode, LD)(FPL1053S)、数字信号发生器(Digital Signal Generator, DSG)和铌酸锂(LiNbO₃)电光调制器组成,其中1310 nm的连续光通过DSG信号加载的LiNbO₃调制器被调制为占空比为50%的激光,其频率通过DSG精确可调。LiNbO₃电光调制器购于EOspace公司,主要工作波段为O、C、L波段,可调频率最高为20 GHz,光损伤阈值为400 mW。1560 nm的激光腔采用90 cm的掺铒光纤(LIEKKI, Er110-4-125)作为增益介质,由980 nm的LD通过波分复用器(Wavelength Division Multiplexer, WDM)泵浦,使用偏振无关隔离器(Polarization-Independent Isolator, PI-ISO)保证激光的单向传输。偏振控制器(Polarization Controller, PC)来调节腔内传输光的偏振状态,通过仔细调节PC可以使脉冲的稳定性得到提高。调制光通过工作波长

为1310/1550 nm的 WDM 耦合人环形腔内,与腔内的信号光共同作用于全光调Q器件后,调制光被滤波器 (Filter)滤除。腔内1560 nm 的信号光经过30:70的 OC 输出后被光谱仪(Agilent, HP70951B)和示波器 (Tektronix TDS2024)检测,输出功率通过功率计(Thorlabs PM100USB)测量。环形腔的总腔长为16.5 m。



图 4 基于石墨烯全光调制器的主/被动调 Q 光纤激光器 Fig. 4 Active-passive Q-switched fiber laser based on graphene all-optical modulator

实验先将石墨烯薄膜A作为可饱和吸收体置于腔内。在实验过程中发现当DSG使用不同的电压加载在LiNbO3电光调制器上时,激光腔的输出脉宽是不同的。因此,为了探明获得最窄脉冲时的电压(即最佳电压),将调制光的泵浦功率和重复频率分别设置为60mW和18kHz。当EDFL的泵浦功率增加到140mW时,分别用1~8V的电压加载在LiNbO3电光调制器上,测得的激光腔输出信号如图5。可以看出当负载电压为4V时,激光腔的输出脉宽是最窄的,其对应的脉冲强度也是最大的。因此,在之后的实验中,LiNbO3电光调制器的负载电压设置为4V。



图 5 脉冲宽度和脉冲强度随 LiNbO3调制器负载电压的变化 Fig. 5 Pulse width and pulse intensity vary with LiNbO3 modulator load voltage

3 结果与讨论

首先,本文研究了EDFL被动调Q的输出性能。当泵浦功率设置为140 mW时,缓慢调整PC获得了稳定的脉冲,如图6(a),其脉冲间隔为53.4 µs,对应重复频率为18.7 kHz,脉冲宽度为10.3 µs。之后将调制光的泵浦功率、重复频率和负载电压分别设置为60 mW、18 kHz和4 V,其输出占空比为50%的激光序列如图6(c)(顶部),将占空比设为50%也适用于调制光为方波或正弦波的情况。然后,将调制光通过WDM耦合入EDFL形成一个主/被动调Q装置,通过调整PC获得了如图6(b)所示的稳定脉冲,其脉冲间隔为55.46 µs,对应的重复频率恰好为18 kHz,脉冲宽度为6.34 µs。可以看出输出脉冲的重复频率被调制光的重复频率所控制,且相比被动调Q,脉宽明显被压窄。图6(d)显示了主/被动调Q的光谱,调Q激光的中心波长为1564 nm,激光线宽和边模抑制比分别为0.06 nm和31 dB。光谱比较光滑,意味着无寄生连续波,调Q更加稳定有效^[27]。



图 6 调 Q 光纤激光器的输出特性 Fig. 6 Output characteristics of Q-switched fiber laser

由于泡利阻塞,当注入1310 nm的调制光时,石墨烯开始吸收调制光,逐渐达到饱和,此时石墨烯对1560 nm 的光吸收减弱,1560 nm的光在激光腔内由高损耗状态变为低损耗状态,这种状态随着调制光的周期而改 变,因此输出脉冲的重复频率随着调制光的重复频率而变化,如图6(c)所示,可以发现调Q脉冲序列和调制 光同步输出。调制光的入射加速了石墨烯的漂白状态,缩短了1560 nm脉冲的形成时间,因此与1560 nm 的被动调Q激光器的输出脉冲相比,主/被动调Q激光器产生的脉冲宽度变窄^[24]。

将泵浦功率固定在140 mW,通过DSG将调制光的重复频率从12 kHz连续变化到32 kHz,获得了稳定的1560 nm的调Q脉冲,其重复频率随调制光重复频率的变化而变化,图7为激光输出特性随调制光重复频率的变化曲线。可以观察到输出脉冲宽度随着调制光重复频率的增加先变窄再逐渐变宽,输出脉冲能量随重复频率的增加而减小,对应的峰值功率也同样减小。这是由于脉冲周期的初始反转率和能量存储减少所致。泵浦功率为140 mW时,激光器被动调Q的重复频率为18.7 kHz。当调制频率比较低时(低于被动调Q的重复频率),每个开关周期存储在增益光纤中的能量较多,因此释放出较高脉冲能量的较长脉冲;随着调制频率增加到被动调Q的本征重复频率,激光器获得最佳窄脉冲;随着调制频率的进一步增加,每个开关周期存储在增益光纤中的能量较少,因此释放出具有较低脉冲能量的较长脉冲^[21]。还可以看出,在泵浦功率固定的情况下,平均输出功率随重复频率的变化不明显。

之后测量了在不同的泵浦功率下,输出脉冲的重复频率和脉冲宽度的可调谐范围,如图8。图8(a)显示了输出脉冲重复频率随着泵浦功率的变化,其中蓝色的点为最大可调谐值,红色的点为最小可调谐值, 黑色的点表明了在没有调制光参与时,EDFL被动调Q时脉冲的重复频率的变化。可以看出,随着泵浦功 率的增加,被动调Q的重复频率从18.7 kHz增加到47.17 kHz,其对应的脉冲宽度从10.3 μs减小到5.32 μs, 如图8(b)。在图中,输出脉冲重复频率的调谐范围随着泵浦功率的增大而增大,而脉冲宽度的调谐范围随 着泵浦功率的增大而减小。

在泵浦功率较低时,被动调Q脉冲宽度下降速度快,很可能是因为电子在高能级的快速积累。然而,当 泵浦功率较高时,由于石墨烯可饱和吸收体趋于饱和,电子累积速度减慢,导致脉冲宽度变化趋于平稳。同



100 -Passive Passive 12 Tunable minimum Tunable minimum Tunable maximum 80 Tunable maximum Pulse width/µs Repetition rate/kHz 60 40 6 20 0 140 160 180 200 220 240 260 140 160 180 200 220 240 260 Pump power/mW Pump power/mW





(b) Tunable range of pulse widths

(a) Tunable range of pulse repetition rates

样,随着泵浦功率的增大,更多的能量将与石墨烯相互作用,从而导致石墨烯更高的调制深度,响应速度也更高^[9]。由此可见,随着泵浦功率的增加,重复频率的响应范围增大,而脉冲宽度因其越平稳而调谐范围 越小。

实验又分别使用石墨烯薄膜B和C置换薄膜A,也可以获得如图6和图7的可调谐性质。图9显示了三 块石墨烯薄膜分别在不同的泵浦功率下,输出脉冲的重复频率和脉冲宽度的可调谐范围。从中可以明显看 出,石墨烯薄膜B和C的调谐性质与A的相似,都是随着泵浦功率的增加,其频率的可调谐范围逐渐增大,而 脉宽的可调谐范围逐渐减小。当泵浦功率为120mW时,薄膜C的频率调谐范围为46.8kHz,而薄膜B的频 率调谐范围为33.9kHz。这是因为薄膜B的饱和强度比较大,此时的光强还不足以使其达到饱和,而薄膜C 的饱和强度比较小,此时的光强足以使其达到饱和,从而调制深度更大。在图9(b)中可以看出在泵浦功率为 120mW时,薄膜C的脉宽调谐范围很小,进一步证明了薄膜C已经饱和。同理,在泵浦功率小于200mW时, 因为薄膜A的饱和强度大于薄膜B,薄膜B更快达到饱和,此时薄膜B的频率调谐能力大于薄膜A。饱和强 度越大的薄膜拥有越大的调谐潜力,当泵浦功率大于200mW时,薄膜A渐趋于饱和,其调制深度相比薄膜B 更大,因此可以获得更大的调谐范围。图9中的黄色曲线表示使用不同石墨烯的被动调制获得的频率和脉 宽,其明显符合被动调Q的特征。

在实验过程中,EDFL调Q激光器的重复频率始终等于调制光的重复频率,改变调制光的占空比也不会 影响输出脉冲的重复频率,但当占空比过小(10%~15%)或过大(80%~85%)时,激光输出脉冲会变的不稳



图 9 石墨烯薄膜A、B、C对不同泵浦功率下输出脉冲重复频率和脉冲宽度变化范围的影响 Fig. 9 Effects of graphene films A, B, C on pulse repetition rate and pulse width variation range at different pump powers

定,甚至无法工作。当关闭1310 nm的泵浦光源时,EDFL激光器立即恢复为被动调Q状态,证明了1560 nm 的可调谐调Q脉冲是由1310 nm光调制产生的。在EDFL激光器泵浦功率不变的情况下,即使仔细调整 PC也无法调谐其输出脉冲。这表明1310 nm激光调制了腔的Q因子,有助于调谐1560 nm激光脉冲。使 用这种方式,不仅可以获得1560 nm的稳定窄脉宽脉冲序列,还可以在不改变泵浦功率的情况下,在一定范 围内实现输出脉冲重复频率和脉冲宽度的调谐操作。

4 结论

本文研究了一种基于石墨烯全光调制器的主/被动调Q光纤激光器。石墨烯全光调制器具有全光纤结构、全光调制、宽带应用等优点,可以作为被动调Q和主动调Q共同作用器件,使激光器同时结合了被动调Q和主动调Q的优势。在不改变泵浦功率的情况下,实现了激光器输出脉冲重复频率随调制光外加电场重复频率的变化而对应可调。研究发现,当石墨烯调制器的调制深度越大时,输出脉冲的重复频率变化范围越大,其可调脉宽范围越小,重频变化的最大范围为31.6~92.6 kHz。这种石墨烯全光调制器比传统的调制器件更小且易于集成在光学系统中,对应用条件的要求更低,在非线性变频、多色泵浦探测光谱等领域具有广阔的应用前景。同时,本文研究还为调Q激光器选取合适的石墨烯薄膜提供了参考。

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Active-passive Q-switched Fiber Laser Based on Graphene All-optical Modulation (Invited)

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Abstract: Q-switching is a technology that converts continuous light into pulse light to obtain high pulse energy and peak power. It is widely used in material processing, biomedicine, nonlinear frequency conversion and other fields. Generally, Q-switching can be divided into passive and active mechanisms. The passive Q-switching is achieved by inserting a saturable absorber into the cavity. Its structure is simple, but the repetition frequencies of the output pulses depend only on the pump power. Active Q-

switching uses external drive electro-optic and acousto-optic modulator to adjust the Q factor of the laser to achieve pulse output. These types of Q-switching system can flexibly control the change of pulse repetition rate, but it breaks the all-fiber structure and leads to a high cost. More importantly, the modulator needs to be specially designed because of the narrow working bandwidth. However, we are inspired by the graphene all-optical modulator, which can regulate the attenuation of the specific light in graphene by introducing another frequency of light into the graphene, thus regulating the in-cavity Q factor. In addition, graphene acts as a saturable absorber in the laser cavity. Therefore, we have built an active-passive Q-switched fiber laser based on graphene all-optical modulator, which can not only obtain stable narrow pulse, but also flexibly change the repetition frequency without changing the pump power. It has an all-fiber structure and a wide working bandwidth. At the same time, we also studied the effects of different modulation depths of graphene on the pulse repetition rate and pulse width variation range. Here, the graphene-films are made by spin-coating the graphene Polyvinyl Alcohol (PVA) water solution, which are placed between two fiber connectors to form graphene modulators. We measured the modulation depths and saturation strengths of three graphene (A, B, C), of which the modulation depths are 33.5%, 18.1% and 8.7%, corresponding to saturation strengths of 40, 5.4 and 3.5 MW/cm², respectively. Then, we built an activepassive Q-switched fiber laser, which consists of an active modulated light with a wavelength of 1 310 nm and a passive Q-switched Erbium-doped ring cavity fiber laser with a wavelength of 1 560 nm. First, a passive Q-switching pulse with a repetition frequency of 18.7 kHz and a pulse width of 10.3 µs is obtained when the active modulated light is turned off. After that, we turned on the modulation light and set the repetition frequency of the modulation light to 18 kHz, and obtained a output pulse with a repetition frequency of 18 kHz and the pulse width of 6.34 µs. It can be seen that the repetition frequency of the output pulse is controlled by the repetition frequency of the modulated light, and the output pulse width is significantly narrower than the passive Q-switched pulse width. Further study shows that the output pulse width gradually widens with the increase of the modulation repetition frequency, while the pulse energy and peak power decrease, which is attributed to as the modulation frequency increases, the energy stored in the gain fiber per switching cycle reduces and therefore releases longer pulse with lower pulse energy. The experiment also explored the effects of three graphene films with different saturation strengths on the repetition frequency and pulse width variation range of the output pulse at different pumping powers. It shows that when the modulation depth of graphene modulator is larger, the variation range of output pulse repetition rate is larger, the variation range of output pulse width is smaller, and the maximum variation range of repetition rate is $31.6 \sim 92.6$ kHz. The modulator described in this paper is easier to be integrated into optical system than the traditional modulator, and has a broad application prospect in nonlinear frequency conversion, multi-color pump detection spectrum and other fields. At the same time, the research also provides a reference for selecting suitable graphene films in the field of Q-switched lasers.

Key words: Graphene all-optical modulation; Active-passive Q-switching; Pulse repetition rate; Modulation depth; Fiber laser

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