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基于非线性管理的类噪声掺铒锁模光纤激光器

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摘 要:报道了一种基于非线性光纤的宽光谱类噪声锁模掺铒光纤激光器。在非线性和偏振旋转锁模掺铒光纤激光谐振腔内引入色散补偿光纤和高非线性光纤, 实现腔内色散和非线性管理, 最终获得稳定的锁模脉冲输出。当在谐振腔内引入 6 cm 高非线性光纤时, 可以获得中心波长为 1 534 nm, 脉冲宽度为 1.9 ps, 重复频率为 20.1 MHz, 40 dB 光谱带宽约为 100 nm 的超短脉冲输出。在此基础上, 将高非线性光纤长度增加至 30 cm 时, 通过优化波片角度, 观察到稳定的类噪声锁模脉冲输出, 其输出光谱覆盖范围为 1 280~1 850 nm, 40 dB 带宽为 500 nm, 尖峰脉冲宽度短至 70.9 fs, 基座脉冲宽度为 26.6 ps, 重复频率约 19.7 MHz。同时在实验中发现随着泵浦功率的提高, 类噪声脉冲的基座脉宽和尖峰脉宽的演化呈相反趋势, 光谱覆盖范围更宽。该类噪声锁模光纤激光器的研究对低相干光谱干涉技术的发展具有重要意义。

关键词:宽光谱; 高非线性光纤; 色散; 类噪声脉冲; 非线性偏振旋转锁模

中图分类号: TN248

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0 引言

被动锁模光纤激光器由于其光束质量好、结构紧凑、体积小、制作成本低、可调谐以及容易产生超短脉冲等优点^[1-3], 在光纤通信^[4]、光纤传感^[5]、光学频率测量^[6]和航空航天领域^[7]具有潜在的应用价值。近几十年来, 利用被动锁模光纤激光器可以产生多种类型的锁模脉冲, 如高斯脉冲^[8]、自相似脉冲^[9]、孤子脉冲^[10]、类噪声脉冲^[11](Noise-Like Pulse, NLP)等等。其中, NLP 是锁模激光器在一定条件下产生的一种特殊脉冲, 由于其具有脉冲宽度宽、能量高以及低时域相干性^[12-13]等特点被广泛应用于低相干光谱干涉仪^[14]、微加工^[15]、超连续谱产生^[16]等领域。因此, 研究类噪声锁模光纤激光器具有重要意义。

目前, 基于被动锁模技术的类噪声掺铒光纤激光器的研究已经被大量报道。1997 年, 以色列的 HRORWITZ M 等^[17]首次在非线性和偏振旋转(Nonlinear Polarization Rotation, NPR)掺铒光纤激光器中成功实现了尖峰脉冲宽度为 190 fs、波长范围为 1 495~1 620 nm 的 NLP 输出。随后, XIA Handing 等^[18]通过在 NPR 锁模光纤激光谐振腔内引入 20 m 增益光纤, 实现了重复频率为 9.36 MHz、光谱范围为 1 500~1 650 nm 的类噪声锁模脉冲输出。LUO Aiping 等^[19]通过非线性环形镜掺铒锁模光纤激光器中引入 32.8 m 的单模光纤(Single Mode Fiber, SMF)和 4 m 的增益光纤, 实现了光谱范围为 1 540~1 600 nm 的类噪声锁模脉冲输出。WANG Zhenhong 等^[20]通过在掺铒光纤激光器中放置 10 m 的增益光纤, 实现了光谱范围为 1 545~1 620 nm 的类噪声锁模脉冲输出。CHENG Xi 等^[21]在 NPR 掺铒光纤激光器中利用 45°倾斜光纤光栅, 产生了尖峰脉冲宽度为 420 fs、光谱范围为 1 540~1 630 nm 的类噪声锁模脉冲。在以上报道中, 研究人员大都是利用较长的

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增益光纤或者 SMF 调节腔内色散和积累非线性, 以此获得类噪声锁模脉冲的输出, 其输出光谱范围都在 1 495~1 650 nm 之间。到目前为止, 基于 NPR 锁模机制, 采用高非线性光纤 (Highly Nonlinear Fiber, HNLF) 管理激光腔内非线性实现宽光谱类噪声锁模光纤激光器尚未见相关文献报道。

因此, 本文通过 HNLF 和色散补偿光纤 (Dispersion Compensation Fiber, DCF) 来实现激光腔内非线性和色散管理, 利用 NPR 技术最终获得稳定的类噪声锁模脉冲输出, 首先在腔内加入较短的非线性光纤, 实现超短脉冲的稳定输出, 其脉冲中心波长为 1 534 nm, 脉冲宽度为 1.9 ps, 重复频率为 20.1 MHz, 40 dB 带宽约为 100 nm。为了进一步提高腔内非线性效应, 将非线性光纤增长至 30 cm, 获得了稳定的宽谱类噪声锁模激光输出, 其光谱覆盖范围为 1 280~1 850 nm, 40 dB 光谱带宽达到 500 nm。同时通过实验发现, 类噪声锁模脉冲的基座脉冲宽度和尖峰脉冲宽度随泵浦功率的演化呈相反趋势, 且光谱覆盖范围随泵浦功率的增加而展宽。目前, 由于使用的泵浦激光功率有限, 后续可以选用更高功率的泵浦激光实现光谱的进一步拓展。

1 实验装置及工作原理

为了利用非线性管理技术来获得稳定的锁模激光输出, 首先对基于 6 cm 非线性光纤的掺铒锁模光纤激光器进行理论模拟, 为后续的实验设计提供理论指导。在理论上采用分步傅里叶算法求解非线性薛定谔方程, 模拟掺铒光纤谐振腔内脉冲演化过程。图 1(a) 为其锁模激光器的理论模型。该环形腔由 SMF、掺铒光纤 (Erbium-doped Fiber, EDF)、DCF、HNLF、可饱和吸收体 (Saturable Absorber, SA) 和输出耦合器 (Output Coupler, OC) 组成。

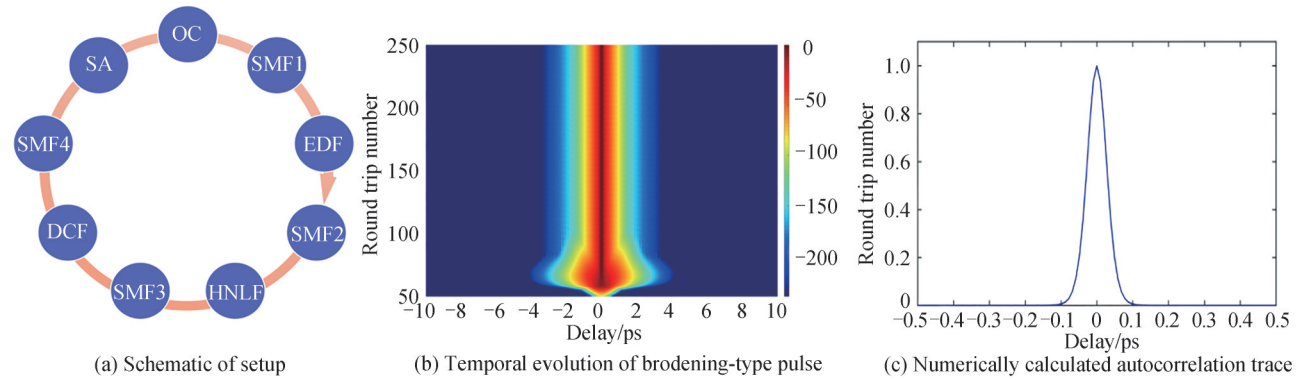


图 1 被动锁模光纤激光器理论模拟特性

Fig.1 The theoretical simulation characteristics of passive mode-locked fibre laser

在模拟中, 利用广义非线性薛定谔方程来描述脉冲的传播

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial z} = -\frac{\alpha}{2} A + \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{g(\omega)}{2} \tilde{A}(\omega) e^{-i\omega t} d\omega - i \frac{\beta_2}{2} \frac{\partial^2 A}{\partial t^2} + i\gamma |A|^2 A \quad (1)$$

式中, A 表示光脉冲的振幅, α 是损耗, β_2 是群速度色散, γ 是非线性系数, \tilde{A} 是 $A(t)$ 的傅里叶分量, $g(\omega)$ 是增益, 它与频率 ω 有关, 并考虑到增益饱和效应

$$g = \frac{g_0}{1 + E_{\text{pulse}}/E_{\text{sat}}} \lambda \quad (2)$$

在式(2)中, g_0 为小增益信号, E_{sat} 为增益饱和能量, E_{pulse} 为脉冲能量。图 1(b) 给出了时域上信号从白噪声起振到形成锁模脉冲的自洽过程。从图中可以看出, 脉冲可以从白噪声中迅速提取, 经增益光纤放大, 并通过 SA 实现脉冲的稳定, 整个自洽过程循环 50 圈以后就可以完成。图 1(c) 为其展宽脉冲型的典型自相关轨迹, 一般采用双曲正割或者高斯函数进行拟合。当进一步增加 HNLF 的长度, 使得腔内非线性效应增强, 由于脉冲坍塌和峰值功率箝制效应的共同作用可以实现 NLP 运转, 其脉冲的时域演化过程如图 2 所示。图 2(a) 为 NLP 的时域演化过程, 可以看出, 经过有限次的循环, NLP 可以稳定地运转。图 2(b) 是对应的自相关曲线演化图, 从图中我们可以发现, 宽脉冲底座上有一个较窄的尖峰, 由于尖峰脉冲较窄, 在图中需要仔细分辨。图 2(c) 为典型的 NLP 自相关曲线, 通过自相关曲线可以最直观的分辨 NLP。通过对该锁模系统的理论分析, 为后续实验设计提供了理论指导。

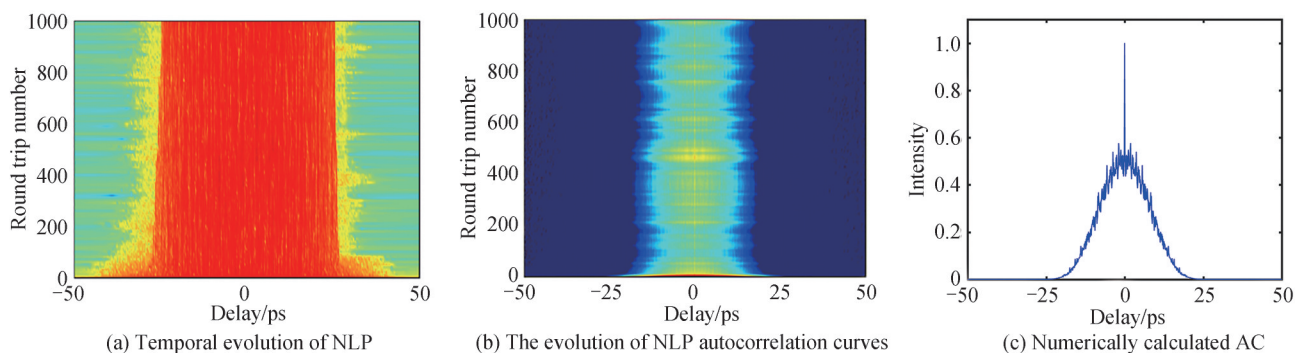


图2 类噪声锁模光纤激光器理论模拟特性

Fig.2 The theoretical simulation characteristics of noise-like mode-locked fiber laser

在理论模拟的基础上,选择最佳的谐振腔参数,在实验上搭建基于HNLF和DCF的被动锁模掺铒光纤激光器,实验装置如图3所示。激光泵浦源采用输出波长为976 nm的半导体激光二极管(Laser Diode, LD),最高泵浦功率为1 100 mW。980/1 550 nm波分复用器(Wavelength Division Multiplexer, WDM)可将LD的泵浦激光耦合到掺铒增益光纤中,其中WDM的尾纤为0.4 m长的HI1060光纤,群速度色散为 $-0.0013 \text{ ps}^2/\text{m}$ 。增益光纤选用60 cm长的EDF(Er110-4/125),群速度色散(Group Velocity Dispersion, $\text{GVD}-\beta_2$)为 $0.0134 \text{ ps}^2/\text{m}$ 。在增益光纤之后引入一段HNLF,其零色散波长为1 550 nm,非线性系数为 $10.7 \text{ W}^{-1}\text{km}^{-1}$,在1 550 nm处的色散斜率和色散量分别为 $0.03 \text{ ps}\cdot\text{nm}^{-2}\cdot\text{km}^{-1}$ 、 $-0.0076 \text{ ps}^2/\text{m}$,主要用于对谐振腔内的非线性进行管理。为了减小EDF、DCF与HNLF之间的熔接损耗,在HNLF前后各熔接一段SMF(SMF-28),其群速度色散为 $-0.022 \text{ ps}^2/\text{m}$ 。SMF与HNLF之间的熔接模式主要通过改变主放电时间和主放电功率进行优化,通过优化,其熔接损耗可以低至0.03 dB。为实现腔内色散的调整,选用2.5 m长的DCF($\beta_2=0.048 \text{ ps}^2/\text{m}$)。腔内剩余光纤为SMF-28。空间部分主要包括2个 $\lambda/2$ 波片(Half-Wave Plate, HWP)、2个 $\lambda/4$ 波片(Quarter-Wave Plate, QWP)、1个偏振分光棱镜(Polarizing Beam Splitter, PBS)、1个空间隔离器(Polarization Dependent Isolator, PD-ISO)和2个准直器(Collimator, Col)。其中2个Col将光纤中的光导出至空间并耦合形成回路,PD-ISO用来确保谐振腔内的光保持单向运转。利用 $\lambda/4$ 波片、 $\lambda/2$ 波片和PBS来精确调控腔内光偏振态,进而实现激光达到锁模状态。激光的光谱采用横河的光谱分析仪(YOKOGAWA, AQ6370D,最小分辨率为0.02 nm,监测范围为1 200~2 400 nm)进行测试,脉冲宽度利用自相关仪(Pulsecheck USB, APE)测量,信噪比由频谱分析仪(Agilent Technologies E4407B)测量,脉冲序列由带宽500 MHz数字存储示波器(Tektronix, MDO3054)配合光电探测器监测。

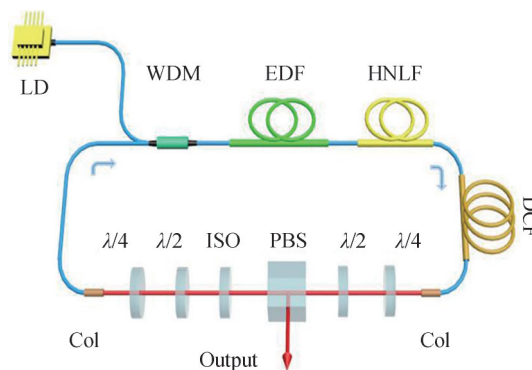


图3 掺铒锁模光纤激光器实验装置图

Fig. 3 The experimental setup of erbium-doped mode-locked fiber laser

2 结果与讨论

当泵浦激光功率为600 mW,通过调整谐振腔内的波片角度可以获得稳定的超短脉冲输出。此时谐振腔内的HNLF长度为6 cm,腔内净色散为 -0.019 ps^2 。图4为该系统的典型输出特性。图4(a)为该激光谐振腔的光谱数据,从图中可以看出,中心波长在1 534 nm,输出光谱的40 dB带宽约为100 nm,波长范围从1 480 nm到1 580 nm。图4(b)是一个典型的均匀锁模脉冲序列,可以看到脉冲强度基本相等,且分布均匀,相邻脉冲之间的时间间隔为50 ns,属于单脉冲锁模状态,对应的脉冲重复频率为20.1 MHz。测量的脉冲宽度为1.9 ps,如图4(c)所示,对应的时带积为6.96,这说明腔内存在较多的啁啾。输出脉冲的射频频谱如图4(d)所示。观测到基频为20.1 MHz的强信号峰值,其信噪比约为66 dB。插图是从0 MHz到500 MHz范围

内的射频频谱,表明该激光器在高度稳定的状态下工作。通过自相关曲线可以看出,该系统未产生NLP。

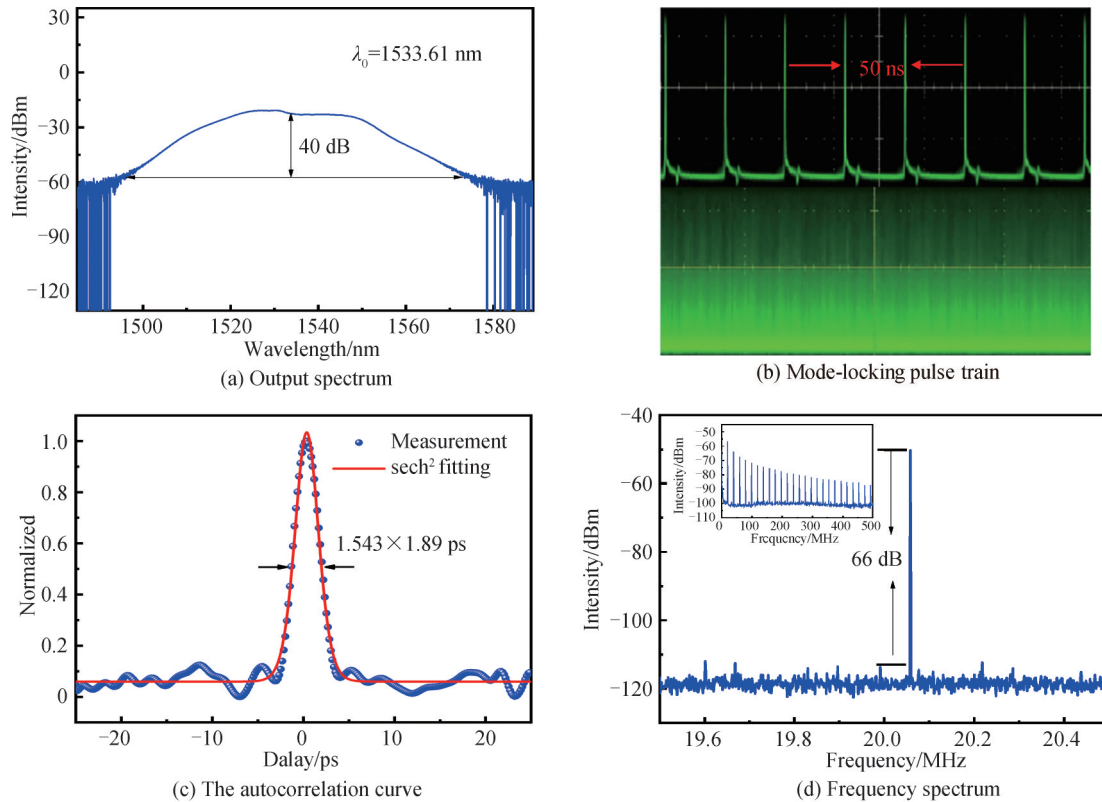


图4 展宽型掺铒锁模光纤激光器的输出特性

Fig. 4 Output characteristics of broadband erbium-doped mode-locked fiber lasers

在此基础上,将腔内HNLf的长度增加至30 cm,腔内总色散为 -0.021 ps^2 。当泵浦功率为1 100 mW时,通过适当地调节波片的状态,该激光系统可以实现NLP运转。图5展示了在泵浦功率为1 100 mW时,类噪声锁模脉冲的脉冲序列、光谱图、自相关曲线以及射频频谱图。图5(a)为类噪声锁模脉冲的光谱,从图中可以看出,类噪声脉冲的中心波长在1 553 nm,40 dB光谱带宽约为500 nm,光谱覆盖1 280~1 850 nm,此时的光谱范围明显增大,这主要是由于NLP通过HNLf传输时,其频域和时域演化受到了多种非线性效应的影响。所有这些非线性过程都能在NLP频谱内产生新的频率成分,进一步展宽了光谱。图5(b)是一个典型的锁模脉冲序列,脉冲的幅度均匀一致,相邻脉冲之间的时间间隔为51 ns。对应的脉冲重复频率为19.7 MHz,与10.5 m的总腔长相符。输出NLP的射频频谱如图5(c)所示。基频为19.7 MHz的强信号峰值,其信噪比约为45 dB。该信号有噪声基座,是典型的NLP激光器特征。插图是从0 MHz到500 MHz范围内的射频频谱,表明该类噪声锁模光纤激光器在比较稳定的状态下工作。为了进一步确定是锁模NLP,使用商用的自相关仪测量了不同扫描范围内脉冲的自相关曲线,如图5(d)所示。通过图5(d)可以清楚地看到,在50 ps的扫描范围内,自相关曲线包含了一个大的能量底座,一个窄的尖峰位于大的基座上,其尖峰与基座的强度比为0.5,基座的脉冲宽度为26.6 ps。这是典型的NLP的特点,一个大的脉冲包络由许多振幅和相位不相同的超短脉冲组成。对尖峰采用高斯曲线拟合,拟合之后的尖峰脉冲宽度为70.9 fs,结果如图5(d)的插图所示。皮秒基座的出现表明,所研究的光场是由皮秒波包组成的,其内部是由许多强度和宽度随机演化的飞秒脉冲构成的精细结构。另一方面,飞秒峰值表明波包内的脉冲具有飞秒级的持续时间。尖峰与基座的强度比为0.5,表明光场的光谱成分是高度不相关的,因此光场具有较低的时域相干性^[22-24]。同时,也表明飞秒脉冲的强度是随机变化的^[17,22-23]。

当泵浦功率为1 100 mW时,得到最大的输出功率为2.08 mW,类噪声锁模光纤激光器的平均输出功率随泵浦功率的变化关系如图6(a)所示。激光输出曲线并未出现功率饱和,由于泵浦功率的限制,并没有继续增加泵浦功率。从图中可以看出,当泵浦功率为0~500 mW时,该激光器输出的是连续波;当泵浦功率为

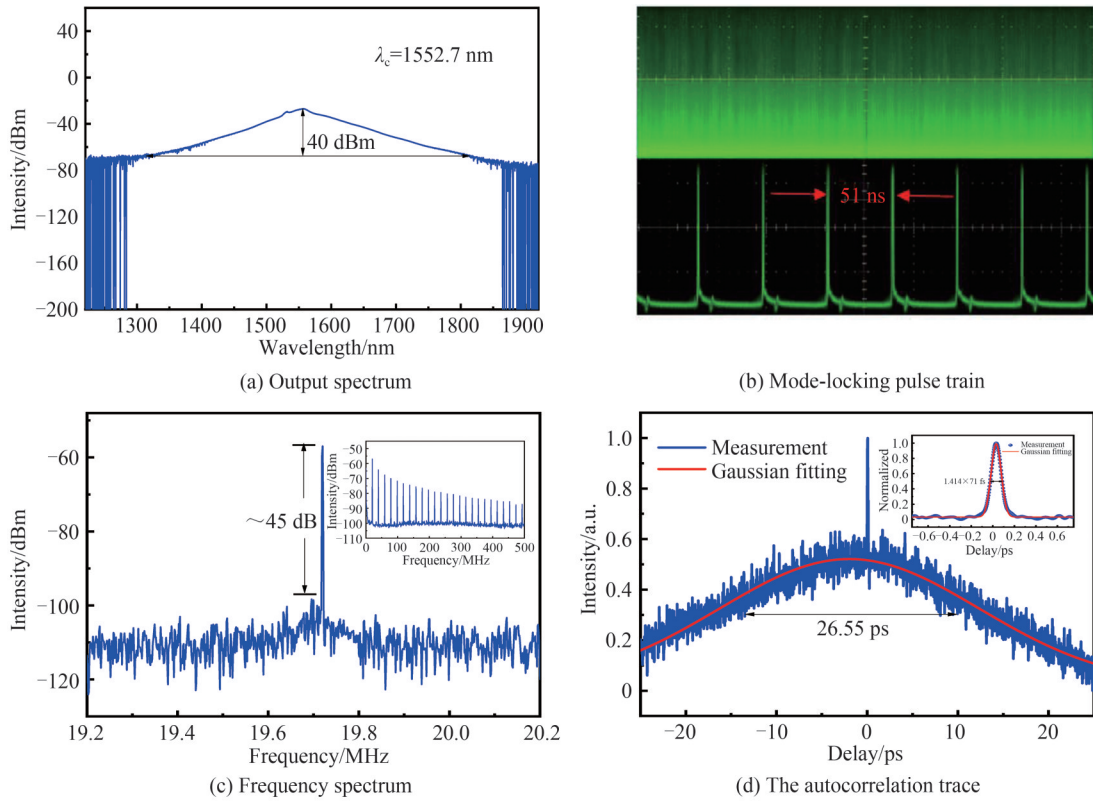


图5 泵浦功率为1 100 mW时类噪声被动锁模光纤激光器的输出特性

Fig. 5 Output characteristics of a noise-like passive mode-locked fiber laser with pumping power of 1 100 mW

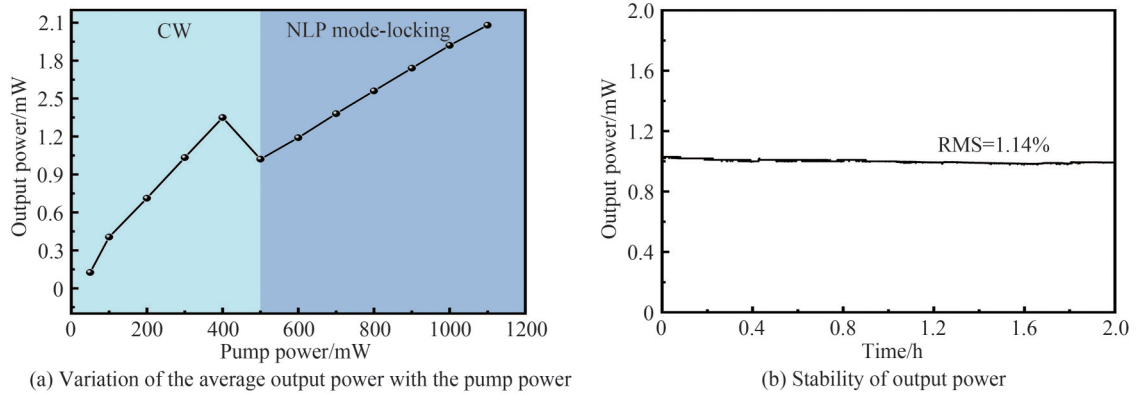


图6 类噪声锁模光纤激光器的输出功率和功率稳定性

Fig. 6 Output power and power stability of noise-like mode-locked fiber laser

500~1 100 mW时,由于DCF和HNLF控制腔内色散和提供非线性效应,以及适当地调节偏振控制器,该激光器实现了宽带光谱类噪声锁模脉冲的输出。其锁模阈值相对较高,这主要是由于HNLF的熔接损耗以及所用器件都是常规器件,工作带宽相对较窄。因此,需要采用较大的泵浦功率来达到锁模阈值,相比谐振腔内没有HNLF的情况下,激光器的斜率效率从2%降低至0.18%,这主要是由于腔体中异质光纤的模场不匹配导致损耗过大,使得类噪声锁模光纤激光器的斜率效率降低。为了验证类噪声锁模光纤激光器的功率稳定性,采用功率计(Gentec-EO MASTERRO)测量了其输出功率,我们对其输出功率进行了2 h的监测,监测结果如图6(b)所示。从图中可以看出,输出功率始终保持在1.01 mW左右,通过计算可得,2 h的均方根(Root Mean Square, RMS)为1.14%,说明它具有良好的环境稳定性。

在获得类噪声锁模脉冲后,研究了不同泵浦功率下NLP的输出光谱和对应的自相关曲线。当泵浦功率为500~1 000 mW时,该激光器一直处于NLP锁模状态,其光谱特性和时域特性如图7所示。从图7(a)中

可以看出,随着泵浦功率的增加,尖峰脉冲的持续时间略有减少,这一特征主要是源于光谱带宽逐渐变宽的事实。相反地,随着泵浦功率的增加,基座的脉冲宽度逐渐变宽,其结果如图7(a)所示。这主要是由于随着泵浦功率的增加,小脉冲数量会不断增加,NLP的持续时间也会相应变长。从图7(b)可以看出,随着泵浦功率的增加,光谱的形状基本保持不变,输出光谱同时向短波长和长波长两个方向展宽,光谱覆盖范围逐渐增大。这主要是由于随着泵浦功率的增加,耦合进HNLF的功率不断提高。因此,NLP在通过HNLF传输时,由于自相位调制、孤子自频移等非线性效应的综合作用不断增强,使得光谱逐渐展宽。随着泵浦功率的提高,NLP的平均输出功率还一直在增加,其光谱也一直在变宽,说明还未达到饱和展宽阶段,还有进一步提高功率和展宽光谱的空间。通过本实验的研究,后续可以通过定制宽带工作的光纤器件,选用更高功率的泵浦激光,优化HNLF的熔接损耗,进而获得更宽光谱的类噪声锁模脉冲输出。

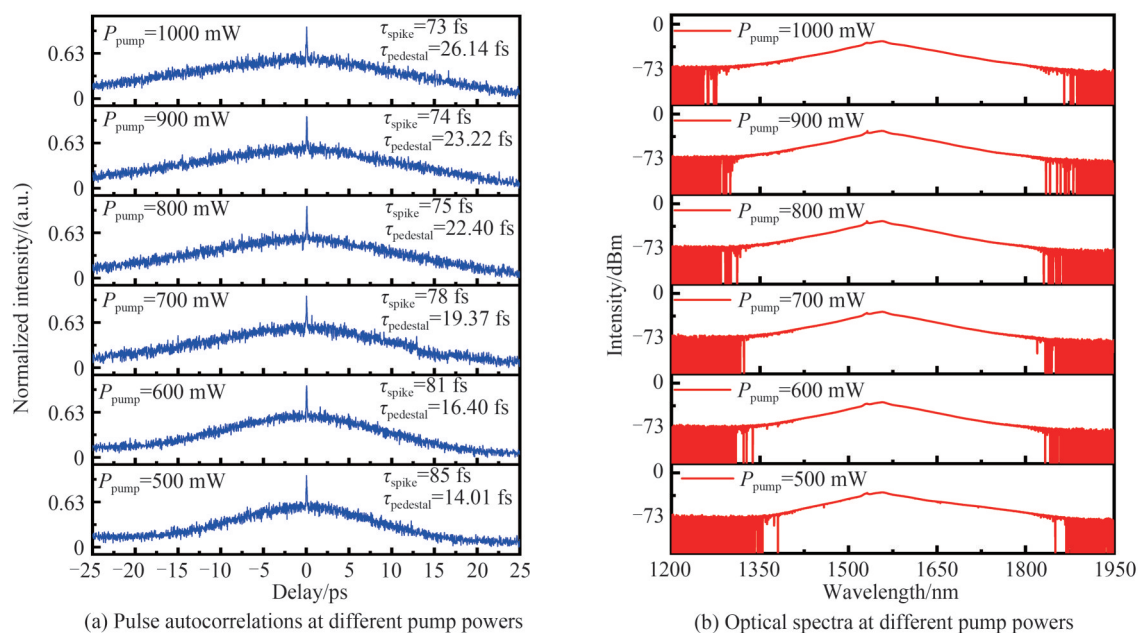


图7 不同泵浦功率下类噪声锁模光纤激光器的输出光谱和自相关曲线

Fig. 7 Output spectra and autocorrelation traces of noise-like mode-locked fiber laser at different pump powers

3 结论

本文研究了一种基于非线性和色散管理技术的NPR类噪声锁模光纤激光器。为了获得类噪声锁模脉冲的输出,在激光谐振腔内引入30 cm HNLF和2.5 m DCF管理腔内非线性和色散。当泵浦功率为1.1 W时,由于色散和非线性效应的影响,该激光器获得了尖峰脉冲宽度和包络脉冲宽度分别为70.9 fs、26.6 ps, 40 dB光谱带宽为500 nm,重复频率为19.7 MHz的类噪声锁模脉冲输出。同时实验发现,随着泵浦功率的增加,类噪声锁模光纤激光器的输出光谱范围变得更宽。本文的研究为制备宽光谱类噪声锁模激光光源提供了可行方案,由于其紧凑、输出稳定、易制作等特点,它具有很大的应用潜力。

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Noise-like Mode-locked Er: fiber Laser Based on Nonlinearity Management

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Abstract: Passive mode-locked fiber lasers have potential applications in fiber optic communication, fiber optic sensing, optical frequency measurement, and aerospace due to their good beam quality,

compactness, small size, low fabrication cost, tunability, and easy generation of ultrashort pulses. In recent decades, several types of mode-locked pulses can be generated using passive mode-locked fiber lasers, such as Gaussian pulses, self-similar pulses, soliton pulses, noise-like pulses, and so on. Among them, noise-like pulses is a special pulse generated by mode-locked lasers under certain conditions, which is widely used in low-coherence spectral interferometry, micromachining, nonlinear frequency conversion and supercontinuum spectrum generation due to its wide pulse width, high energy, and low time-domain coherence. In light of these applications, broadband noise-like pulse generation in erbium-doped fiber lasers has attracted considerable interest. The study of noise-like erbium-doped fiber lasers based on passive mode-locking technique has been reported extensively. Researchers have mostly used longer gain fibers or single-mode fibers to adjust intracavity dispersion and accumulate nonlinearity as a way to obtain the output of noise-like mode-locked pulses. So far, it has not been reported that using highly nonlinear fiber based on nonlinear polarization rotating mode-locking mechanism to manage the nonlinear in laser cavity to realize the mode-locked fiber laser with wide spectrum. In this work, we experimentally report the noise-like pulses generation in an anomalous dispersion erbium-doped fiber laser based on nonlinearity management technique. The erbium-doped mode-locked fiber laser adopt nonlinear polarization rotation technique. In the experiment, by introducing dispersion compensating fiber and highly nonlinear fiber into the nonlinear polarization rotation mode-locked erbium-doped fiber laser resonator, intracavity dispersion and non-linearity management is achieved, resulting in a stable mode-locked pulse output. When the intracavity highly nonlinear fiber length is 6 cm, corresponding to a net cavity dispersion of about -0.019 ps^2 . An ultrashort pulse output with a central wavelength of 1 534 nm, a pulse width of 1.9 ps, a repetition frequency of 20.1 MHz, and a 40 dB spectral bandwidth of about 100 nm can be obtained. Based on this, the length of the highly nonlinear fiber in the cavity is increased to 30 cm, and the total dispersion in the cavity is -0.021 ps^2 . This laser system can achieve noise-like pulse operation by properly adjusting the state of the wave-plate when the pump power is 1 100 mW. The output spectral coverage range of noise-like pulse is 1 280–1 850 nm, the bandwidth of 40 dB is 500 nm, the peak pulse width is as short as 70.9 fs, the base pulse width is 26.6 ps, and the repetition rate is about 19.7 MHz. The maximum output power is 2.08 mW at pump power of 1 100 mW, corresponding to an optical conversion efficiency of 0.18%. In order to verify the power stability of the noise-like mode-locked fiber laser, we monitor its output power for 2 hours, and the monitoring results showed that the output power is always maintained at about 1.01 mW, and the root mean square is calculated to be 1.14% for 2 hours, indicating that it has good environmental stability. After obtaining noise-like mode-locking pulses, we investigate the output spectra and the corresponding autocorrelation curves of noise-like pulses at different pump powers. It is found that the duration of the spike pulses decreased slightly with increasing pump power, a feature that mainly stems from the fact that the spectral bandwidth becomes progressively wider. Conversely, as the pump power increases, the pulse width of the base becomes progressively wider. And as the pumping power increases, the shape of the spectrum remains essentially the same and the output spectrum broadens in both the short and long wavelength directions, gradually increasing the spectral coverage. This is mainly due to the increasing power coupled into the highly nonlinear fiber as the pumping power increases. The present experimental study will allow subsequent optimisation of the fusion loss of the highly nonlinear fiber by tailoring the fibre device for wide bandwidth operation and selecting a higher power pump laser, resulting in a wider spectrum of noise-like mode-locked pulse output. The research in this paper provides a feasible solution for preparing a broad-spectrum noise-like mode-locked laser light source, which has great potential for applications due to its compactness, stable output, and ease of fabrication.

Key words: Broad spectrum; Highly nonlinear fiber; Dispersion; Noise-like pulse; Nonlinear polarization rotation mode-locking

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