引用格式: HUANG Yi, WU Kan, XIAO Zeyu, et al. Supercontinuum Spectroscopy of Thin Film Lithium Niobate Waveguide Based on Modulated Optical Frequency Comb[J]. Acta Photonica Sinica, 2023, 52(5):0552221 黄毅,吴侃,肖泽宇,等. 基于调制光频梳的薄膜铌酸锂波导超连续谱研究[J].光子学报,2023,52(5):0552221

基于调制光频梳的薄膜铌酸锂波导超 连续谱研究

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摘 要:仿真研究了基于薄膜铌酸锂调制器的电光频梳和飞秒脉冲产生,并利用该飞秒脉冲在一段薄膜铌酸锂波导中实现覆盖倍频程的超连续谱产生和倍频信号产生。通过级联铌酸锂调制器进行电光 调制,产生了一个180 fs的超短脉冲。使用该脉冲作为输入源输入一段薄膜铌酸锂波导,当输入能量达 到126.4 pJ时,波导内产生的超连续谱达到倍频程并与倍频信号重叠。此外,还对脉冲参数优化进行了 分析。本研究为实现基于薄膜铌酸锂的片上自参考光频梳系统奠定了基础。 关键词:铌酸锂;光频梳;电光调制;超连续;非线性光学

中图分类号:TN256 文献标识码:A

doi:10.3788/gzxb20235205.0552221

0 引言

光学频率梳是一种频率谱线间间隔均匀且相干的多波长激光源。最近光学频率梳在不同领域的应用 在不断拓宽,例如可以应用在光谱学^[1]、原子钟^[2]、光通信^[3]和微波光子学^[4]等中。产生光学频率梳的方法一 般有三种:1)基于锁模激光器产生固定重复频率的光频梳^[5],这种方法由于激光器性能限制,难以集成化^[6]; 2)基于克尔非线性,在片上的高Q值微环或微腔中产生光学频率梳^[7-8],该方案较难在微环或微腔内同时实 现超宽谱(如覆盖倍频程)且具有较小梳齿间隔的光频梳;3)利用电光效应进行电光调制产生光频梳^[9-10],这 种方法可以获得重频大范围可调的光频梳,但产生的光谱宽度通常有限。过去的电光调制往往是利用非集 成的铌酸锂调制器,近年来薄膜铌酸锂调制器受到了广泛的关注,相比于非集成的铌酸锂调制器,薄膜铌酸 锂调制器可以达到更低的半波电压(2~2.5 V)^[11],因此使用薄膜铌酸锂调制器可以达到更大的调制深度,从 而产生更宽光谱的电光频梳。

另一方面,将飞秒脉冲输入高非线性的波导,经波导介质的非线性效应,可以得到超宽的光谱展宽,即 超连续谱产生^[12-13]。特别地,为了实现光频梳的自参考锁定,需要将光谱展宽到覆盖倍频程。同时还需要将 输入光谱做倍频,利用倍频信号与超连续光谱在光谱上的拍频,来提取出所需的载波包络频率。实现倍频 的传统方式是利用周期性极化的晶体或者直波导^[14]。最近,在氮化硅波导与氮化铝波导中已经实现了覆盖 倍频程的超连续光谱和二次谐波产生,但这两种材料的倍频效率都比较低,氮化硅 $\chi^{(2)}=0.5 \text{ pm/V}^{[15]}$ 、氮化铝 $\chi^{(2)}=1 \text{ pm/V}^{[16]},因此在这两种波导中产生超连续光谱和二次谐波所需的能量为纳焦耳量级。$

铌酸锂材料因其有较强的线性电光效应和较强的二阶、三阶非线性一直以来都受到广泛关注。近年来,薄膜铌酸锂的出现更是将铌酸锂的研究推向了高峰。通过将光场局域在很小的薄膜铌酸锂波导内,电光效应和非线性效应都得到了大幅增强。目前已经有论文报道了基于薄膜铌酸锂的高速光调制器、二次谐波产生以及超连续谱产生^[17-21]。

基金项目:国家自然科学基金(Nos. 61875122, 61922056)

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收稿日期:2022-11-21;录用日期:2023-01-30

本文仿真研究了基于薄膜铌酸锂调制器的电光频梳和飞秒脉冲产生,并利用该飞秒脉冲在一段薄膜铌 酸锂波导中实现覆盖倍频程的超连续谱产生和倍频信号产生。通过级联铌酸锂调制器进行电光调制,产生 了一个180 fs的超短脉冲。接着使用该脉冲作为输入源输入一段薄膜铌酸锂波导,当输入能量达到126.4 pJ 时,波导内产生的超连续谱达到倍频程并与倍频信号重叠,可用于实现*f*~2*f*的自参考锁频。本文还对脉冲 的参数优化进行了分析,提出了较优的参数选取方案。

1 系统与原理

仿真系统框图如图1(a),其中CW为连续光激光器输入,经过铌酸锂强度调制器(Intensity Modulator, IM)和铌酸锂相位调制器(Phase Modulator, PM)输出得到电光梳,然后利用一段色散补偿光纤(Dispersion Compensate Fiber, DCF)对信号的时域进行压缩,得到窄脉宽的脉冲信号,最后将这个脉冲信号输入铌酸锂 波导通过超连续展宽得到倍频程的宽带光谱,并同时在波导中实现倍频信号的产生。



(b) Structure of nonlinear LN waveguide



对于通过级联调制器产生电光频梳和超短脉冲,已有较多文献研究。本文采用已有文献中的参数,即 30 GHz的调制频率下,单个铌酸锂相位调制器可以达到的最大调制深度为7.8π,其所需的射频功率为 3.8 W^[11]。图1(b)为仿真所用到的非线性铌酸锂波导示意。采用的是长为0.45 cm的薄膜铌酸锂波导,铌酸 锂波导厚为510 nm,刻蚀深度为410 nm,梯形波导的角度为75°,使用二氧化硅作为下包层,空气作为上包 层,这样设计的波导在1550 nm附近的色散参数接近于零色散。

在铌酸锂波导中,需要考虑铌酸锂波导的χ⁽²⁾非线性和χ⁽³⁾非线性,因此利用非线性薛定谔方程对光场 在薄膜铌酸锂波导中的传播演化进行数学建模^[22-23]

$$\frac{\partial E(z,t)}{\partial z} + \frac{\alpha}{2} E(z,t) - i \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{\beta_n}{n!} \left(i \frac{\partial E(z,t)}{\partial t} \right)^n = i \frac{\omega_0}{2n_0 c \epsilon_0} \left(1 + i \tau_{\rm sh} \frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} \right) P_{\rm NL}(z,t)$$
(1)

式中, α 为传播损耗, β_n 为n阶色散系数, ω_0 中心频率,c为真空中的光速, ε_0 为真空中介电常数, n_0 为中心波长

处的折射率, $\tau_{\rm sh} = \frac{1}{\omega_0} - \frac{\partial \left[\ln(n(\omega)) \right]}{\partial \omega} \bigg|_{\alpha = \alpha}$ 表示光的自陡峭效应, $\tau = t - \beta_1 z$ 为快变时间, $P_{\rm NL} = \epsilon_0 (\chi^{(2)} E^2 + \omega)$

χ⁽³⁾E³)为总的非线性极化。仿真中考虑了二阶和三阶非线性效应,高阶色散和光的自陡峭效应,并采用分步傅里叶算法对式(1)求解。为了验证仿真系统的可行性,采用文献[23]的参数进行仿真验证,图2(a)为输入脉冲在一段长为5mm的铌酸锂波导中传播时频谱的演化过程。输入的脉冲信号的能量为107pJ,中心波长为1560nm,脉冲的脉宽为90fs,重复频率为250MHz。在频谱中,能观察到二次谐波信号出现在780nm处,并且随着传播距离的变长,信号的频谱因其自相位调制效应逐渐展宽。在传输距离超过4mm后,在波长840nm附近出现了色散波。



图 2 光谱在铌酸锂波导中的演化过程和波导的色散参数以及波导输出的光谱 Fig.2 Evolution of spectrum in lithium niobate waveguide, dispersion parameters of waveguide and output spectrum of waveguide

图 2(b)为仿真中所用波导的群色散速度(Group Dispersion Velocity, GVD)和色散因子 D 在不同波长处的数值,其中色散因子 $D = \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{\beta_n}{n!} (\omega - \omega_0)^{n[24]}$,其中心波长为1560 nm。图 2(c)为仿真中波导处的输出信号的频谱,其中色散波产生的位置所对应的是色散因子的零点的位置。仿真结果与文献[23]结果有着很好的一致性,证明了仿真系统的正确性。

2 仿真与分析

仿真系统中,主要考虑采用单频的连续光激光器作为输入源,选择 30 GHz 作为射频调制频率,利用铌酸锂强度调制器产生初级梳,然后利用铌酸锂相位调制器调制得到电光频率梳。为了得到更大的调制深度 与更窄的脉冲宽度,采用了级联多个相位调制器的设计。在级联相位调制器系统中,总的调制深度达到 28π,经过色散补偿模块后,输出的脉冲信号的脉宽可以达到 180 fs,其光谱的 10 dB 带宽为 5.5 THz,输出脉 冲波形与光谱如图 3。

$$D = \frac{1}{2} \beta_2 (\omega - \omega_0)^2 + \frac{1}{6} \beta_3 (\omega - \omega_0)^3$$
(2)

图 4(a)为仿真中使用的铌酸锂的波导的群速度色散 GVD(蓝色)和色散因子 D(红色)。图 4(b)是对应的仿真输出光谱,输入脉冲能量为 126.4 pJ。在 780 nm 附近,可以观察到二次谐波,同时在对应色散因子 D 为零的地方,可以发现与色散因子对应的色散波。在仿真中,研究并分析了铌酸锂波导在相等的脉冲宽度和不同的输入能量下对光谱的展宽作用,结果如图 4(c),图中由上往下输入的脉冲能量依次由 63.2 pJ 增大至 126.4 pJ。当输入能量为 63.2 pJ时,能观察到中心频率处的光谱有了一定的展宽,在 780 nm 处出现了与中心频率对应的二次谐波,并且在 1 050 nm 处出现了一个色散波,其对应的是色散因子为零的波长。根据







图4 仿真中波导的色散参数和在不同脉冲能量下的波导输出的光谱

Fig.4 The dispersion parameters of the waveguide and the spectrum of the waveguide output at different pulse energies in the simulation

色散因子的定义,当只考虑二阶色散与三阶色散时,色散因子D可表示为

由式(2)可以得到色散波出现的位置为 $\omega = \omega_0 - \frac{3\beta_2}{\beta_3}$,由此可知,色散波出现的位置不仅与二阶和三阶

色散相关,还与中心频率相关。因为输入能量较低,可以发现此时超连续频谱与二次谐波之间还有很长一段距离。随着输入脉冲能量的不断增强,铌酸锂波导产生的非线性效应逐渐增强,该现象呈现为中心频率与二次谐波处的光谱不断地展宽。当输入能量达到126.4 pJ时,中心频率与二次谐波处的光谱出现了明显的重叠,说明脉冲信号经过铌酸锂波导后,产生的超连续谱已经覆盖了一个倍频程。与文献[23]相比,本文使用了宽度更宽的脉冲信号(文献[23]为90 fs),在输入能量稍高的情况下(文献[23]为107 pJ),同样产生了覆盖倍频程的超连续光谱,说明了基于片上电光调制的飞秒脉冲产生超连续光谱的可行性。

由于铌酸锂相位调制器的调制深度直接决定了压缩后光脉冲的脉宽,分别分析了调制深度为14π、21π 和28π的情况下,不同能量的输入脉冲在铌酸锂波导中的光谱演化。图5(a)展现了当调制深度为14π,脉 冲信号脉宽为322 fs,10 dB光谱宽度为2.89 THz时,不同输入能量下的光谱演化图。其中从左往右输入脉



图5 不同输入能量、不同调制深度时,光谱在波导中的演化

Fig.5 Spectral evolution in the LN waveguide under different input pulse energies, and different modulation depths

冲的能量依次增加,当光谱产生超连续展宽时,所需的脉冲能量为1102.2 pJ。图5(b)、(c)展示了调制深度为21π与28π时的光谱演化过程,此时输入铌酸锂波导的脉冲脉宽分别为230 fs和180 fs,其得到的10 dB 光谱宽度为4.1 THz和5.5 THz,在这两种调制深度下,产生超连续展宽所需的脉冲能量分别为410.8 pJ和 126.4 pJ。

作为对比,还对调制深度为21π与调制深度为28π时光谱超连续展宽进行了分析。发现脉冲宽度越宽, 即光谱的10dB带宽约窄,其产生超连续光谱所需的能量越高。调制深度为21π时的电光梳光谱宽度大约 为调制深度为28π时的75%,其脉冲宽度约为调制深度为28π的1.25倍。但是经过同样一段波导后,要产生 覆盖倍频程的超连续光谱,所需的能量却几乎为调制深度为28π时的3倍。因此,脉冲宽度或初始电光梳光 谱的宽度,对超连续光谱展宽的影响比输入的脉冲的能量的影响更显著。

为了验证脉冲宽度与脉冲能量对光谱演化的影响,对不同调制深度下的演化情况进行了仿真分析。仿 真参数与结果如表1,表中最右列为在当前的调制深度下,产生倍频程超连续谱所需的输入脉冲能量。图6 为脉冲宽度与倍频程的超连续谱产生时所需能量的关系图。可以观察到,随着调脉冲脉宽的增加,超连续

Table 1 Required pulse energy to generate octave supercontinuum under difference modulation depth			
Modulation depth	Pulse width/fs	Spectrum width/THz	Required energy/pJ
14π	322	2.89	1 102.2
17π	281	3.27	726.7
19π	251	3.75	527.4
21π	230	4.11	410.8
23π	213	4.53	267.7
26π	191	5.13	182.8
28π	180	5.5	126.4





图6 脉冲宽度与产生倍频程超连续谱时输入能量

Fig. 6 The relationship of pulse width and input energy when supercontinuum spectrum of octave band generated

展宽所需的能量近似呈现平方变化。因此当脉冲宽度不断增加时,即光谱的带宽不断变窄时,在同样一段 波导中,产生超连续所需要的能量会呈现近似平方的增加。

最后,在输入脉冲峰值功率固定的情况下探究了该系统对调制频率的调谐性的关系,结果如图7,图中 展示了调制频率分别为20 GHz、25 GHz与30 GHz,调制深度均为28π,脉冲的峰值功率均为700 W 时薄膜 铌酸锂波导中的光谱的演化情况。因为调制频率的不同,电光调制产生的脉冲的脉宽也不同,在三种调制 频率下的脉冲信号的脉宽分别为270 fs、220 fs和180 fs,在这三种调制频率下,光谱产生倍频程超连续展宽 所需要的波导距离是不同的。在20 GHz、25 GHz和30 GHz时产生倍频程的超连续展宽所用的波导长度分 别为5.5 mm、5.2 mm和4.5 mm。因此在相同的调制深度与输入脉冲的峰值功率下,随着调制频率的增加, 输入信号光谱的非线性展宽效果就越好,产生覆盖倍频程的超连续谱展宽所需要的波导长度也就会更短。



图7 不同调制频率时波导中光谱的演化过程

Fig.7 Spectral evolution in the LN waveguide under different modulation frequencies

3 结论

本文仿真研究了基于薄膜铌酸锂调制器的电光频梳和飞秒脉冲产生,并利用该飞秒脉冲在一段薄膜铌酸 锂波导中实现覆盖倍频程的超连续谱产生和倍频信号产生。利用对片上薄膜铌酸锂调制器的仿真,在 30 GHz的调制频率下,产生了180 fs的电光调制信号,脉冲信号的能量为126.4 pJ,利用该信号在一段薄膜铌 酸锂波导中产生了覆盖倍频程的超连续光谱。还探究了脉冲的脉宽与能量对覆盖倍频程的超连续谱产生的 影响,并针对不同的脉冲脉宽提出在此脉宽下产生覆盖倍频程的超连续谱所需的能量,并分析了脉冲脉宽和 能量在覆盖倍频程的超连续谱产生时的对应关系。最后,探究了在不同的调制频率下,薄膜铌酸锂波导中光 谱演化的不同过程,为实现基于片上调制光梳在薄膜铌酸锂波导中产生倍频程的超连续光谱奠定了基础。

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Supercontinuum Spectroscopy of Thin Film Lithium Niobate Waveguide Based on Modulated Optical Frequency Comb

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Abstract: Optical frequency comb is a kind of multi-wavelength laser source with uniform and coherent frequency lines. Recently, the application of optical frequency comb in different fields has been expanding, such as spectroscopy, atomic clock, optical communication and microwave photonics. In the past decades, there are three main methods to generate optical frequency comb: firstly, optical frequency comb is generated by model locked lasers with a fixed repetition frequency. However, this method is limited by the model locked lasers, and it has small adjustable range and inflexibility. Secondly, optical frequency comb is generated on micro ring or cavity with great Kerr nonlinearity on chip, and the micro ring and cavity are easily affected by temperature in this method. Third, optical frequency comb is generated by electro-optic modulation using electro-optic effect. This method is generally used to generate optical frequency comb outside the chip due to the limitation of electro-optic modulator. Supercontinuum traditionally is generated by inputting MHz femtosecond pulse into a highly nonlinear waveguide to broaden its spectrum. Recently, lithium niobate materials stand out among many materials because of its strong linear electro-optic effect and high modulation bandwidth. With the integrated lithium niobate modulator, ultra-low optical loss, high modulation bandwidth and low RF drive voltage can be achieved simultaneously. Moreover, integrated lithium niobate has become an ideal platform in nonlinear optics because of its large second-order nonlinear index and high third-order nonlinearity. In this paper, we use the push-pull Mach Zehnder modulation and a cascade phase modulator integrated on the lithium niobate platform to generate optical frequency comb, and then let the signal go through a dispersion compensation module to compress the time domain waveform into a femtosecond pulse. At last, the signal is input into the lithium niobite waveguide which has great second-order nonlinear and third-order nonlinear to generate the second harmonic in the waveguide. Then the second harmonic interferes with the fundamental wave to generate a supercontinuum spectrum. In this paper, our mathematical model includes both second-order and third-order nonlinear, and the process of generating the second harmonic and supercontinuum spectrum is simulated in numerical simulation. Firstly, we use the cascade lithium niobite to generate a pulse with 180 fs pulse width and 126.4 pJ energy. Then this femtosecond pulse is input into the lithium niobite waveguide to generate the supercontinuum spectrum by the nonlinear effect of lithium niobite. We analyze the spectrum evolution under different energy of input pulse. In the simulation, we discuss the appearance of dispersion wave in the process of supercontinuum. Then we make a simulation on smaller modulation depth in order to get a wider pulse signal, and observe the effect of different input energies on supercontinuum broadening under this modulation depth. Comparing the energy required for the supercontinuum broadening of the optical spectrum with the modulation depth of 21π and 28π , it can be found that the wider the pulse width is, the narrower the 10 dB bandwidth of the spectrum is, the higher the energy required to generate the supercontinuum spectrum is. Moreover, when the modulation depth is 21π , the spectral width is about 75% of the modulation depth of 28π , and the pulse width is about 1.25 times of the modulation depth of 28π . However, after passing through the same section of waveguide, the supercontinuum spectrum also needs about 3 times of the energy when the modulation depth is 28π . Therefore, we believe that the pulse width, namely the width of the spectrum, has a greater impact on the supercontinuum broadening of the signal spectrum than the energy of the input pulse. This work lists the pulse width, spectrum width and input energy of input pulse when the supercontinuum spectrum is generated in different modulation depths. At last, we also observe the relationship between the pulse width and input energy in a figure, and conclude that the input energy will increase approximately square with the decreasing of pulse width.

Key words: Lithium niobate; Optical frequency comb; Electro-optic modulation; Supercontinuum; Nonlinear optics

OCIS Codes: 130.3730; 320.6629; 320.7110

Foundation item: National Natural Science Foundation of China(Nos. 61875122, 61922056)