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多模光纤作可饱和吸收体的锁模光纤激光器

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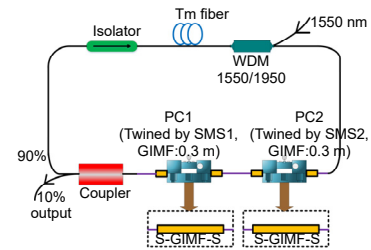
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摘要: 本文报道了一种新兴的锁模方式—多模干涉锁模。这种锁模方式结构简单, 搭建方便。在单模光纤激光器中熔接二段短的渐变折射率多模光纤, 利用这种单模-多模-单模(SMS)结构的模式干涉效应实现可饱和吸收机制, 从而实现锁模脉冲输出。SMS结构实现锁模需要对多模光纤的长度进行精确控制, 本文提出将SMS结构缠绕进偏振控制器中, 通过理论推导偏振控制器对多模光纤中传输光相位的调控, 以实现可饱和吸收效应。在263 mW泵浦功率下实现了24.83 MHz重复频率的传统孤子脉冲输出, 其脉冲间隔为40.12 ns, 信噪比为50.8 dB, 中心波长为1881.7 nm。通过调节偏振控制器和泵浦功率实现孤子分子与传统孤子脉冲的转换。在410 mW的泵浦阈值下实现了25 MHz重复频率的孤子分子脉冲输出, 其脉冲间隔为40.3 ns, 信噪比为54.4 dB, 中心波长为1887.60 nm。

关键词: 光纤激光器; 锁模激光器; 单模-多模-单模光纤结构; 非线性多模干涉

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Mode-locked fiber laser with multimode fiber as saturable absorber

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Abstract: We demonstrate a new mode-locking method: multimode interference mode-locking. This method is simple and convenient in construction. It is only necessary to fuse two short pieces of graded-index multimode fiber in a single-mode fiber laser, which uses the mode interference effect of single-mode multimode single-mode (SMS) structure to achieve saturable absorption mechanism. In order to realize the mode-locking of the SMS structure, it is

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necessary to precisely control the length of multimode fiber. We propose to coil the SMS structure into the polarization controller. By theoretically deriving the polarization controller to adjust the phase of transmission light in a multimode fiber, the saturable absorption effect can be achieved. Under the 263 mW pump power, a stable 24.83 MHz repetition frequency fundamental frequency mode-locked pulse output was realized, where the pulse interval was 40.12 ns, the signal-to-noise ratio was 50.8 dB, and the center wavelength was 1881.7 nm. The conversion between soliton molecules and traditional soliton can be realized by adjusting the polarization controller and pump power. Under the pump threshold of 410 mW, a stable 25 MHz repetition frequency soliton molecular mode-locked pulse output was realized, where the pulse interval was 40.3 ns, the signal-to-noise ratio was 54.4 dB, and the center wavelength was 1887.60 nm.

Keywords: fiber laser; mode-locked laser; single-mode multimode single-mode fiber structure; nonlinear multimode interference

1 引言

近年来,掺铈锁模光纤激光器以结构紧凑、脉冲宽度窄、峰值功率高等特点引起了研究者的广泛关注,在材料加工、气体检测、生物医学、激光雷达等方面具有重要的应用前景^[1-4]。利用被动锁模技术产生超短脉冲,且光开关的非线性光子饱和和吸收特性决定了超短脉冲的时域和频域^[5-6]。与此同时,可饱和吸收体(saturable absorption, SA)是确定锁模性能的关键器件。

在 SA 中,半导体可饱和吸收镜(semiconductor saturable absorber mirror, SESAM)占主导地位,它可以提供 SA 的各种特性^[7-9]。但是,SESAM 价格昂贵,并且受频带限制。以石墨烯为代表的许多一维(1D)和二维(2D)层状材料(MoS₂, WS₂)已被证明可以作为可饱和吸收体^[10],但是,这些 SA 的制造过程较复杂且具有较低的损伤阈值^[11-13],而基于非线性偏振旋转或非线性放大器环形镜的 SA 稳定性较差,容易受到环境干扰^[12-15]。因此,需要对基于新材料的全光开关进行探索和研究,以解决当前光开关的问题。近几年,基于多模光纤模式干涉的可饱和吸收体效应被提出,引起了国内外研究者的普遍关注^[16-18]。2013年, Nazemosadat 和 Mafic 从理论上提出单模-多模-单模(SMF-MMF-SMF, SMS)结构在锁模光纤激光器中起 SA 的作用^[19]。2015年, Fu 等人报道了基于 SMS 的 Q 开关全光纤激光器^[20]。2017年,王兆坤等人在渐变折射率多模光纤(GIMF)上增加微米级的阶跃折射率多模光纤,消除了 GIMF 长度限制,实现了锁模操作,同年该课题组使用拉伸的 GIMF 获得稳定的锁模输出脉冲^[21]。2018年, Wang 等人报告了基于 SMS 的孤子脉冲光纤激光器,该结构在 GIMF 中引入了内部微腔,并将其用作非线性光学开关^[22]。2019年,张宏伟等人

通过将 GIMF 缠绕在偏振控制器(PC)的拨片上来改善 SMS 的锁模特性,获得了传统孤子脉冲^[23]。与其他类型的 SA 相比, SMS 具有结构简单、稳定性好、损伤阈值高的优点。这些优点使激光器能够获得更高的脉冲能量和峰值功率。然而,在实践中难以实现基于 SMS 的 GIMF 长度的精确控制,例如在微腔中进行微米级操作以及对 GIMF 进行拉伸操作^[18]。因此研究基于 PC 的 SMS-SA 具有重要意义。

本文提出了一种基于多模光纤作可饱和吸收体的 2 μm 锁模光纤激光器。将 SMS 作为可饱和吸收体缠绕至 PC 上,通过旋转 PC 角度实现锁模操作。在 263 mW 泵浦功率下实现了稳定的锁模脉冲输出,其重复频率为 24.83 MHz,脉冲间隔 40.12 ns,信噪比为 50.8 dB,中心波长 1881.7 nm。通过调节 PC 和泵浦功率,可以将传统孤子脉冲转换至孤子分子脉冲。当泵浦功率为 410 mW 时,实现孤子分子锁模脉冲输出,其重复频率为 25 MHz,脉冲间隔 40.3 ns,信噪比 54.4 dB,中心波长 1887.60 nm。实验表明,这种可饱和吸收体结构简单,且能够解决精确控制 GIMF 长度的难题,为 2 μm 锁模脉冲的产生提出了一种有效的手段。

2 理论推导

被用作可饱和吸收体的 SMS 结构如图 1 所示,其中 GIMF(GI 50/125 μm, YOFC)的长度为 L 。多模干涉效应(MMI)是指激光由单模光纤耦合至多模光纤时,会在多模光纤中产生模式干涉叠加的现象。这些叠加的模式具有共同的周期性变化,在某些特定位置会同相位叠加,这种现象被称为自成像效应。在具有高功率的非线性状态下,自相位调制(self-phase modulation, SPM)和交叉相位调制(cross-phase modulation, XPM)会影响每种模式的传播常数,从而改变

GIMF 中光的拍频长度, 导致 SMF 与 GIMF 之间的耦合效率发生改变^[24]。因此, 随着输入光功率的增加, 从 GIMF 到 SMF 的相对传输功率发生改变。Mafic^[19]指出, 如果将 GIMF 的长度精确选择为拍频长度 $L\pi$, 则在线性情况下, 相对传输功率最小。此外, 随着输入功率的增加, 相对传输功率也会增加, 直至达到最大值。因此, 低功率信号会减弱, 高功率信号会通过, 这表明基于 PC 的 SMS 结构具有 SA 的潜力^[24-25]。

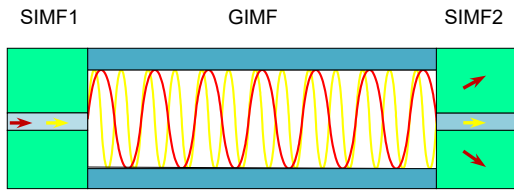


图 1 SMS 饱和吸收器原理图
Fig. 1 The schematic of SMS saturable absorber

为了进一步描述与 PC 缠绕在一起的 SMS 结构的非线性吸收机理, 从理论上分析了 GIMF 中 MMI 的 Kerr 效应^[26-27]。假设 SMF1、GIMF 和 SMF2 的纤芯中心对齐, 可以忽略模式转换。激光通过 GIMF 的光场表达式为^[28-29]

$$E_{MM}(r, \varphi, z) = e^{-i\beta_1 z} \sum_{n=1}^N C_n e_n(r, \varphi, z) e^{-i(\beta_n - \beta_1)z}, \quad (1)$$

其中: C_n 为模式扩展系数, β_1 和 β_n 分别为基本模式和第 n 个激励模式的传播常数。所有模式均满足以下条件:

$$\Delta\beta_n L = m\pi. \quad (2)$$

根据公式:

$$\Delta\beta_n = \beta_1 - \beta_j \text{ 和 } \Delta n_{\text{eff},n} = \frac{(\beta_1 - \beta_j)\lambda_0}{2\pi},$$

可得:

$$\Delta n_{\text{eff},n} L = \frac{m\lambda_0}{2}, \quad (3)$$

其中: λ_0 是中心波长。式(3)表明, SMS-SA 的可饱和吸收取决于有效折射率系数、中心波长和 GIMF 的长度。为了克服 SMS-SA 结构对 GIMF 长度精确控制的限制, 将 SMS 缠绕到 PC 上。PC 上的光纤因应力弯曲而产生双折射, 经过双折射光纤的激光将产生非线性相移。相移的大小与双折射的程度有关, 并且通过调节 PC 叶片的角度来改变双折射的程度。非线性相移和双折射的关系表达式为^[11]

$$\Delta\phi_{NL} = \gamma L(1-B)(P_x - P_y), \quad (4)$$

其中: γ 是非线性系数, B 是双折射度, P_x 和 P_y 是两个偏振分量的幂。因此, 所有模式均满足以下条件:

$$\Delta\beta_n L + \Delta\phi_{NL} = m\pi, \quad (5)$$

和

$$\Delta n_{\text{eff},n} L = \left(\frac{m}{2} - \frac{\Delta\phi_{NL}}{2\pi}\right)\lambda_0. \quad (6)$$

由式(4)~式(6)可得, 双折射引起的非线性相移会改变所有模式之间的相位差。因此, 该结构放宽了对用于模式锁定的 SMS-SA 结构的精确长度要求。

3 结果与讨论

2 μm 被动锁模掺铥光纤激光器的结构如图 2 所示, 该激光器为全光纤环形腔结构。增益介质选取一段长度为 2 m 的掺铥光纤(SCF-TM-9/125, Coractive), 其数值孔径为 0.15。两个 SMS 结构中 GIMF 的长度均为 0.3 m, 总腔长为 8.1 m。泵浦源由一个波长 1.5 μm 的分布式反馈激光器(DFB)和一个铒镱共掺光纤放大器(EYDFA)组成, 谐振腔内有两个 PC 和一个偏振无关的隔离器(isolator, ISO), 其中 ISO 用来保证环形腔内激光单向运转。1 \times 2 光耦合器(optical coupler, OC)的 90% 输出端口用以提供腔内反馈, 10% 端口作为测试端。输出脉冲由带宽为 10 GHz 的 2 μm 波段光电探测器探测, 其脉冲信号的波形由带宽为 32 GHz 的高速示波器(Agilent, DSO-X 93204A)观测, 光谱由光谱分析仪(YOKOGAWA, AQ6375)记录, 最小分辨率为 0.05 nm。频谱分析仪(Agilent, N9030A)用来测试输出脉冲的射频频谱, 频谱分析仪的频率范围为 3 GHz。此外, 2 μm 被动锁模掺铥光纤激光器输出脉冲的自相关迹由自相关仪(FR-103XL)测量。

实验中, 增加泵浦源的泵浦功率, 当泵浦功率为

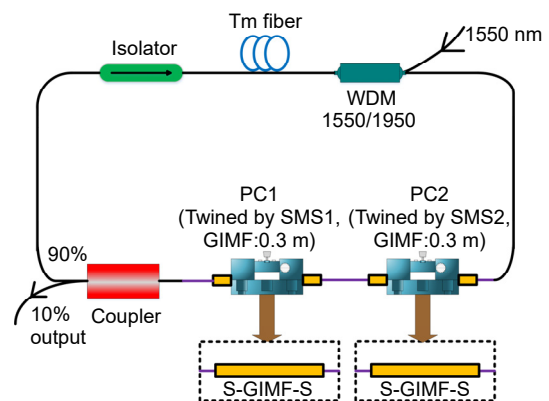


图 2 由 SMF-GIMF-SMF 结构锁模的 Tm 光纤激光器的示意图

Fig. 2 The schematic of the Tm fiber laser mode-locked by a SMF-GIMF-SMF structure

68 mW 时, 该激光器工作在连续光区域。继续增加泵浦功率, 通过调节谐振腔内的 PC 来改变偏振状态实现锁模操作, 当泵浦功率增加至 263 mW 时, 激光器可以产生传统孤子脉冲。进一步将泵浦功率增加至 360 mW 时, 该激光器仍能保持稳定的单脉冲运行, 其输出特性如图 3 所示。图 3(a) 为传统孤子脉冲的输出光谱, 对称分布的 Kelly 边带是传统孤子锁模的典型特征。光谱的中心波长和 3 dB 带宽分别为 1887.60 nm 和 3.83 nm。图 3(b) 为传统孤子的脉冲序列, 脉冲间隔为 40.12 ns, 恰好对应于光脉冲在谐振腔内传输一周所用的时间。传统孤子的自相关如图 3(c) 所示, 采用双曲正割型脉冲函数拟合后, 测得孤子脉冲宽度为 4.89 ps。对应的时间带宽积为 1.573, 明显大于变换极限 0.315, 表明脉冲是啁啾的。为了进一步证明锁模光纤激光器处于高稳定状态, 我们测量了该脉冲的射频频谱, 基频脉冲信噪比(signal-to-noise ratio, SNR) 为 50.8 dB, 如图 3(d) 所示。实验结果表明, 该 2 μm 被动锁模掺铽光纤激光器处于稳定锁模状态。

通过调节 PC 和泵浦功率可以实现传统孤子与孤子分子的转换。将泵浦功率增加至 410 mW, 获得的孤子分子输出特性如图 4 所示。图 4(a) 为孤子分子的输出光谱, 中心波长为 1888.12 nm。光谱的中心正好

是两个干涉条纹的中心, 表明两个束缚孤子之间的相位差为 π 。此外, 光谱的两个最低阶边带之间的干涉条纹数 $N=6$, 对应的调制周期为 2.72 nm。孤子分子的脉冲序列如图 4(b) 所示, 脉冲间隔为 40.3 ns。图 4(c) 为孤子分子脉冲的自相关轨迹, 脉冲间隔为 4.35 ps, 与调制周期相对应。此外, 自相关迹中三个峰的光强比接近 1: 2: 1, 并且脉冲宽度相同, 表明具有固定间距的两个束缚孤子具有相同的脉冲宽度和幅度。图 4(d) 为孤子分子的射频频谱, 信噪比为 54.4 dB, 说明该锁模光纤激光器处于高稳定锁模运转。为了确定锁模操作是否是受 SMS-SA 结构的饱和吸收效应影响, 我们将 SMS-SA 结构从谐振腔中移除, 此时未观察到锁模状态。

在基于多模干涉效应的 2 μm 锁模光纤激光器中, 通过增加泵浦功率和改变谐振腔的偏振状态, 可以实现不同工作模式的转化。该激光器的工作模式以及相应的输出功率和泵浦功率之间的关系如图 5 所示, 平均输出功率与泵浦功率呈线性增加。当泵浦功率高于 263 mW 时, 通过调节 PC, 可以观察到传统孤子产生。泵浦功率增加至 380 mW, 轻微调节 PC, 可以实现稳定的孤子分子脉冲输出, 其最大输出功率为 3.62 mW。为了证明 SMS-SA 的可饱和吸收作用, 通过改变

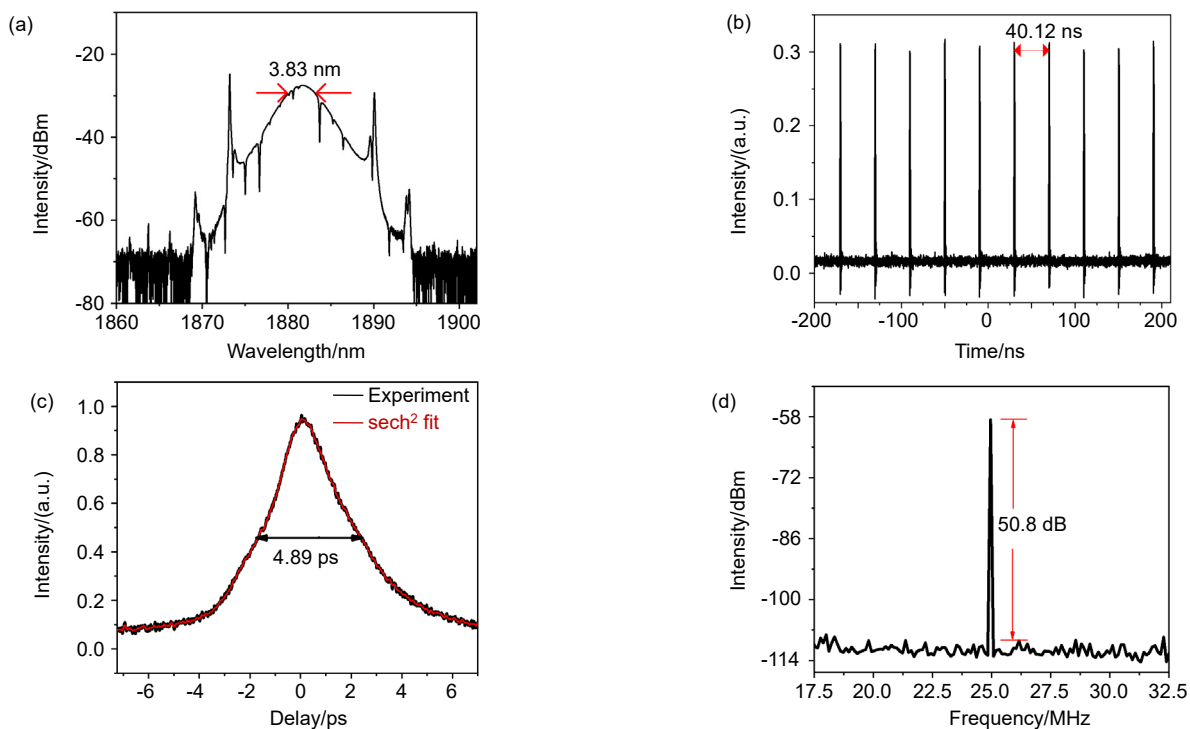


图 3 传统孤子实验结果。(a) 脉冲光谱; (b) 脉冲序列; (c) 光学自相关迹线; (d) 24.83 MHz 基频的 RF 频谱

Fig. 3 Experimental results of traditional soliton.

(a) Laser spectrum; (b) Pulse sequence; (c) Single pulse; (d) RF spectrum at the fundamental frequency of 24.83 MHz

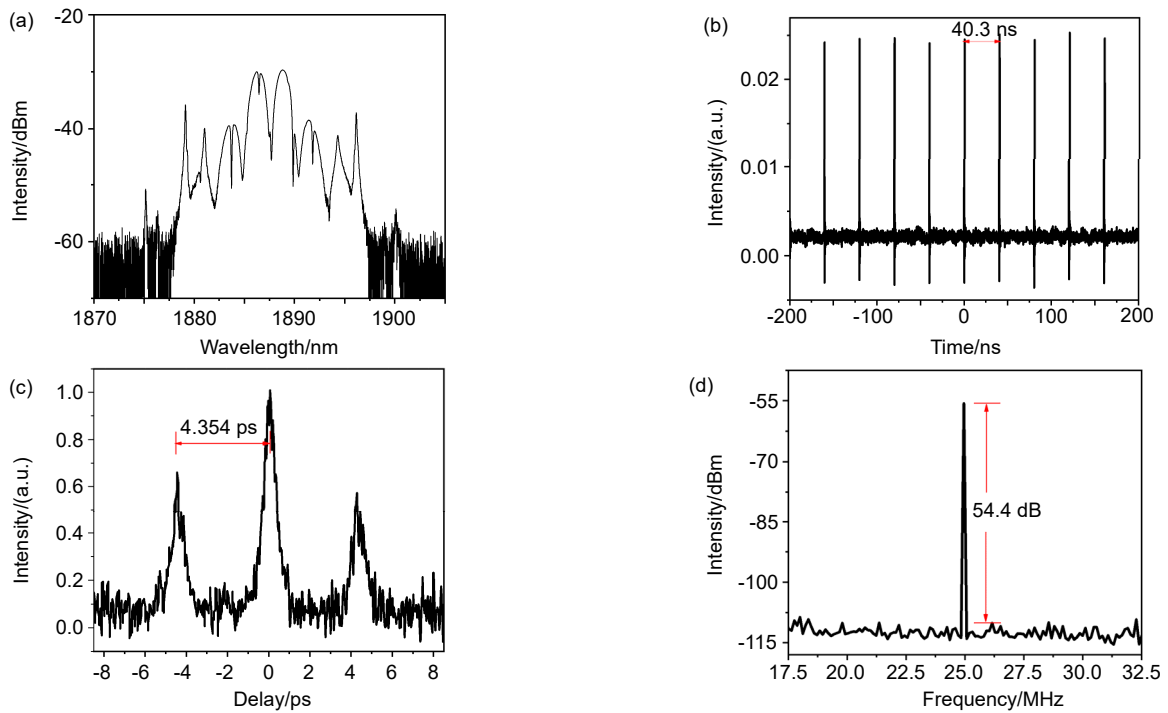


图 4 孤子分子实验结果。(a) 脉冲光谱; (b) 脉冲序列; (c) 光学自相关迹线; (d) 25 MHz 基本频率的 RF 频谱

Fig. 4 Experimental results of soliton pairs.

(a) Laser spectrum; (b) Pulse sequence; (c) Optical autocorrelation trace; (d) RF spectrum at the fundamental frequency of 25 MHz

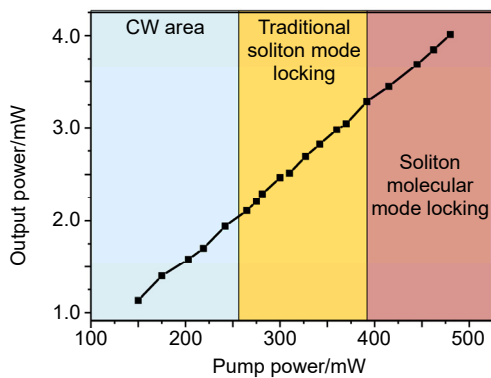


图 5 光纤激光器的输出功率与泵浦功率的关系

Fig. 5 The output power of the fiber laser versus pump power

SMS-SA 中 GIMF 的长度来观测激光器的锁模情况。当结构中其中一段 GIMF 的长度分别为 0.5 m、0.7 m 和 0.9 m 时, 激光器均可以实现稳定的锁模操作, 表明可以通过将 SMS 缠绕到挤压式 PC 中来降低 GIMF 作为 SA 的长度精确控制要求。最后, 在 410 mW 的泵浦功率下, 通过测量输出脉冲的光谱来评估光纤激光器的稳定性。在 10 h 内, 每隔一小时记录一次输出光谱, 其结果如图 6(a)所示。孤子分子的光谱几乎保持不变, 表明该激光器具有良好的稳定性。图 6(b)为信噪比随时间变化的曲线, 长时间内信噪比的波动小于 1 dB, 较小的波动说明该光纤激光器性能稳定。

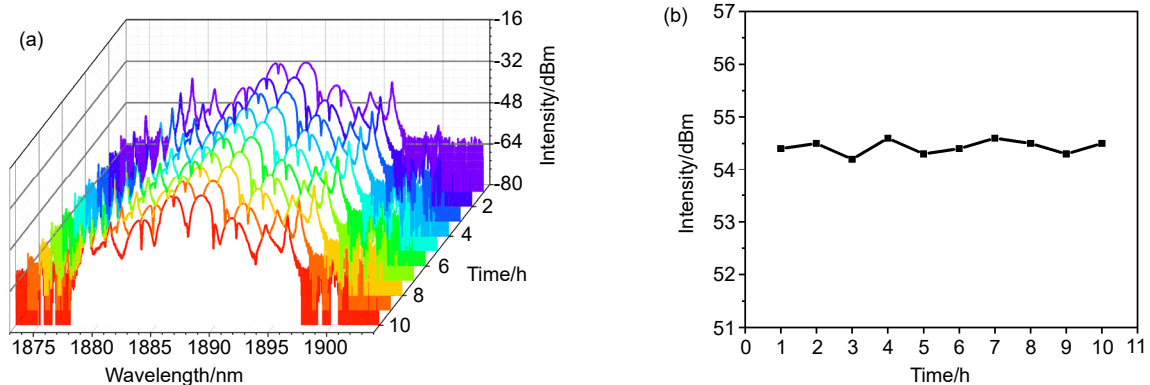


图 6 10 h 内的长期稳定性测试结果。(a) 光谱; (b) 信噪比

Fig. 6 Long term stability test results over 10 hours period. (a) Spectrum; (b) Signal to noise ratio

4 结 论

本文报道了一种基于 SMS-SA 结构锁模的光纤激光器, 通过将 SMS-SA 缠绕在 PC 中实现了孤子脉冲与孤子分子的锁模操作。当激光器处于锁模状态时, 通过旋转 PC 可以有效的放宽对 GIMF 长度的严格限制。此种结构的可饱和吸收体易操作且成本较低。除此之外通过调节泵浦功率和腔内的偏振控制器, 可以实现孤子分子和传统孤子脉冲的转换, 其中, 传统孤子脉冲的中心波长为 1887.6 nm, 脉冲宽度为 4.89 ps; 孤子分子的中心波长为 1888.12 nm, 脉冲宽度为 4.35 ps。这种简单的 SMS-SA 结构为全光纤锁模超快激光器提供了新的思路。

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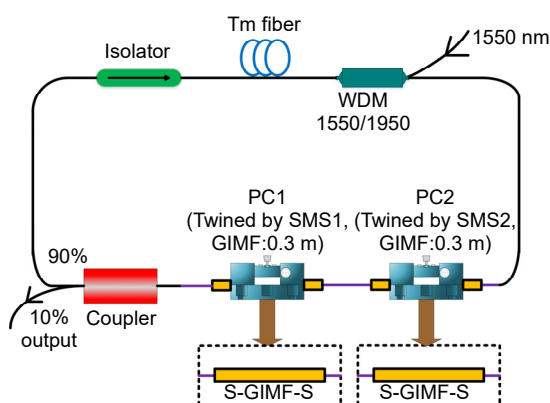
Mode-locked fiber laser with multimode fiber as saturable absorber

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The schematic of the Tm fiber laser mode-locked by a SMF-GIMF-SMF structure

Overview: In recent years, the wide application of Thulium-doped fiber ultrafast mode-locked lasers in the wavelength band of about 2 μm due to its compact structure, narrow pulse width and high peak power has attracted great attention. It has important application prospects in material processing, gas detection, biomedicine, laser radar, etc. The ultrashort pulses in fiber lasers can be produced by using passive mode-locking technology produces. The key device that determines the mode-locking performance is the saturable absorber (SA). The SA with SMS structure has the advantages of simple structure, long-term stability, and high damage threshold. These advantages enable the laser to obtain higher pulse energy and peak power. In recent years, researchers have published many related studies on SMS as a SA. In 2013, Nazemosadat and Mafi theoretically proposed to use the SMF-GIMF-SMF (SMS) structure as the SA in the mode-locked fiber laser. In 2015, S. Fu demonstrated a Q-switched all-fiber laser using SMS as a SA. In 2017, Z. K. Wang et al. used stretched GIMF to obtain a stable pulse. In 2018, N. Wang reported the observation of SMS-based soliton, which introduced an internal microcavity in GIMF and used it as a nonlinear optical switch. In 2019, Zhang et al. improved the mode-locking properties of SMS by coiling it on the paddles of polarization controller (PC) in 1.5 μm band. It can be seen from the reports that it is difficult to achieve precise control of the length of SMS-based multimode fiber in practice.

In this paper, we report a method based on nonlinear multimode interference in the 2 μm band, using single-mode fiber-gradient index multimode fiber (GIMF)-single-mode fiber (SMS) which are twined into the PC as mode-locked fiber laser with saturable absorber, and the gain medium is the 2 m Thulium-doped fiber. In the SA structure, two SMSs are fused together, and each SMS is twined into the PC. By properly adjusting the PC's paddles, we can easily achieve mode locking. This structure reduces the control accuracy of GIMF length. Such an all-fiber SA is based on nonlinear multimode interference. Basically, stable mode-locking operation is obtained under the pump threshold of 410 mW. We have obtained a stable soliton molecule with a shortest pulse duration of 40.3 ns, a corresponding repetition frequency of 25 MHz, and a center wavelength of 1887.60 nm. The signal-to-noise ratio of RF spectrum is 54.4 dB. The conversion between soliton molecules and traditional soliton can be realized by adjusting the PC and input power. Using SMS as SA has many potential applications in human eye-safe ultrafast photonics.

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