

DOI: 10.12086/oe.2022.210420

基于并联法布里-珀罗干涉仪的高灵敏度光纤气压传感器

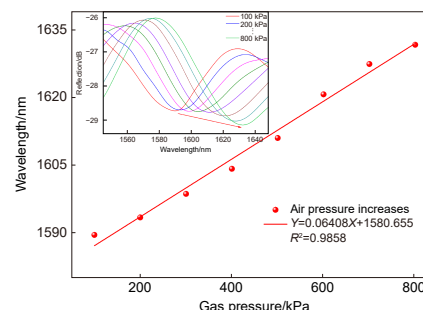
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摘要: 本文提出并制备了一个基于游标效应的高灵敏度光纤气压传感器。该传感器包含两个并联的法布里-珀罗干涉仪 (FPI), 它们均由单模光纤和一小截毛细管熔接构成, 分别作为传感腔和参考腔, 且其中传感腔的侧面刻蚀微通道, 以便于待测气体进入。俩干涉仪间较小的光程差导致传感器产生具有游标效应的叠加反射光谱, 气压灵敏度得到极大的提高, 达到~64 pm/kPa, 该值是单一 FPI 的~16 倍。另外, 实验结果显示, 该传感器对温度不敏感, 从而减少了环境温度对气压测量结果的影响。结构结实、气压灵敏度高等优点, 预示着该传感器在工业生产、气体检测等领域具有广阔的应用前景。

关键词: 光纤传感; 法布里-珀罗干涉仪; 游标效应; 气压

中图分类号: TP212

文献标志码: A



郭允, 吴玉纯, 王嘉浩, 等. 基于并联法布里-珀罗干涉仪的高灵敏度光纤气压传感器 [J]. 光电工程, 2022, 49(8): 210420
Guo Y, Wu Y C, Wang J H, et al. Highly sensitive gas-pressure sensor based on paralleled optical fiber Fabry-Perot interferometers[J]. *Opto-Electron Eng*, 2022, 49(8): 210420

Highly sensitive gas-pressure sensor based on paralleled optical fiber Fabry-Perot interferometers

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Abstract: A highly sensitive optical fiber sensor based on the Vernier effect is demonstrated for gas pressure sensing. It consists of two paralleled Fabry-Perot interferometers (FPIs), which are both produced by splicing a single-mode fiber to a short segment of capillary tube, acting as sensing cavity and reference cavity, respectively. The lateral wall of the sensing FPI is drilled with a micro-channel allowing gas to flow in. Due to the small optical path difference between the two FPI, the Vernier effect is caused in the reflected spectrum of the sensor. Thus, the gas-pressure sensitivity is significantly enhanced, achieving up to ~64 pm/kPa which is ~16 times higher than that

收稿日期: 2022-01-02; 收到修改稿日期: 2022-03-13

基金项目: 浙江省自然科学基金资助项目 (LY19F050010); 微光机电系统技术教育部重点实验室 (天津大学) 开放基金资助项目 (MOMST 2016-1)

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of a single FPI. Additionally, experimental results show that the sensor is insensitive to the surrounding temperature, which reduces the influence of ambient temperature on the measurement of gas pressure. The advantages of robust structure and high sensitivity of gas pressure indicate that the demonstrated sensor has a promising potential in industrial production, gas detection, and other fields.

Keywords: optical fiber sensor; Fabry-Perot interferometer; vernier effect; gas pressure

1 引言

光纤作为信息感知的重要媒介之一, 已被应用于弯曲、温度、应变、气压、振动等^[1-5]参数的传感测量。其中光纤气压传感器具有结构紧凑, 灵敏度高, 抗电磁干扰, 易于检测等优点, 得到广泛的关注。其传感机理包括光纤布拉格光栅 (FBG) 型^[5-6], 长周期光纤光栅 (LPFG) 型^[7]和各种干涉仪型^[8-10]气压传感器。其中基于光纤法布里-珀罗干涉仪 (FPI) 的气压传感器因结构紧凑、鲁棒性好、分辨率高等诸多优势而尤其受到研究者或用户的青睐。进一步, FPI 型光纤气压传感器又包括封闭腔和开放腔两种结构。前者工作于压力效应, 即气压对干涉腔的挤压导致其变形 (主要体现在腔长的变化) 引起 FPI 的干涉光谱发生漂移。

为提高测量的灵敏度, 通常将 FPI 的一个反射面用膜状结构来代替 (如石英薄膜、聚合物薄膜等)。如 Wei 等人^[11]将单模光纤与填充有聚二甲硅氧烷 (PDMS) 薄膜的空芯光纤 (HCF) 熔接, 形成封闭腔 FPI, 其中 PDMS 薄膜充当 FPI 的一个反射面。气压导致薄膜发生弹性形变, 从而引起干涉仪的腔长和干涉光谱发生变化, 该器件的气压灵敏度高达 52.143 nm/MPa。Liu 等人采用厚度约 170 nm 的二氧化硅薄膜, 将灵敏度提高至 12.22 nm/kPa^[12]; Ma 等人采用厚度仅数纳米的石墨烯薄膜, 实现了 39.4 nm/kPa 的超高气压灵敏度^[13]。显然, 膜越薄, 器件的气压灵敏度越高, 但同时也降低了这类器件的机械强度, 限制了测量范围。开放腔 FPI 气压传感器则是工作于折射率效应^[14-15], 一般谐振腔全开放或通过微槽或微通道与外界相通, 待测气体气压的变化导致谐振腔内介质的折射率发生微小变化, 从而引起干涉仪的反射光谱产生漂移。得益于 FPI 对腔内介质折射率的高灵敏特性, 该类传感器可实现气压的微小变化检测。如 Xu 等人采用双毛细管结构构成带微通道的纤内 FPI 实现气压的传感测量, 其灵敏度达到 4.147 nm/MPa^[16], 之后采用毛细管内嵌微球的结构构成复合腔型 FPI, 实现了带温度补偿功能的气压测量^[17]。开放腔 FPI 气压

传感器具有量程大, 结构结实的优点, 但是, 由于腔内气体折射率受其压强的调制十分有限, 因此开放腔 FPI 的气压灵敏度有限, 且明显低于薄膜式封闭腔 FPI。

近年, 光学游标效应的研究为传感器灵敏度的提高提供了可行性。如通过级联 FPI^[18-19]、萨格纳克 (Sagnac) 干涉仪^[20]或马赫-曾德干涉仪 (MZI)^[21-22]构成串联干涉仪结构, 利用串联的两干涉仪干涉谱自由光谱范围 (FSR) 相近的特点从而形成光学游标效应, 实现了较之单个干涉仪的灵敏度数倍或数十倍的气压、折射率或温度等物理量的传感测量。

本文结合开放式 FPI 和光学游标效应增敏技术, 提出了具有游标效应的并联 FPI 结构。实验结果显示该传感器的气压灵敏度高达~64 pm/kPa, 较之单一 FPI, 其灵敏度提高了约 16 倍。另一方面, 并联结构使得独立测量单个 FPI 的干涉谱变得简单, 从而方便实现高精度气压传感测量时所需的温度补偿功能。

2 传感器结构和基本原理

图 1 给出了基于游标效应的并联 FPI 光纤气压传感器结构示意图。两个基于石英毛细管的“三明治”结构 FPI 经 3 dB 耦合器构成并联结构, 这两个 FPI 具有相近的毛细管长度, 分别作为传感 FPI 和参考 FPI。其中传感 FPI 的腔长约为 156 μm , 其腔壁上包含一个用飞秒激光刻蚀的微通道, 便于待测气体进入腔内; 参考 FPI 为一密闭腔, 腔长约为 168 μm 。

如图 1(a), 毛细管与单模光纤 (SMF) 的界面充当 FPI 的两个反射面 M1 和 M2, 由于界面的反射率较低 (~4%), 此处的法布里-珀罗干涉可以简化为双光束干涉。则单个 FPI 的反射光强可以表示为

$$I = I_1 + I_2 + 2\sqrt{I_1 I_2} \cos\left(\frac{4\pi n L}{\lambda} + \pi\right), \quad (1)$$

式中: I_1 和 I_2 分别为单一 FPI 的前后反射面上的反射光强, $I_1 = r \cdot I_0$, $I_2 = (1-r)^2 r \cdot I_0$, I_0 和 r 分别为入射光强和反射率 ($r \approx 0.04$)^[23]; λ 为入射光的波长; n 为腔

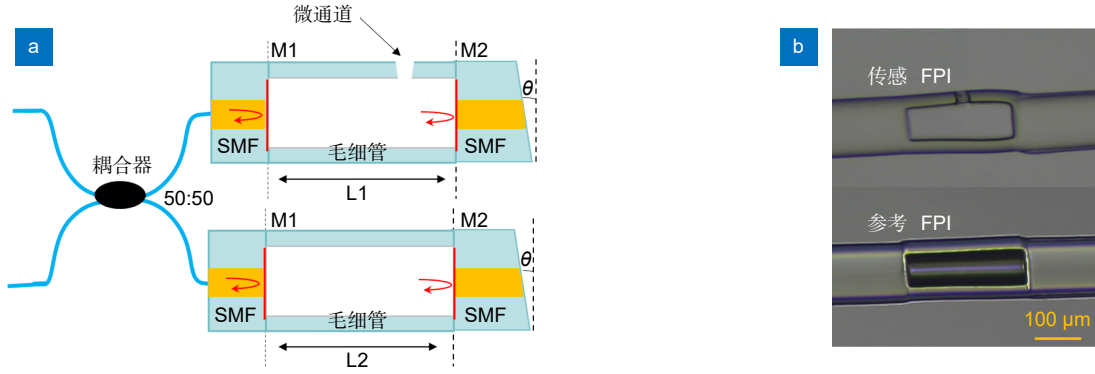


图 1 并联 FPI 光纤气压传感器 (a) 结构示意图和 (b) 显微镜照片

Fig. 1 (a) Schematic diagram and (b) micrograph of the proposed gas pressure sensor based on paralleled FPIs

内气体的折射率; L 为腔长, 传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的长度分别为 L_1 和 L_2 。当谐振腔前后界面反射光之间的相位差 $\Delta\phi$ 为 π 的奇数倍时, 对应反射光谱中出现极小值, 光谱中的波谷^[24]:

$$\Delta\phi = \frac{4\pi nL}{\lambda_m} + \pi = (2m+1)\pi, \quad (2)$$

式中: m 为整数, λ_m 为第 m 级干涉波谷的中心波长, 其值可以表示为

$$\lambda_m = \frac{2nL}{m}. \quad (3)$$

又因为 FPI 谐振腔内气体的折射率和腔长均受到气体气压的调制, 因此气压发生变化, 谐振波谷的中心波长也随之发生变化。也就是说, 可以通过测定 FPI 的反射谱中谐振波谷中心波长的漂移量来感知待测气压 P 的变化。进一步, 由式 (3), 可知气压传感的灵敏度为

$$\frac{d\lambda_m}{dP} = \lambda_m \left(\frac{1}{n} \frac{dn}{dP} + \frac{1}{L} \frac{dL}{dP} \right), \quad (4)$$

式中谐振腔内空气有效折射率 n 与其气压 P (单位: Pa) 之间存在关系^[25]:

$$n = 1 + \frac{2.8793 \times 10^{-9} P}{1 + 0.00367T}, \quad (5)$$

式中: T 为环境温度 (单位: $^{\circ}\text{C}$), 在实验中为室温 25°C 。文献表明, 该结构中气压对腔长的调制 ($\sim 0.015 \text{ nm/MPa}$)、小于对腔内空气有效折射率的影响^[26], 因此忽略 dL/dP 项, 气压传感灵敏度可简化为

$$S_{\text{FPI}} = \frac{d\lambda_m}{dP} = \frac{\lambda_m}{n} \frac{dn}{dP} = \frac{\lambda_m}{n} \cdot \frac{2.8793 \times 10^{-9}}{1 + 0.00367 \times 25}. \quad (6)$$

式 (6) 显示, 灵敏度为正数, 即随着气压的增大反射光谱发生红移, 且灵敏度随着谐振波长的增大而增大。

为实现游标效应, 图 1 中并联的传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 具有相近的腔长, 其独立的反射光谱自由光谱区 (free spectral range, FSR) (参考 FPI 自由光谱区和传感 FPI 自由光谱区分别用 R_{FSR} , S_{FSR} 表示) 也十分接近。并联后, 反射光谱叠加, 产生游标效应, 叠加谱包络呈现周期性变化, 且包络 (envelope) 的自由光谱区 (E_{FSR}) 可表示为

$$E_{\text{FSR}} = \frac{S_{\text{FSR}} \cdot R_{\text{FSR}}}{|S_{\text{FSR}} - R_{\text{FSR}}|} \approx R_{\text{FSR}} \cdot M, \quad (7)$$

式中: M 为反射光谱包络的放大因子; $S_{\text{FSR}} = \lambda^2/2n_1L_1$, $R_{\text{FSR}} = \lambda^2/2n_2L_2$ 分别对应传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的 FSR, n_1 和 n_2 分别为传感腔和参考腔内空气的折射率。

当传感 FPI 腔内空气气压变化导致其折射率发生变化时, 叠加光谱的包络相应出现漂移, 其灵敏度为: $S_E = M \cdot S_{\text{FPI}}$ 。由式 (6) 可知, 减小传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的自由光谱区差异, 即 $|S_{\text{FSR}} - R_{\text{FSR}}|$, 有助于提高游标效应的传感器气压灵敏度。

为了更加直观地表征传感器的游标效应特性, 根据式 (1), 对传感器的反射光谱进行了模拟仿真, 得传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的反射光谱如图 2(a) 所示, 以及单个传感 FPI 腔内气压变化前后的光谱对比如图 2(b)。建模参数: $L_1=156 \mu\text{m}$, $L_2=168 \mu\text{m}$, $n_1=n_2=1.000$, $r_1=r_2=0.04$ 。传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的 FSR 分别为 $\sim 7.70 \text{ nm}$ 和 $\sim 7.13 \text{ nm}$, 两者相近但不相等, 符合游标效应的产生条件。根据式 (7) 可得, 并联后放大因子 M 为 ~ 13.5 。图 2(b) 显示, 腔内气压变化 200 kPa , 单个传感 FPI 的反射光谱向长波长方向漂移约 0.76 nm , 对应气压灵敏度为 3.8 pm/kPa 。

图 3 显示了传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 并联后的叠加反

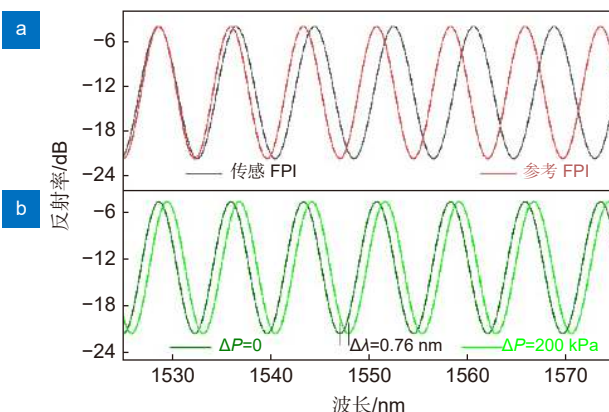


图 2 (a) 模拟计算得到的参考 FPI 和传感 FPI 的反射光谱;
(b) 单一传感 FPI 在不同气压下的反射光谱

Fig. 2 (a) Simulated reflection spectra of the sensing and reference FPIs, respectively;
(b) The reflection spectra of the single sensing FPI at different gas pressures

射光谱以及传感 FPI 腔内气压变化导致的叠加谱变化。传感 FPI 腔内气压变化 200 kPa 时, 空气有效折射率的改变导致绝对光谱的漂移量很小, 但是各个谐振波长的光强发生了显著的变化, 通过对光谱的极小值形成的包络进行三角函数拟合, 发现包络发生了明显的漂移, 向长波长方向漂移了 10.43 nm, 对应灵敏度为 52.15 pm/kPa, 该值约是单一传感 FPI 的 13.72 倍。

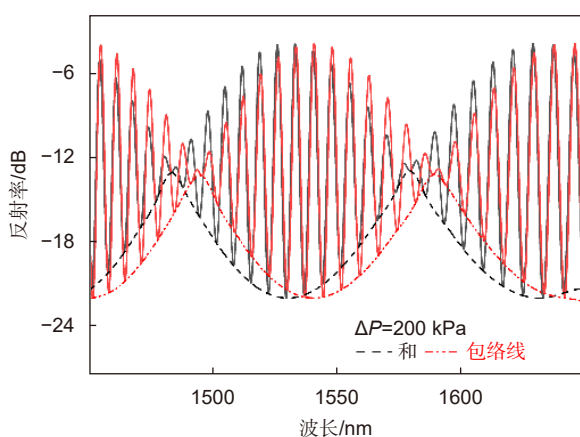


图 3 模拟计算气压变化 200 kPa 的
并联 FPI 气压响应特性

Fig. 3 Calculated reflection spectra of the
paralleled FPIs for gas pressure variation of 200 kPa

3 实验装置及结果分析

3.1 实验装置

首先, 我们制备了如图 1 所示的传感 FPI 和参考 FPI。利用光纤熔接机 (Fujikura, FSM-80S) 将一段

内径为 75 μm , 外径为 127 μm 的石英毛细管 (Polymicro Technologies, TSP075150) 熔接于两段单模光纤之间形成“三明治”结构。借助显微镜, 可以精确切割以控制其间的毛细管长度, 测得传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 对应的毛细管长度分别约为 156 μm 和 168 μm 。再利用飞秒激光微加工系统将飞秒激光聚焦在传感 FPI 的毛细管侧壁上以刻蚀一微小通道, 便于待测气体可以顺利进入谐振腔内。飞秒激光的波长约为 800 nm, 脉冲频率 5 kHz, 单脉冲能量约为 0.6 mJ, 选用 20 \times 聚焦物镜, $NA=0.4$ 。如图 1(b) 所示, 传感 FPI 侧壁上微通道的直径约为 15 μm 。

然后, 我们搭建了如图 4 的光纤气压传感实验装置。宽带光源 (波长范围 1450 nm~1650 nm) 发出的光经光纤耦合器到达传感 FPI 和参考 FPI。传感 FPI 置于气室内, 可通过手动压力泵 (Wisdom Billiton, Y039) 改变气室内及 FPI 腔内的气压, 具体气压值可通过气压计 (ZHITUO, YB-150) 实时测量。从传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 反射回来的光再经过光纤耦合器后由光谱分析仪 (OSA Yokogawa, AQ6370D) 接收, 并实时记录器件的反射光谱。

3.2 实验结果分析

首先, 我们对制备的两个 FPI 进行独立反射光谱的测量, 其结果如图 5(a)。传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的反射光谱消光比略有差异, 对应 FSR 分别为 7.00 nm 和 7.69 nm。并联后的反射叠加谱如图 5(b) 所示, 图中红色虚线是光谱极小值的连线, 即反射叠加谱的包络。

接着, 我们测试了单一传感 FPI 的气压响应特性, 如图 6(a) 所示。可看出, 单一传感 FPI 腔内气压增量从 100 kPa 到 800 kPa 变化过程中, 随着气压的增大, 传感 FPI 的反射光谱向长波长方向发生漂移, 谐振波谷中心波长总的漂移量约 2.89 nm。图 6(b) 给出了升

压和降压两个过程中每个特征气压对应的追踪谐振波谷中心波长。可以看出, 该器件具有良好的重复性。对升压过程测量的数据进行线性拟合, 发现拟合系数 $R^2=0.9992$, 表征反射光谱的漂移量与腔内气压存在良好的线性关系, 其斜率表征灵敏度, 约为 4.1 pm/kPa,

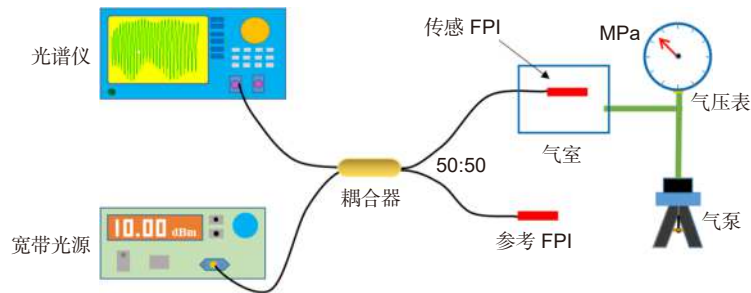


图 4 气压传感测试装置示意图
Fig. 4 Experimental setup for gas-pressure sensing

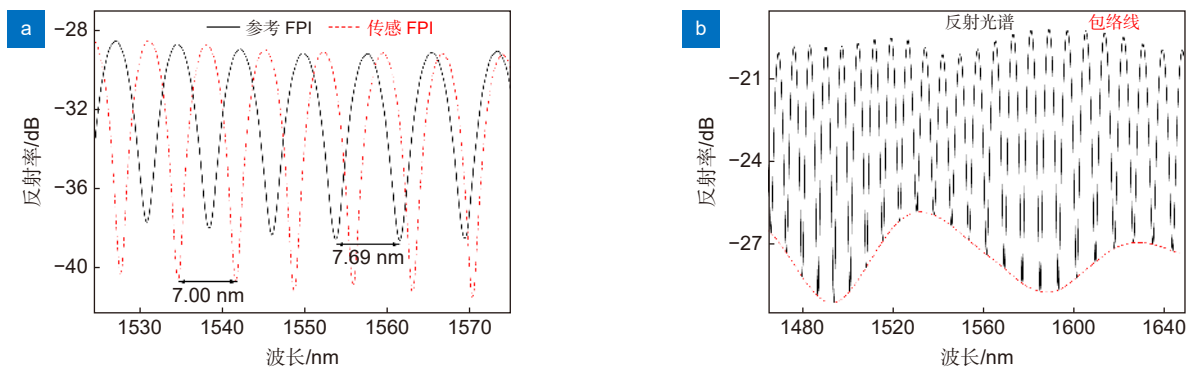


图 5 (a) 传感 FPI 和参考 FPI 的反射光谱; (b) 并联 FPI 的反射光谱
Fig. 5 (a) Measured reflection spectrum of the sensing and reference FPIs, respectively;
(b) The reflection spectrum of the device with paralleled FPIs

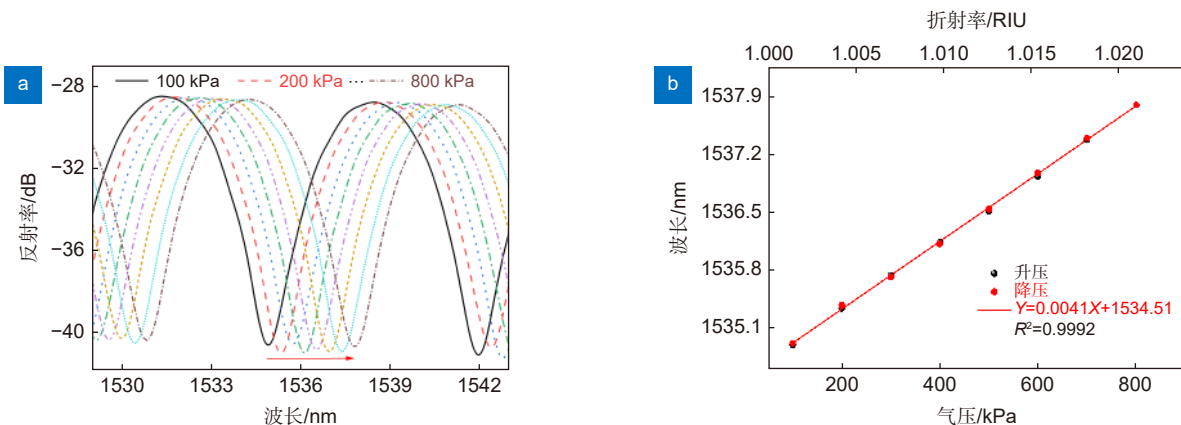


图 6 单一传感 FPI 的反射光谱气压响应。
(a) 不同气压下的反射谱线; (b) 谐振波谷中心波长与气压之间的关系
Fig. 6 Response of the sensing FPI to gas pressure.
(a) The reflection spectra at different pressures; (b) The relationship between resonances dip wavelength and gas pressure

与式 (6) 的理论值接近。

接下来, 我们测试了并联 FPI 的气压响应特性。图 7(a) 显示了并联 FPI 在不同气压下的反射光谱。随着腔内气压的增大, 干涉光谱向长波长方向发生漂移。图 7(b) 显示通过追踪谐振波谷中心波长直接解调气压的结果。使用最小二乘法线性拟合, 得拟合系数 $R^2=0.9919$, 线性函数的斜率代表气压灵敏度, 其值为 0.574 pm/kPa 。

基于图 7(a) 的反射光谱, 获得不同气压下反射光谱的包络, 如图 8(a) 所示。显然, 并联 FPI 结构的反射叠加光谱的包络, 随着气压的增大而向长波长方向发生明显漂移。追踪包络线中的特定波谷, 获得其中心波长与气压的关系如图 8(b) 所示。应用最小二乘法对数据进行线性拟合, 得到拟合系数 $R^2=0.9858$ 。拟合线的斜率对应气压灵敏度, 其值为 $\sim 64 \text{ pm/kPa}$, 是单一传感 FPI 灵敏度 (4.1 pm/kPa) 的 ~ 16 倍, 是叠加光谱直接追踪波谷解调法的 111 倍。该

灵敏度也远高于已报导的马赫-曾德结构传感器 ($\sim 9 \text{ pm/kPa}$)^[27]、FPI ($< 5 \text{ nm/MPa}$)^[28-29], 光纤光栅结构传感器 ($\sim 1.57 \text{ pm/kPa}$)^[30], 等。

进一步, 我们在标准大气压下测试了该器件对环境温度的响应特性。将传感 FPI 置于温控腔中, 内部温度从室温上升至 $65 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, 每间隔 $5 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ 待器件温度达到平衡后, 记录一次器件的反射光谱, 结果如图 9(a) 所示。追踪 1500 nm 附近具有较高消光比的某一谐振波谷中心波长, 得其与环境温度的关系如图 9(b) 所示。显然, 在 $25 \text{ }^\circ\text{C} \sim 65 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ 的温度范围内, 该谐振波谷中心波长表现出微小的抖动, 其最大值与最小值间的差异约仅为 7 pm , 意味着该器件对温度不敏感, 这是因为器件结构中的石英毛细管热膨胀系数极小, 约为 $5.5 \times 10^{-7} / ^\circ\text{C}$, 加之 FPI 腔内气体的热光系数仅为 $10^{-5} / ^\circ\text{C} \sim 10^{-6} / ^\circ\text{C}$, 两者导致的光程变化极小。实验结果意味着该器件受环境温度的影响极低, 这有利于气压的准确测量。

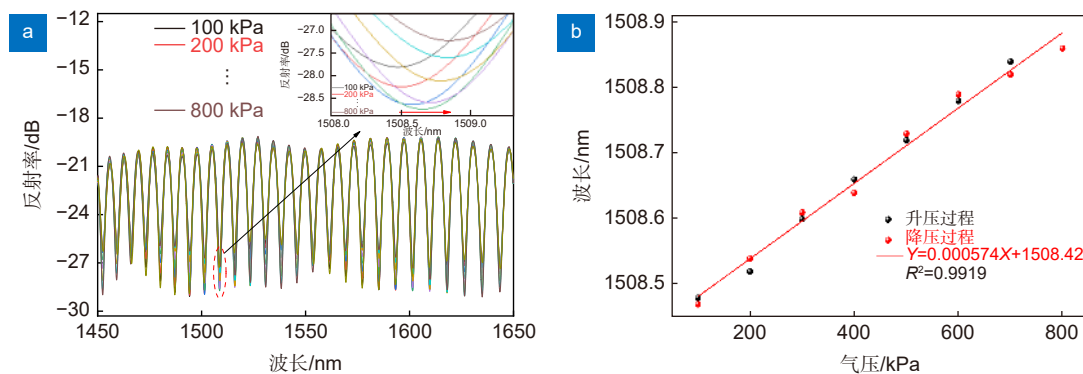


图 7 并联 FPI 的气压响应特性。

(a) 不同气压下的反射光谱; (b) 谐振波谷中心波长与气压的关系

Fig. 7 Response of the proposed device with paralleled FPIs to gas pressure.

(a) Reflection spectra at different gas pressure; (b) Relationship between resonances dip wavelength and gas pressure

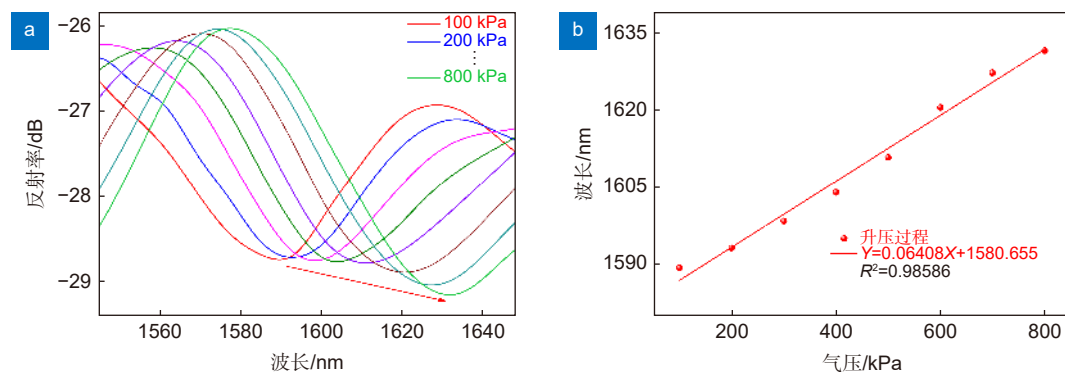


图 8 (a) 不同气压下的并联 FPI 的反射光谱的包络; (b) 包络中心波长漂移与气压之间的关系

Fig. 8 (a) Envelopes of the reflection spectra of the device with paralleled FPIs at different gas pressures;

(b) The relationship between resonances dip wavelength of the envelope and gas pressure

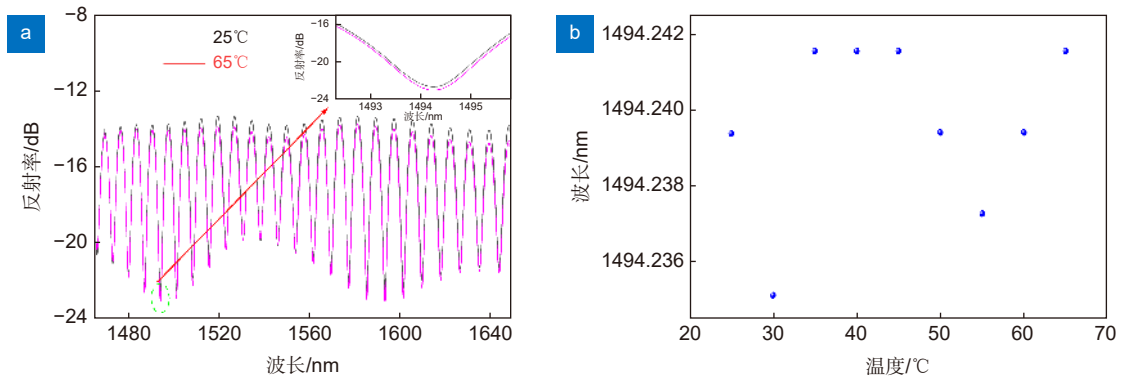


图9 并联FPI的温度响应特性。

(a) 在不同温度下的反射谱线; (b) 谐振波长与温度之间的关系

Fig. 9 Temperature response of the proposed device with paralleled FPIs.

(a) Measured reflection spectra at different temperatures; (b) The relationship between resonances dip wavelength and temperature

4 结论

本文介绍了一种基于游标效应的高灵敏度光纤气压传感器。该传感器由两个光纤FPI经耦合器并联而组成, 每个FPI都是由插入单模光纤中的一小段石英毛细管构成, 它们具有相近的腔长, 差别仅体现在传感FPI中的毛细管壁上有一微通道与外界相同, 而参考FPI具有封闭的谐振腔。并联FPI腔长接近, 产生游标效应, 实现了反射光谱包络解调的高灵敏度气压传感测量。实测灵敏度高达~64 pm/kPa, 是单一传感FPI的~16倍, 是叠加光谱直接追踪波谷解调法的111倍。同时, 该传感器不易受环境温度的影响, 加之传感器尺寸小, 反射式工作方式等特点, 预示着该传感器具有良好的应用前景, 特别适用于狭小空间的高精度气压测量领域。

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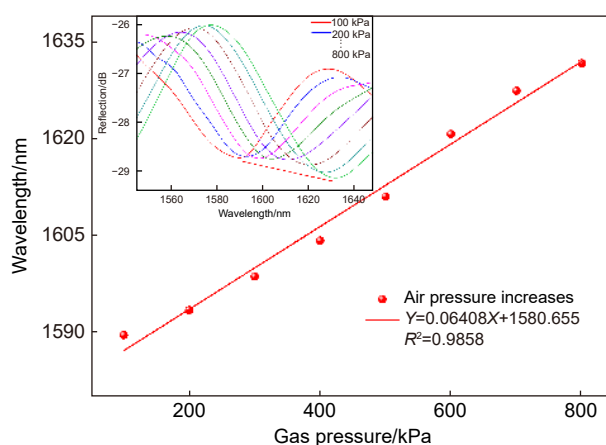


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Highly sensitive gas-pressure sensor based on paralleled optical fiber Fabry-Perot interferometers

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Relationship between resonate wavelength and gas pressure

Overview: Precise measurement of the gas pressure is important in a variety of fields, including environmental monitoring, energy management, and vehicle manufacturing. The measuring range is severely limited due to the electronic gas pressure sensor's susceptibility to temperature and electromagnetic interference. Optical fiber pressure sensors have demonstrated significant potential in practical applications due to their unique qualities of compact size, anti-electromagnetic interference, corrosion resistance, and robust resistance, attracting a lot of interest from researchers. Various fiber sensors based on fiber Bragg gratings (FBGs), long-period gratings (LPGs), and interferometers for gas pressure sensing have been presented in recent years. They all have distinct sensing benefits, among those, high sensitivity has always been one of the goals that researchers pursue.

Vernier effect is known for the first time because it was applied to Vernier calipers, consists of two independent scales with slightly different periods so that the overlap of both achieves the high measurement accuracy. Similarly, this effect can also be employed in the field of optical fiber sensing. Normally two interferometers with slightly different free spectral ranges are arranged in series (or cascaded structures), one as a sensor while the other as a stable reference. By tracking the response of the spectral envelope of the two interferometers, the sensitivity can be amplified by several orders of magnitude, realizing high-precision measurements. This sensitivity amplification mechanism has been successfully applied in temperature, pressure, refractive index, and curvature.

In this paper, a highly sensitive optical fiber sensor based on the Vernier effect is demonstrated for gas pressure sensing. It consists of two paralleled Fabry-Perot interferometers (FPIs), which are both produced by splicing a single-mode fiber to a short segment of capillary tube, acting as sensing cavity and reference cavity, respectively. The lateral wall of the sensing FPI is drilled with a micro-channel allowing gas to flow in. Due to the small optical path difference between the two FPI, the Vernier effect is caused in the reflected spectrum of the sensor. Thus, the gas-pressure sensitivity is significantly enhanced, achieving up to ~ 64 pm/kPa which is ~ 16 times higher than that of a single FPI. Additionally, experimental results show that the sensor is insensitive to the surrounding temperature, which reduces the influence of ambient temperature on the measurement of gas pressure. The advantages of robust structure and high sensitivity of gas pressure indicate that the demonstrated sensor has a promising potential in industrial production, gas detection, and other fields.

Guo Y, Wu Y C, Wang J H, et al. Highly sensitive gas-pressure sensor based on paralleled optical fiber Fabry-Perot interferometers[J]. *Opto-Electron Eng*, 2022, 49(8): 210420; DOI: [10.12086/oe.2022.210420](https://doi.org/10.12086/oe.2022.210420)

Foundation item: Natural Science Foundation of Zhejiang Province (LY19F050010) and the Open Project of the Key Laboratory of Micro Opto-Electro Mechanical System Technology, Tianjin University, Ministry of Education (MOMST 2016-1).

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