

❖ 特约专栏 ❖

超短脉冲光纤激光相干合成(特邀)

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摘 要: 相干合成技术能够突破单路激光的功率和脉宽极限, 实现超高功率、超短脉宽的脉冲激光输出。介绍了超短脉冲光纤激光空域、时域和频域相干合成的基本原理和关键技术。综述了空域、时域和频域相干合成系统及其关键技术的研究现状, 梳理了超短脉冲光纤激光相干合成的发展趋势, 为相关技术的发展提供参考。

关键词: 光纤激光; 超快光学; 相干合成

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**Review on the progress in coherent beam combining
of ultra-short fiber lasers**(Invited)

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Abstract: Coherent beam combining (CBC) of ultra-short pulsed lasers is a promising way to overcome the power and pulse width limitations from a single fiber. In this paper, the principles and technologies of coherent combining of ultra-short pulsed lasers in spatial, time and spectral domains were described. The current status of ultra-short laser CBC systems and their key technologies were reviewed, several future perspectives were pointed out. This paper can be a reference for future development of CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers.

Key words: fiber laser; ultrafast optics; coherent beam combining

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0 引言

高功率超短脉冲激光在科学研究、工业生产和生物医疗等领域具有重要的应用价值^[1-2]。特别是超高峰值功率、超短脉宽的激光脉冲,为激光粒子加速、激光核物理、超高速现象和高能物理等重大科技前沿问题的研究提供了前所未有的极端条件^[3]。目前,基于大口径、块状固体增益介质的超短脉冲激光系统的峰值功率已达到拍瓦量级、脉冲能量已达到兆焦耳量级^[4]。但是,这类系统转换效率和重复频率较低,系统规模较为庞大^[3-5]。光纤激光具有转换效率高、结构紧凑和热管理方便等优势,近年来得到快速发展。目前,单纤连续激光的平均功率达到 20 kW^[6],飞秒脉冲激光的平均功率达到 kW 级^[7],峰值功率达到十 GW 级^[8-9]。但是,由于光纤模场面积小,易于发生光学损伤和非线性效应。采用啁啾脉冲放大(CPA)技术可以从一定程度上抑制非线性效应,提升脉冲激光的峰值功率^[10],但是仍然难以满足一些应用领域的功率需求。此外,由于掺杂光纤的增益带宽较窄,且放大过程中存在增益窄化效应,高功率光纤激光的脉冲宽度也受到限制^[11]。

相干合成技术能够突破单根光纤的功率极限,同时解决亮度、热管理等一系列问题,已成为光纤激光技术中的重要研究方向。早期的相干合成研究主要针对连续激光^[12-14],随着连续光纤激光相干合成相关技术的成熟以及高功率超短脉冲激光需求的不断增大,超短脉冲光纤激光相干合成在近年来成为研究热点^[5,15-18],并且发展出许多超短脉冲相干合成专有的新技术。文中将从空域、时域和频域三个方面,系统地介绍超短脉冲光纤激光相干合成的基本原理、关键技术和研究进展,分析其发展趋势,为超短脉冲光纤激光相干合成的发展提供参考。

1 基本原理

光束合成可以分为非相干合成和相干合成两大类。非相干合成中,各路激光之间进行强度叠加。常见的非相干合成方式有几何并束^[19-20]、功率合成^[21-22]、光谱合成^[23-25]和时序合成^[26]等。几何并束就是通过倾斜镜等装置对各路激光的发射方向进行控制,使每一路激光都出射到同一目标靶面。功率合成是指将

多根中等功率的单模光纤激光通过功率合束器合成到一根多模光纤中,其中功率合束器是功率合束方案的核心器件。光谱合成就是使不同波长的光以不同的角度入射到色散组件,色散组件使各光束朝相同方向衍射,形成高亮度的合成光束。时序合成是将多路脉冲激光在时序上进行叠加,从而提高输出激光的平均功率。

相干合成中,各路激光进行振幅叠加。要实现各路激光的稳定干涉,需要满足以下三个条件:各路激光的频率分布相同(空/时域合成)或者频率差恒定(频域合成);各路激光的偏振态相同或关系保持恒定;各路激光的相位差恒定。在超短脉冲相干合成中,根据各路激光在空域、时域和频域上的关系,可以将其分为空域相干合成、时域相干合成和频域相干合成三类,如图 1 所示。图中均以两路合成为例,实线代表脉冲激光的波包(反映光强信息),虚线代表脉冲激光的载波(反映振幅和相位信息)。

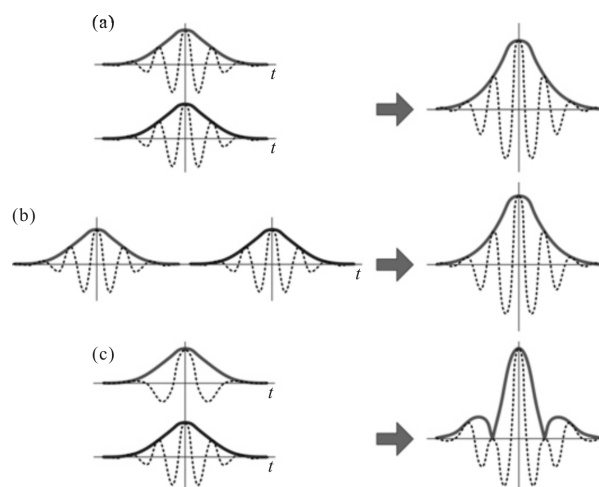


图 1 超短脉冲(a)空域(b)时域和(c)频域相干合成的对比示意图
Fig.1 Comparison of CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers in (a) spatial (b) temporal and (c) spectral domain

脉冲激光空域相干合成的基本原理和连续激光相干合成相同。为了获得频率(光谱)分布相同的多路激光,空域相干合成一般采用 MOPA 结构,通过分束器将种子激光分为多路,每一路激光进行功率放大后,再通过合束装置将各路放大后的激光合为一束^[27]。调节各路激光的光程差使脉冲在时域上完全重合;并通过相位控制时各路激光的相位相同或者保持相位差恒定,就能实现各路激光的相干合成。

时域相干合成是指通过时域合成或脉冲堆叠装置将脉冲序列的各子脉冲相干合成为新的单一脉冲,从而提升脉冲的能量和峰值功率。当从同一脉冲种子发出的前一个脉冲和后一个脉冲相遇时,如果能够在脉冲包络和相位上的重合,就能达到相干合成的目的,如图 1(b)所示。

频域相干合成通过对具有不同光谱成分的光源进行相干合成,在提高脉冲能量和峰值功率的同时,还能压缩脉冲宽度。要获得短的脉冲宽度需要满足三个条件^[20]:一是纵模锁定;二是光谱宽度足够宽,这是由傅里叶变换理论决定的;三是色散足够小。超短脉冲激光通常是由锁模激光器产生的,锁模激光器输出的超短脉冲包含大量的纵模(频域)成分,相邻纵模之间的频率间隔一定,且相邻模式的相位差一致。各纵模进行振幅叠加,形成一定重复频率(与激光腔长相关)的脉冲序列。从某种程度上,锁模激光器也可以看成是不同纵模成分的频域相干合成。如果多路锁模激光器满足如下三个条件,也能实现频域上的相干合成。以两路激光的频域相干合成为例,一是两个光源的纵模频率间隔相等(即 $f_{rep1}=f_{rep2}$),如图 2(b)所示;在时域上表现为两路激光的重复频率相同(即 $f_{RR1}=f_{RR2}$),因为锁模激光器中 f_{rep} 和 f_{RR} 都与腔长成反比。二是脉冲包络在时域上重合,如图 2(a)所示。三是实现各脉冲激光的相位(频率)锁定,在时

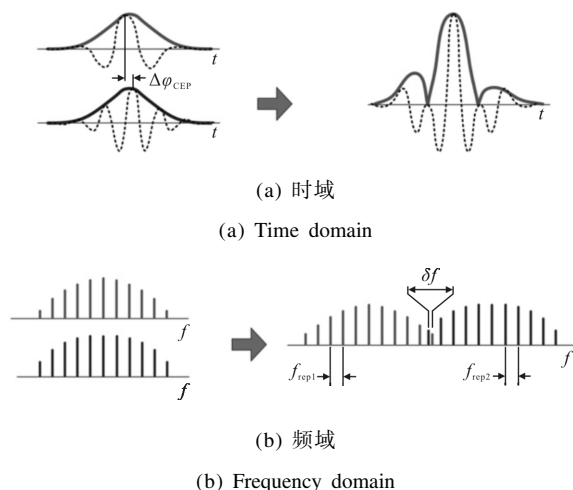


图 2 超短脉冲频域相干合成的原理

Fig.2 Principle of spectral coherent beam combining of ultra-short pulsed lasers

域上表现为两个脉冲的“载波-包络相位”(carrier-envelope phase, CEP)相同(即 $\Delta\varphi_{CEP}=0$),如图 2(a)所

示;在频域上表现为两个激光器的纵模实现锁定(即 $\delta f=0$),如图 2(b)所示。假设 $f_{rep1}=f_{rep2}=f_{rep}$,则有 $\Delta\varphi_{CEP}=f_{rep}(\delta f/2\pi)^{[20]}$ 。实际上,可以将频域相干合成后的脉冲激光看成是一个新的锁模激光,其纵模间隔不变、数目更多,因此输出激光的脉宽更窄。

2 关键技术及研究进展

从上节的介绍可以看出,不论哪种相干合成,要获得理想的合成效果,需要实现各路激光在空间/时间上的重合、在光谱上的匹配和在相位上的锁定。这些要求的满足依赖于复杂的相干合成关键技术。由于空域、时域和频域的相干合成在系统结构和技术细节上存在一定差别,这一节将分别介绍各种相干合成的关键技术和代表性研究结果。实际上,也可以在同一系统中采用多种合成方式,例如为了同时获得高的平均功率和峰值功率,近年来空域-时域相干合成系统受到较为广泛的研究,相关内容将在 2.2 节(时域相干合成)中一并介绍,不对其进行单独分类介绍。

2.1 空域相干合成

空域相干合成又称为空间分束相干合成,连续激光相干合成一般都是指的空域相干合成。超短脉冲激光空域相干合成的典型系统结构如图 3 所示。锁模飞秒激光种子经过脉冲展宽后,再由空间分束器分为多路。每一路激光经过放大后,由相位控制系统锁定为同相,再由合束装置对阵列光束进行高效合束。最后用脉冲压缩器将合成后的激光压缩为飞秒激光。该系统中的关键技术主要有高效合束、光程控制和相位控制等。

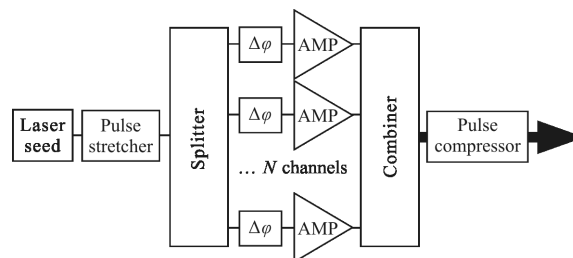


图 3 超短脉冲激光空域相干合成系统结构示意图

Fig.3 Schematic setup of spatial coherent beam combining of ultra-short pulsed lasers

(1) 高效合束

和连续激光的相干合成一样,要获得好的合成

效果,需要进行孔径压缩,实现高效的光束合成。根据合成光束的排布特点,光束合成可以分为分孔径合成和共孔径合成两大类,如图 4 所示。分孔径合成中,采用压缩占空比的方式,提高阵列光束远场光斑的能量集中度,主要采用光束传输因子(BPF)描述合成效果^[30]。共孔径合成中,各路激光在空间上完全重合,形成一束激光输出。共孔径合成的关键是减小合束过程中的功率损失,通常采用合成效率(η)来描述系统性能^[31]。表 1 中给出了几种空域特性对高斯光束合成的影响情况^[30-31]。

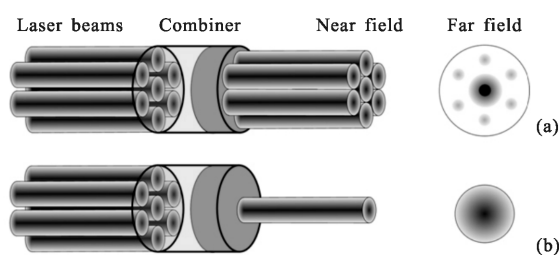


图 4 分孔径(a)和共孔径(b)光束合成示意图

Fig.4 Schematic of (a) tiled aperture and (b) filled aperture beam combining

表 1 空域特性对高斯光束相干合成的影响

Tab.1 Impact of spatial aberrations on CBC of Gaussian beams

	Tiled aperture		Filled aperture	
	BPF	BPF=0.95	η	$\eta=0.95$
Fractional pointing (σ_θ)	$1/[1+0.67(\sigma_\theta/\theta_k)^2]$	$\sigma_\theta/\theta_k=28\%$	$1-(\sigma_\theta/\theta_k)^2$	$\sigma_\theta/\theta_k=22\%$
Fill factor(ν)	$\exp(-0.53\nu)$	0.097	-	-
Fractional spot displacement (σ_r/ω)	-	-	$1-(\sigma_r/\omega)^2$	$\sigma_r/\omega=22\%$
Fractional spot size (σ_r/ω)	-	-	$1-(\sigma_r/\omega)^2/2\ln 2$	$\sigma_r/\omega=26\%$

分孔径合成的实现方式主要有准直器直接拼接^[32-34]、空间光路拼接^[35-36]、光束整形^[37]和微透镜阵列^[38-39]等。基于微透镜阵列,2011年,美国林肯实验室实现了 8 路总功率 4 kW 的连续激光相干合成,中央主瓣能量占总功率的 58%^[39];同年,法国 Thales 公司实现了 64 路光纤激光合束,中央主瓣能量占总功率的 58%^[38]。

共孔径合成的主要实现方法有 M-Z 干涉仪^[40]、自成像光波导^[41]、功率合束器^[42]、相干偏振合成(CPBC)^[43]和衍射光学元件(DOE)^[44]等。利用相干偏振合成,笔者所在课题组于 2012 年以 92%的合成效率实现了 8 路连续光纤激光的合成输出^[43],2016 年实现了 4 路总功率 5.02 kW 连续光纤激光的近衍射极限合成输出,合成效率 93.8%^[45];2016 年,德国耶拿大学实现了 8 路总功率 kW 量级、平均功率 mJ 量级脉冲能量的飞秒脉冲输出,合成效率在 90%左右^[46]。基于 DOE 元件,2012 年美国诺格公司以 68%的合成效率实现了 15 路总功率 600 W 连续激光的相干合束^[47];2016 年,美国空军实验室利用 DOE 实现了 5 路总功率 4.9 kW 连续光纤的相干合成,合成效率为 82%^[48]。

(2) 光程控制

在脉冲激光相干合成中,由于光程差(OPD= ΔL)的存在,一方面会使各脉冲存在时域误差,使脉冲激光不能在时域上完全重合^[49];另一方面会造成群延时,使单元光束的相位差存在频域啁啾^[50-52]。如图 5 所示,当中心频率(ν_0)的光波被锁定到同相时,其它频率(如 ν_1)的光仍然存在相位差:

$$\Delta\phi_{\text{delay}}(\nu_1)=2\pi\Delta L(\nu_1-\nu_0)/c \quad (1)$$

式中: c 为光速。以两路傅里叶变换极限脉冲的相干合成为例,为了获得大于 95%的合成效率,当脉冲 3 dB 光谱宽度为 7 nm 时,光程差必须控制在 $\pm 25\lambda$ 以内;当脉冲 3 dB 光谱宽度增大到 13 nm 时,光程差的控制要求进一步提高,需控制在 $\pm 14\lambda$ 以内^[50]。

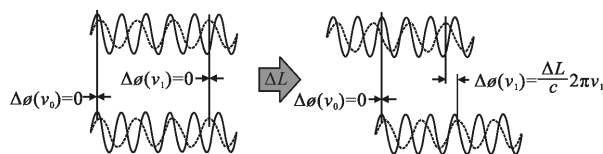


图 5 光程差导致群延时的示意图

Fig.5 Schematic of OPD-induced spectral phase shift

目前,光程差控制的方法主要有空间光路调节^[53]、被动光纤调节^[35,54]、光纤延迟器件调节等^[39]。可以根据合成系统的要求,采用大行程低精度+小行程高精度相结合的方法^[27],或者静态调节+动态调节相结合的方法^[55],也可以利用同时对多个频率成分的激光进行锁定的方法,实现高精度的光程差控制^[56]。

(3) 相位控制

在光纤激光放大器中,由于增益光纤热效应和

外界环境扰动等因素的影响,输出的激光存在相位噪声。为了消除各路激光之间的相位差,实现各路激光的同相输出,需要对各路激光的相位进行实时控制。按照相位控制的物理机制,主要分为被动相位控制和主动相位控制。

被动相位控制是通过一定的能量耦合机制或者非线性相互作用实现各路激光相位起伏的自动补偿,达到相位锁定的目的。被动锁相方法主要有外腔法^[44,57-59]、倏逝波耦合法^[60-61]、全光纤自组合法^[62-63]和相位共轭法^[64-66]等。2011年,中国科学院上海光学精密机械研究所采用单模光纤滤波环形腔实现了8路总功率1.09 kW的连续光纤激光相干合成,这是采用被动相位控制技术实现的最高功率的相干合成^[67]。在脉冲激光相干合成方面,主要报道的被动相位控制方法有全光纤自组织^[68-72]、自成像腔^[73]、倏逝波耦

合^[74-75]、单模光纤滤波环形腔^[76-77]和 Sagnac 腔^[78-79]等,功率相对较低,且脉冲宽度多在纳秒以上。

主动相位控制利用相位检测和控制系统对各路激光的相位起伏进行补偿,从而达到各路激光同相输出的目的。根据相位差探测的原理,主动相位控制又可以分为直接探测和间接探测两大类。直接探测通过一定的手段获得单元激光之间的相位误差并进行校正,具有控制速率快的优点;间接探测不对相位误差进行直接测量,而是利用一定的算法不断更新控制信号,使合成效果趋于最优,具有控制系统结构简单的优点。为了进一步提升控制带宽,还可以在一个系统中同时使用多种主动控制算法^[80]。主动相位控制在功率和路数提升方面具有很大潜力,在高功率和大阵元的相干合成系统中使用较为广泛。常见的相位控制方法及其代表性结果如表 2 所示。

表 2 几种常见的主动相位控制方法和代表性结果

Tab.2 Several active phase control technologies and the representative results

Phase control method	Results	Notes
SPGD algorithm	Other countries: 200 CW diode lasers ^[88] ; 8 CW fiber lasers with 4 kW overall power ^[39] ; 21 CW fiber lasers based on target-in-the-loop ^[33] . In China: 32 low power CW fiber lasers ^[82] ; 9 CW fiber lasers with kW level overall power ^[83-84] ; 5 nanosecond pulsed fiber lasers with 800W overall average power ^[85] .	1. Indirect phase control; 2. Other optimization algorithms such as climbing hill ^[86] , simulated annealing algorithm ^[87] can also be used for phase control.
Frequency dithering (LOCKSET)	Other countries: 16 CW fiber lasers with kW level overall power ^[88] ; 5 CW fiber lasers with 4.9 kW overall power based on DOE ^[43] ; 4 low power femtosecond pulsed fiber lasers ^[89] . In China: 30 low power CW fiber lasers ^[90] ; 9 CW fiber lasers with kW level overall power ^[91-92] ; 4 CW fiber lasers with 5.02 kW overall power based on CPBC ^[45] ; 7 nanosecond pulsed fiber lasers with 1.2 kW overall average power ^[55] ; 4 picosecond pulsed fiber lasers with 88W overall average power based on CPBC ^[93] ; 2 femtosecond pulsed fiber lasers with 313 W overall average power based on CPBC ^[55] .	1. Indirect phase control; 2. Including multi-frequency dithering ^[94] , single-frequency dithering ^[95] , CDMA-based dithering ^[96-98] and so on.
Heterodyne phase measurement	Other countries: 48 low power CW fiber lasers based on interfering fringes ^[99] ; 7 CW Nd:YAG lasers with 100 kW overall power ^[100] . In China: 7 low power CW fiber lasers ^[101] ; 3 CW fiber lasers with W level power ^[102] .	1. Direct phase control; 2. Can only be used in tiled aperture CBC systems.
Hänsch-Couillaud (H-C) measurement	Other countries: 8 femtosecond pulsed fiber lasers with kW level overall average power based on CPBC ^[46] .	1. Direct phase control; 2. Can only be used in CPBC systems.
Quadrivave lateral shearing interferometry	Other countries: 64 low power CW fiber lasers ^[38] .	1. Direct phase control; 2. Can only be used in tiled aperture CBC systems.

在间接探测相位控制中,一般是通过合成光束的功率起伏来解算各路激光的相位信息,再对各路

激光之间的相位差进行实时矫正^[103]。然而,在脉冲激光中,由于激光脉冲本身也是一种光强起伏,这必然

对相干合成的相位控制产生影响^[104]。当激光重频频率较高时,可以通过低通滤波消除光强起伏的影响^[53];当激光重频频率较低时,则需要通过连续光成分获取相位噪声信息^[40]。

在超短脉冲光纤激光的相干合成中,除了上述传统意义上的相位控制,还需对“光谱相位”进行控制。光谱相位控制的本质即色散与非线性相移管理。经过前文介绍的光程差控制和相位控制,即使各路激光的光程严格相等且相位同步,也不能完全保证相干合成效果。因为超短脉冲激光中存在明显的群延时色散和自相位调制(SPM)等非线性效应,这些非线性效应会

引入脉冲啁啾,当两个脉冲啁啾特性不一致时,其他频率光的相位实际上是不同步的,这将严重影响系统的合成效率^[50,52,105]。在实际的系统搭建中,可以通过调节各路激光的脉冲峰值功率、放大器增益以及光纤长度等参数,使各路激光的色散与非线性相移保持一致,从而消除脉冲啁啾对合成效率的影响。

前面介绍了空域相干合成的几项关键技术。需要指出的是,其中许多技术是从连续激光相干合成中直接借鉴过来的。相比于时域相干合成和频域相干合成,超短脉冲的空域相干合成起步更早,研究更为广泛,近年来的代表性研究结果如表 3 所示。

表 3 超短脉冲空域相干合成代表性研究结果

Tab.3 Representative results of spatial CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers

Year	Institution	Technical solution	Results
2010	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	H-C measurement phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =sub-ps; f_{RR} =10 MHz; P_{ave} =0.5 W; η =97% ^[106]
2011	Université Paris-Sud, France	Frequency dithering phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =325 fs; f_{RR} =35 MHz; P_{ave} =4.3 W; η =90% ^[107]
2011	Université Paris-Sud, France	Sagnac passive phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =250 fs; P_{ave} =multi-W; η =96% @ f_{RR} =35 MHz; η =84% @ f_{RR} =1 MHz ^[70]
2011	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	H-C measurement phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =470 fs; f_{RR} =15 kHz; $P_{ave/peak}$ =30 W/5.4 GW; J =3 mJ; η =89% ^[108]
2012	University of Michigan, USA	Frequency dithering phase control, CPBC, all-fiber configuration.	Channel=4; t_p =300 fs; f_{RR} =47 MHz; P_{ave} =hundreds of mW; η =94% ^[89]
2012	Université Paris-Sud, France	Sagnac passive phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =300 fs; f_{RR} =92 kHz; $P_{ave/peak}$ =60 W/2 GW; J =650 μ J; η >90% ^[79]
2013	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	H-C measurement phase control, CPBC.	Channel=4; t_p =670 fs; f_{RR} =400 kHz; $P_{ave/peak}$ =530 W/1.8 GW; J =1.3 mJ; η =93% ^[109]
2014	University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, China	Active phase control, CPBC.	Channel=2; t_p =277fs; f_{RR} =20 MHz; P_{ave} ~20 W ^[110]
2014	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	H-C measurement phase control, CPBC.	Channel=4; t_p =200 fs; f_{RR} =40 kHz; $P_{ave/peak}$ =230 W/22 GW; J =5.7 mJ; η =88% ^[111]
2015	Université Paris-Sud, France	SPGD algorithm phase control, tiled aperture.	7-core fiber; t_p =860fs; f_{RR} =100 kHz; J =8.9 μ J; power in central lobe=49% (η =76%) ^[112]
2016	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	H-C measurement phase control, CPBC.	Channel=8; t_p =260 fs; P_{ave} =1 kW/ J =1 mJ/ η =91% @ f_{RR} =996 kHz; P_{ave} =887 W/ J =3.3 mJ/ η =89% @ f_{RR} =265 kHz ^[46]
2016	China Academy of Engineering Physics, Mianyang, China	SPGD algorithm phase control, tiled aperture.	Channel=2; t_p =29.8 fs; f_{RR} =1 kHz; η =80.3% ^[113]
2016	National University of Defense Technology, China	Frequency dithering phase control, CPBC, all-fiber configuration.	Channel=2; t_p =827 fs; f_{RR} =80 MHz; P_{ave} =313 W; η =79% ^[55]

2.2 时域相干合成

时域相干合成又称为时序相干合成,是近年来

为了进一步提升脉冲峰值功率而发展起来的一种新技术。其核心思想是对高重频的脉冲序列进行功率

放大后,再通过时序合成,降低激光的重复频率,提升输出激光的峰值功率,避免低重频激光放大过程中高峰值功率引起的各种非线性效应。其基本思路和 CPA 技术一致,因为增加激光的重复频率和展宽脉冲宽度都是为了降低光纤放大器中的峰值功率。目前,常用的时序相干合成方法主要有脉冲分割放大(DPA)和脉冲堆叠两大类。根据 DPA 的实现方式,又可以将其分为被动 DPA 和主动 DPA 两大类。如图 6 所示是几种常见的时域相干合成技术方案。

如图 6(a)所示,在被动 DPA 技术中,每个脉冲被脉冲分割/合成器件分割为脉冲串。在放大器的末端加入一个 Farady 旋转镜和一个反射镜,使各脉冲两次经过放大器进行双程放大后,再由该脉冲分割/合成器件合为一个脉冲。由于脉冲分割与合成采用同一个器件,且各脉冲经过的光路完全相同,在理想情况下整个过程不会引入光程差和相位差,各脉冲能够自动实现相干合成。但是,脉冲序列在光纤放大器中存在增益饱和效应,这会使各自脉冲的峰值功率存在差异。由于 SPM 效应引起的非线性相移与脉冲峰值功率有关,这会影响系统合成效率。对脉冲串中的各脉冲的强度进行操控,能够消除非线性相移。然而,被动锁相系统的对称性结构限制了对于脉冲强度的控制自由度,其能够合成的脉冲数目的扩展能力有限^[114-115]。

主动 DPA 能够克服上述困难,如图 6(b)所示,该技术中,脉冲分割和合成采用两套器件完成。通过脉冲强度的控制自由度为 $N-1$ 的脉冲分割器将一个脉冲分割为 N 各脉冲,各脉冲的强度依次增加。该脉冲序列经过放大后,各脉冲的峰值功率和非线性相移基本保持一致,再由一个脉冲合成器件将其合为一束。由于脉冲分割和合成采用的是两套器件,需要通过一个主动控制系统对脉冲分割器中各延迟线的光程进行精密控制,确保各子脉冲在相干合成时的光程和相位保持一致^[116]。

但是,随着脉冲数目的增加,对 DPA 系统中延迟线数目和长度、单脉冲稳定性和饱和增益效应控制提出了更高的要求,因此 DPA 技术一般只能将脉冲能量提高一个量级左右^[118]。为了进一步提升参与合成的脉冲数目,研究人员提出了脉冲堆叠技术,如图 6(c)所示,高重频的种子激光经过放大后,通过一个脉冲堆叠器来实现成百上千个脉冲的相干叠加。

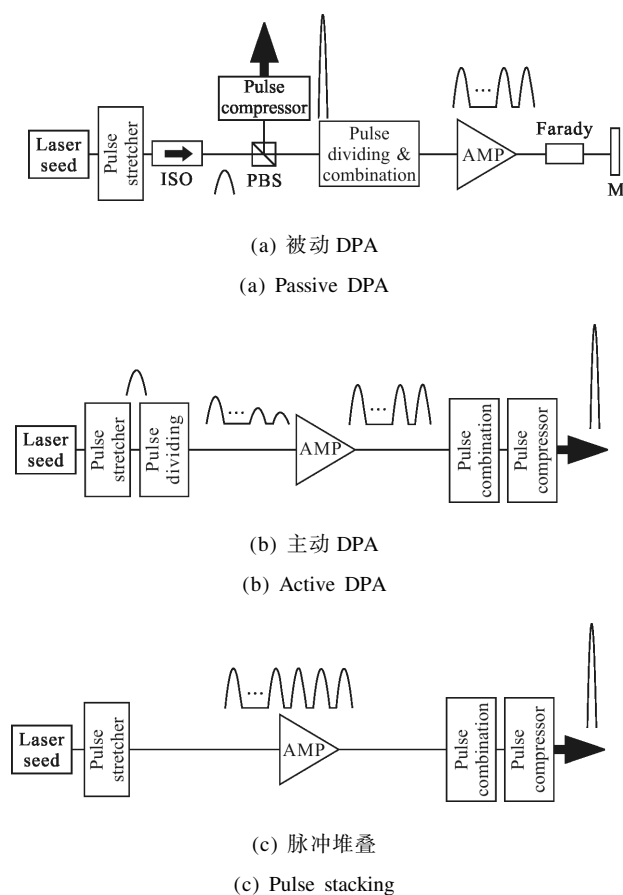


图 6 超短脉冲时域相干合成的原理

Fig.6 Principle of temporal CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers

时域相干合成中,主要关键技术有光程控制、相位控制、脉冲分割/合成和脉冲堆叠等。其中光程和相位控制技术和空域相干合成基本相同,此处不再赘述,下面主要对脉冲分割/合成和脉冲堆叠技术进行介绍。

(1) 脉冲分割/合成

脉冲分割/合成的常用技术方案有双折射晶体组、分束延迟和相位调制等。如图 7 所示为基于双折射晶体组的脉冲分割/合成的工作原理,其中红色箭头代表激光的偏振方向。通过半波片(HWP)将入射激光的偏振方向与双折射晶体的光轴(OA)成 45° 。激光在双折射晶体中传输时由于沿快慢轴方向的传输速率不同,p 光和 s 光发生错位。当这两个脉冲光再次经过另一个光轴与 y 轴成 45° 的双折射晶体(其 z 轴长度一般为第一个双折射晶体的 2 倍或 $1/2$)后,又将分别分割为 2 个脉冲。如此,采用 N 个归一化长度分别为 $1, 1/2, \dots, 1/2^{N-1}$ 的双折射晶体,就能将一个脉冲分割为 2^N 个子脉冲。当一定偏振方向的脉冲

序列从右边入射时,该晶体组又能够将脉冲序列合成为一个脉冲。由于该方案难以对各脉冲序列的光强进行动态控制,目前主要用于被动 DPA 系统中。2007 年,美国康奈尔大学首次提出被动 DPA 方案,利用三块双折射钽钽酸盐晶体将输入脉冲分割成 8 个子脉冲,验证了 DPA 技术抑制非线性效应的可行性^[117]。

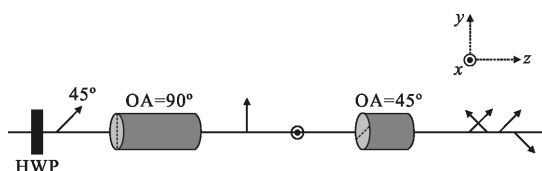


图 7 基于双折射晶体组的脉冲分割/合成的原理示意图
Fig.7 Principle of pulse dividing and combining based on birefringent crystals

基于分束延迟的脉冲分割/合成的工作原理如图 7 所示。入射激光的偏振方向首先由一个半波片(HWP)调整为与 y 轴成 45°。该激光被偏振分光镜(PBS)分为强度相等的透射光(p 光)和反射光(s 光)。s 光经过一段空间延迟后,再通过 PBS 与 p 光在空间上合为一束,此时 p 光和 s 光在时间上发生错位而被分割为两个脉冲。然后,用另一面 HWP 将 s 光和 p 光的偏振方向调整为与 y 轴成 45°,采用同样的方式将它们再分别分割为两个脉冲。分割延迟可以采用“2 个 PBS+2 个高反镜”的结构^[118],如图 8(a)所示;也可采用“1 个 PBS+2 个高反镜+1 个 1/4 波片(QWP)”的结构^[115],如图 8(b)所示。需要说明的是,可

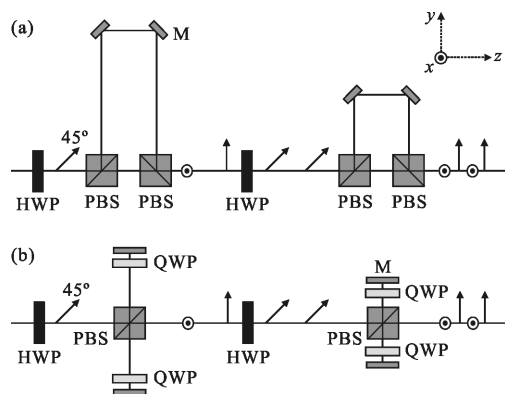


图 8 基于分束延迟的脉冲分割/合成的原理示意图

Fig.8 Principle of pulse dividing and combining based on delay lines

以根据实际需要通过对 HWP 角度和增加脉冲整形装置的方式,对各自脉冲的强度进行调整,以克服增益饱和和效应引起的非线性相移差。基于分束延迟

的脉冲分割/合成方式既可以用于被动 DPA 中,也可以用于主动 DPA 中。

图 9 为基于相位调制的脉冲分割工作原理。同样以 4 个脉冲为例,偏振方向沿 y 方向的脉冲串被分为功率相等的两束,用相位调制(EOM)将第一路中的第 2 个和第二路中的第 4 个脉冲的相位平移半个波长。两束激光经过一个偏振分光镜进行合束,通过调整高反镜(M)的位置来调节第一路激光的光程,使两路激光光程相等,实现两路激光的相干合成。最后再通过一个半波片使各脉冲的偏振方向旋转 45°,该脉冲串通过图 8 所示的脉冲合成装置,就能再次合为一个脉冲。这种方法空间光路更为简单,合成后的脉冲重复频率相对于种子激光能够得到降低。但是,受限于分束器件和 EOM 的功率承受能力,该方法只能用于分束,合成时仍需采用图 7 所示的分束延迟法。2017 年,德国耶拿大学提出了该方法,并进行了实验验证^[119]。

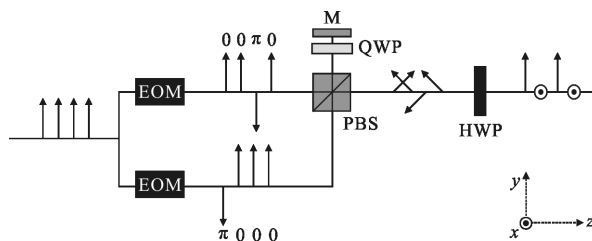
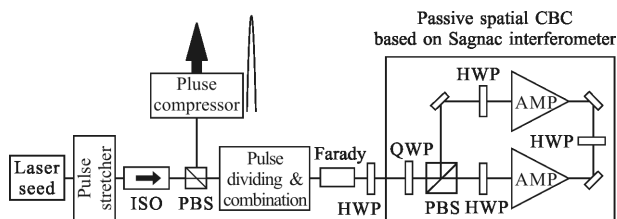


图 9 基于相位调制的脉冲分割的原理示意图

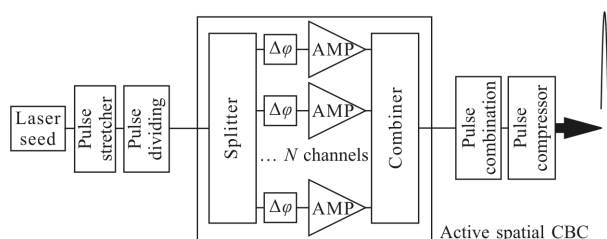
Fig.9 Principle of pulse dividing based on phase modulation

为了进一步提升激光的单脉冲能量,降低光纤放大器中的热效应和非线性效应,DPA 技术常常和空域相干合成和同时使用。图 10 所示为两种典型的空域-时域相干合成方案的原理示意图。被动 DPA 技术通常和 Sagnac 被动相位控制方法同时使用,如图 10(a)所示,用一个 Sagnac 腔替换图 6(a)中的全反射镜,既实现了脉冲序列的全反射,又能够实现 2 束激光的空域相干合成^[120-122]。主动 DPA 技术通常和主动



(a) 被动控制

(a) Passive control



(b) 主动控制

(b) Active control

图 10 超短脉冲空域-时域相干合成的原理

Fig.10 Principle of spatial-temporal CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers

相位控制方法同时使用,如图 10(b)所示,被脉冲分割器件分割成为脉冲串后,再经过一个空间分束、放大、合成系统,最后再将空间合成的脉冲激光进行时序合成,进一步分散了单个光纤放大器中的热效应和非线性效应等^[123-127]。

早期的 DPA 系统主要采用基于双折射晶体组的被动 DPA 方案。随着分束延迟方案的提出,基于该方法的主动/被动 DPA 成为研究的重点。随着空域-时域相干合成方案的采用,超短脉冲光纤激光系统输出的脉冲能量和峰值功率得到了迅速提升。近年来相关的代表性研究结果如表 4 所示。

表 4 超短脉冲 DPA 代表性研究结果

Tab.4 Representative results of DPA of ultra-short pulsed lasers

Year	Institution	Technical solution	Results
2007	Cornell University, USA	Passive DPA, Birefringent crystal stack	Replica=8; $t_p=300$ fs; $f_{RR}=47$ MHz; $J=nJ$ level ^[117]
2012	Cornell University, USA	Passive DPA, Birefringent crystal stack	Replica=32; $t_p=2.2$ ps; $f_{RR}=880$ kHz; $J=2.5$ μ J; $P_{peak}=1$ MW ^[120]
2012	Université Paris-Sud, France	Passive DPA+Sagnac-CBC, Birefringent crystal stack	Replica=4 \times 2; $t_p=50$ fs; $f_{RR}=1$ MHz; $P_{peak}=52$ MW; $J=3.1$ μ J; $\eta=80\%$ ^[122]
2013	Université Paris-Sud, France	Passive DPA, Free-space delay lines	Replica=4; $t_p=320$ fs; $f_{RR}=96$ kHz; $J=430$ μ J; $\eta=82\%$ ^[129]
2013	Université Paris-Sud, France	Passive DPA+Sagnac-CBC, Birefringent crystal stack	Replica=16 \times 2; $t_p=71$ fs; $f_{RR}=100$ kHz; $P_{peak}=86$ MW; $J=7.5$ μ J; $\eta>70\%$ ^[120]
2014	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	Active DPA, Free-space delay lines	Replica=4; $t_p=590$ fs; $f_{RR}=30$ kHz; $P_{peak}=2.9$ GW; $J=1.25$ mJ; $\eta=75\%$ ^[130]
2015	Université Paris-Sud, France	Passive DPA+Sagnac-CBC, Free-space delay lines	Replica=2 \times 2; $t_p=300$ fs; $f_{RR}=55$ kHz; $P_{ave}=55$ W; $J=1.1$ mJ; $\eta>90\%$ ^[121]
2016	University of Central Florida, USA	Active DPA, Free-space delay lines, Nd:YAG amplifier	Replica=2; $t_p=230$ ps; $J=167$ mJ; $\eta=84\%$ ^[131]
2016	Université Paris-Sud, France	Passive DPA, Free-space delay lines, Yb:YAG amplifier	Replica=2; $t_p=520$ fs; $f_{RR}=10$ kHz; $P_{peak}=4.4$ GW; $J=2.3$ mJ; $\eta>90\%$ ^[132]
2016	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	Active DPA+active CBC, Free-space delay lines	Replica=4 \times 8; $t_p=262$ fs; $f_{RR}=55.9$ kHz; $P_{peak}=35$ GW; $J=12$ mJ; $\eta=78\%$ ^[124]

(2) 脉冲堆叠

脉冲堆叠一般是利用环形增强腔实现脉冲序列的相干叠加,降低脉冲重频,提升脉冲能量。环形增强腔早期主要用于提高连续激光倍频效率等^[133-134],随着超短脉冲激光技术的发展,又逐渐应用到超短脉冲高次谐波产生和原子分子光谱学研究等领域^[135-138]。基于环形腔的脉冲堆叠方法主要有两种:一种是吉

莱-图努瓦干涉仪共振腔(GTI);一种是“堆叠-导出腔”(stack-and-dump, Snd)。

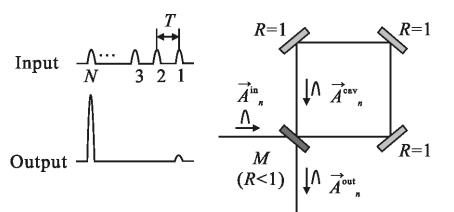
图 11 所示为基于 GTI 腔的脉冲堆叠工作原理。假设 N 个脉冲注入到单个 GTI 腔内,环形腔的腔长 $L=cT$, T 为脉冲周期, c 为光速。如图 11(a)所示,对于第 1 个脉冲,脉冲到达 $R<1$ 的反射镜时,一部分光反射输出,另一部分进入腔内。对于第 n 个脉冲($n=2, 3,$

..., $N-1$), 该脉冲(\vec{A}_n^{in})和腔内的脉冲(\vec{A}_n^{cav})同时到达反射镜 M , 两个脉冲在此发生相干相消, 此时输出脉冲(\vec{A}_n^{out})的振幅为 0, 脉冲能量被堆叠到腔内。当第 N 个脉冲到达反射镜 M 时, 与腔内脉冲发生相干相长, 所有的能量输出腔外。对于第 n 个脉冲, 其腔内传输后在反射镜 M 处的干涉过程可以通过下式表示:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \vec{A}_n^{\text{out}} \\ \vec{A}_{n+1}^{\text{cav}} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \alpha \cdot e^{i\delta} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} r & it \\ it & r \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \vec{A}_n^{\text{in}} \\ \vec{A}_n^{\text{cav}} \end{bmatrix} \quad (2)$$

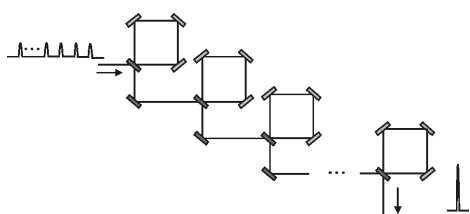
式中: $r=(R)^{1/2}$, $t=(1-R)^{1/2}$, R 为反射镜 M 的反射率; α 和 δ 分别为脉冲在腔内传输一周的损耗和相位差。根据上述过程, 可知 \vec{A}_n^{cav} 仅当 $n=1$ 和 $n=N$ 时为 0, \vec{A}_n^{out} 仅当 $n=1$ 和 $n=N$ 时不为 0。根据公式(2)列出 $n=1, 2, \dots, N$ 时的方程组, 就能够获得脉冲堆叠对输入激光的振幅和相位的要求。

但是, 理论和实验研究发现, 采用单个 GTI 腔一般很难将脉冲能量提高到 3 倍以上^[139-140]。为了进一步提高脉冲堆叠的数目和能量, 研究人员提出了级联 GTI 腔的方法, 如图 11(b)和(c)所示。图 11(b)中, 采用多个腔长相等($L=cT$)的 GTI 腔进行级联, 实现 N 个脉冲的堆叠。如图 11(c)所示如果再采用多个腔长为 $L_i=N \times cT$ 的 GTI 级联腔, 进一步将 M 个周期为 $N \times T$ 的脉冲进行堆叠, 就能实现总数目为 $N \times M$ 的脉冲堆叠^[139]。



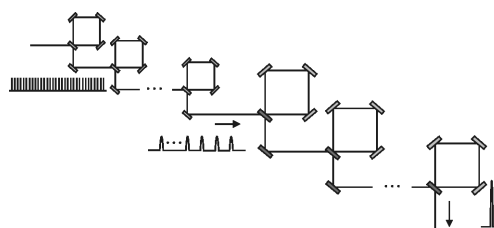
(a) 单腔

(a) Single GTI cavity



(b) 级联腔

(b) Cascaded equal-roundtrip GTI cavities



(c) 多倍级联腔

(c) Multiplexed different-roundtrip GTI cavities

图 11 基于 GTI 腔的脉冲堆叠原理示意图

Fig.11 Principle of pulse stacking based on GTI

SnD 腔的工作原理如图 12(a)所示。高重频的脉冲激光经过耦合镜(IC)进入到增强腔中, 和 GTI 腔

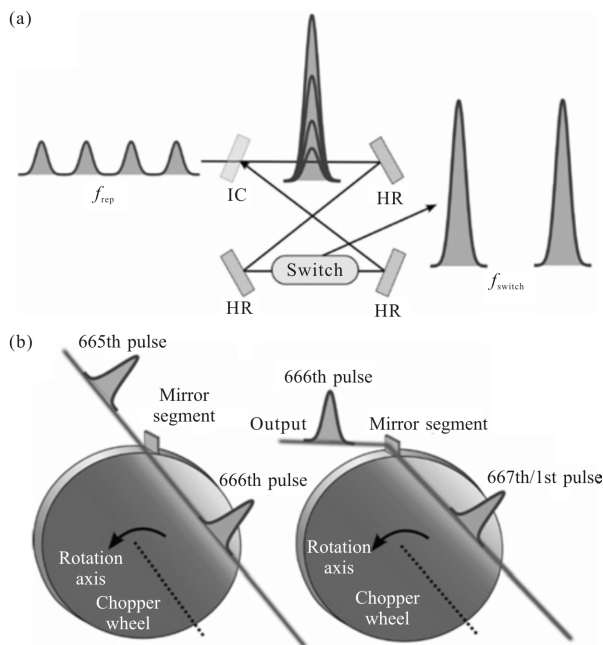


图 12 基于 SnD 腔的脉冲堆叠工作原理示意图^[141]

Fig.12 Principle of a stack-and-dump enhancement cavity^[141]

一样, SnD 腔的腔长也为 $L=cT$ 。脉冲进入 SnD 腔经过多面高反镜(HR)进行发射, 和腔内运行的堆叠脉冲进行相干叠加。每个来回脉冲能量都会得到增强, 同时也存在一定的能量损失(主要来自 HR 的透射等)。当耦合和损失的能量相等时, 腔内的能量达到平衡。平衡态时腔内的脉冲能量一般比入射的单脉冲能量高几个量级^[141]。但是, SnD 腔一般工作在非稳态, 在稳态到来前通过一个变换器件(Switch)将腔内的脉冲导出。该变换器必须满足低损耗、高阈值和快速响应的要求。目前的可选方案主要有快速倾斜斜镜、反射光栅和调制盘等。图 12(b)所示为基于调制

盘实现脉冲导出的示意图，通过外部时钟控制实现调制盘旋转频率的稳定和与脉冲的同步。当腔内堆叠到第 N 个脉冲时，堆叠脉冲正好由调制盘上的反

射镜导出腔外。

研究人员近年来开展了脉冲堆叠的实验验证，代表性研究结果如表 5 所示。采用 GTI 腔和 SnD 腔

表 5 超短脉冲堆叠代表性研究结果

Tab.5 Representative results of stacking of ultra-short pulsed lasers

Year	Institution	Technical solution	Results
2015	University of Michigan, USA	Gires-Tournois interferometers	Replica=5; $t_p=700$ fs; $f_{RR}=10$ kHz; $J=\mu\text{J}$ level; $\eta=97.4\%$ ^[139]
2016	University of Michigan, USA	4+1 Gires-Tournois interferometers	Replica=27; $t_p=330$ fs; $\eta=77\%$ ^[142]
2016	Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, USA	4 Gires-Tournois interferometers	Replica=13; $t_p=10$ ps; enhancement factor=7.4 ^[143]
2016	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany	Stack-and-Dump	Replica=65; $t_p=800$ fs; $f_{RR}=30$ kHz; $J=0.2$ mJ ^[144]
2017	Vienna University of Technology, Austria	Gires-Tournois interferometers	Replica=4; $t_p=200$ ps; enhancement factor=2.62 ^[140]
2017	University of Michigan, USA	4+4 Gires-Tournois interferometers	Replica=81; $t_p=300$ fs; $f_{RR}=1$ kHz; $J=\text{multi-mJ}$ ^[145]

的技术方案都实现了数十路脉冲的相干堆叠。

2.3 频域相干合成

通过空域和时域的相干合成，可以提升系统的平均功率和脉冲能量，但是无法避免光纤激光的增益带宽限制以及脉冲放大过程中的增益窄化效应。因此，普通飞秒光纤激光系统难以实现小于 100 fs 的激光脉冲输出。研究人员利用在传输介质中进行光谱的非线性展宽，获得了小于 100 fs 的脉冲输出^[146-147]，但是压缩过程中的自聚焦及气体离子化效应是其脉冲能量进一步的限制因素。频域相干合成是获得短脉宽高能量脉冲输出的有效技术途径^[28,148-149]。光纤激光的频域相干合成可以通过两种方式实现：多种子频域相干合成和单种子频域相干合成。

(1) 多种子频域相干合成

多种子频域相干合成的核心思想是对多个锁模激光器输出的激光进行“相干光谱拼接”，使多路激光在实现光谱展宽的同时，保持单个锁模激光器的频率和相位特性，达到压缩脉宽的目的。由第 1 节的分析可知，实现多种子激光的频域相干合成需要满足三个条件：各脉冲源的重复频率(或纵模频率)间隔相等，脉冲包络在时域上重合，实现载波-包络相位(或纵模)锁定。为了满足上述条件，需要对各路激光在频域、时域和相位上进行精密控制。下面以两个锁模激光器的频率相干合成为例进行简要说明，如图 13 所示。首先，将两个激光器的腔长控制到一致，实现两路激光器的重复频率(或纵模间隔)相等。通

常利用平衡交叉相关仪(Balanced cross-correlator)来探测两路激光因腔长不一致引起的重复频率抖动(通常称为时间抖动: timing jitter)^[150-153]，作为腔长控制的反馈信号。然后，通过精密控制两路激光的光程差(ΔL)，实现各脉冲包络在时域上重合。最后，再对两路激光的载波-包络相位($\Delta\varphi_{\text{CEP}}$)进行控制。由于 $\Delta\varphi_{\text{CEP}}=f_{\text{rep}}(\delta l/2\pi)$ ，通常采用声光移频器对锁模激光器的频移量进行控制，达到载波-包络相位锁定的目的^[151-152]。

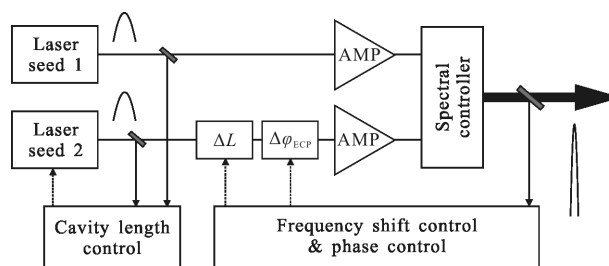
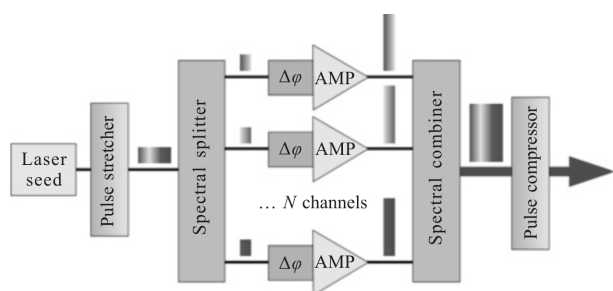


图 13 两路锁模激光器频域相干合成的原理示意图

Fig.13 Principle of spectral CBC of two mode-locked lasers

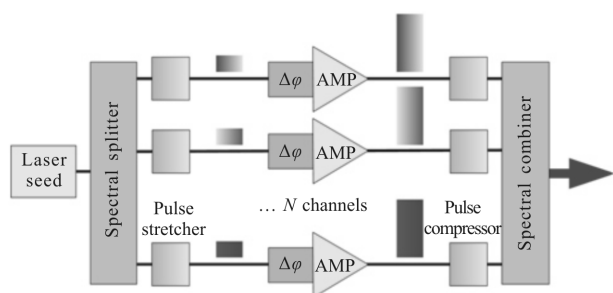
(2) 单种子频域相干合成

单频种子频域相干合成的工作原理如图 14 所示，用光谱分束元件将锁模激光种子分为多束，通过多个放大器对不同光谱成分的脉冲光进行放大，最后再将不同波段的高能量脉冲进行相干合成。由于采用了多个放大器，降低了单个放大器中的光谱窄化效应，能够降低光谱窄化效应对脉冲展宽的影响。如果各放大器的增益带宽范围不同，还可以消除单个放大器的增益带宽对输出脉宽的限制^[154-156]。



(a) 采用单一脉冲展宽/压缩器

(a) Using a single pulse stretcher and compressor



(b) 采用多个脉冲展宽/压缩器

(b) Using N pulse stretchers and compressors

图 14 基于单种子激光的频域相干合成的原理示意图

Fig.14 Principle of spectral CBC system based on a single laser seed

从系统结构上看, 单种子频域相干合成系统和

空域相干合成系统非常相似。主要不同在于其分束元件是光谱相关的, 如光栅^[157]和棱镜^[158-159]等。此外, 相比空域相干合成, 相位控制难度更大。因为相干光谱合成系统输出的干涉信号很弱, 线性探测器难以有效探测。需要采用双光子吸收探测器(two-photon absorption detector)^[11]、平衡交叉相关仪(Balanced cross-correlator)^[155]等提升相位控制的效果。此外, 脉冲展宽/压缩光栅放置的位置对系统的性能也有影响。如图 14(a)所示, 如果对脉冲先进行展宽再分为 N 束, 则单路激光的脉宽将降低为分束前的 $1/N$ 。由于短脉冲放大中非线性效应主要和峰值功率有关, 由于单路放大器可提取的脉冲能量和脉冲宽度成正比。从通过展宽脉冲宽度来抑制非线性效应的角度来说, 该方案在提升脉冲能量方面和单路 CPA 系统相比没有明显优势^[11]。如图 14(b)所示, 如果对脉冲进行分束后再分别进行脉冲展宽, 可以优化每一路的展宽/压缩过程, 使每一个放大器中脉冲的脉宽足够宽, 既能提升合成激光的脉冲能量, 又能抑制放大器增益窄化引起的脉冲展宽。

频域相干合成和空域/时域相干合成相比, 在时频域和相位误差的探测和控制方面技术难度更大。但是, 近年来相关技术得到快速发展, 代表性研究结果如表 6 所示。

表 6 超短脉冲频域相干合成代表性研究结果

Tab.6 Representative results of spectral CBC of ultra-short pulsed lasers

Year	Institution	Technical solution	Results
2001	National Institute of Standards and Technology, USA	Two independent oscillators	Ti:sapphire laser 1:760 nm, <20 fs; Ti:sapphire laser 2:810 nm, <20 fs; Combining timing jitter<5 fs ^[29]
2003	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA	Two independent oscillators	Ti:sapphire laser & Cr:forsterite laser; Combined output: 660-1 450 nm; Combining timing jitter<300 as ^[42]
2010	University of Konstanz, Germany	Single oscillator, 2 EDFA	Channel=2; central wavelength:1125 nm@channel 1, 1 770 nm@channel 2; Combined $t_p=4.5$ fs ^[54]
2011	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA	Single oscillator, 2 OPCPA	Channel=2; OPCPA 1: 9 fs, centred at 870 nm; OPCPA 2: 24 fs, centred at 2.15 μ m; Combined $J=15$ μ J; Combining timing jitter <250 as ^[55]
2012	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA	Two independent oscillators	Ti:sapphire laser: 700-1 000 nm, 6 fs; fiber supercontinuum: 1-1.4 μ m, 8 fs; Combined $t_p=3.7$ fs ^[52]
2013	University of Michigan, USA	Single oscillator, 3 amplifier	Channel=3; Combined $t_p=356$ fs (2-3 times shorter than individual channel); spectrum=10 nm; $f_{RR}=72$ MHz; $P_{ave}=273$ mW; $\eta=85.8\%$ ^[11]
2013	Université de Limoges CNRS, France	Single oscillator, 12-core fiber	12 cores Yb fiber; Combined $t_p=280$ fs (seed $t_p=228$ fs) ^[57]
2013	Université Paris-Sud, France	Single oscillator, 2 amplifier	Channel=2; Combined $t_p=130$ fs; spectrum=19 nm; $f_{RR}=35$ MHz; $P_{ave}=10$ W ^[60]
2014	Deutsches Elektronen -Synchrotron DESY, Germany	Single oscillator, 3 OPA	Channel=3; Combined $t_p=1.9$ fs; spectrum=0.49-2.3 μ m; $\eta>90\%$ ^[56]
2016	Tianjin University, China	Two independent oscillators	Yb laser 1:77 fs; Yb laser 2: 96 fs; contrast factors of spectral interferograms: ~58% ^[51]

3 结束语

相干合成技术能够突破单路激光的功率和脉宽极限,实现超高功率、超短脉宽的脉冲光纤激光输出。2012年,欧盟启动了国际相干放大网络工程(ICAN)计划,旨在推动飞秒脉冲光纤激光相干合成研究,作为下一代粒子加速器的驱动源^[161]。该计划还展望了超短光纤激光相干合成系统在医疗^[162]、原子能^[163]、中性粒子束产生^[164]、激光推进^[165]、空间碎片清理和激光雷达^[166]等方面的应用前景。对光纤激光进行相干合成,可以在充分利用光纤激光转换效率高、结构紧凑和热管理方便等优势的同时,克服其模场面积小、单路激光功率受限的缺点,将是未来大型超短脉冲激光系统的重要技术方案。

空域和时域相干合成可以有效降低热效应和非线性效应等,提升激光的平均功率和峰值功率;频域相干合成能够克服放大器增益带宽和增益窄化效应的影响,压缩激光的脉冲宽度。早期的超短脉冲相干合成主要集中在空域相干合成方面。但是空域相干合成在峰值功率提升和脉冲宽度保持等方面的优势并不明显。例如,为了达到粒子加速器所需的脉冲能量,需要对数以千计的飞秒脉冲激光进行相干合成^[161],如此大规模的相干合成在系统复杂程度和成本上都是难以想象的。德国耶拿大学提出利用空域相干合成(16×32路级联合成)和时域相干合成(666个脉冲堆叠)相结合的方法,以期实现重频15 kHz、平均功率为480 kW、峰值功率100 TW、脉冲能量32 J的飞秒脉冲光纤激光输出,作为激光等离子加速器的驱动源^[141]。可见,多个域的混合相干合成可以充分发挥空域、时域和频域相干合成各自的优势,将是未来超短脉冲相干合成领域的重要发展趋势。

基于主动控制的相干合成(空域、DPA、脉冲堆叠和频域)系统在功率和路数的提升方面具有较大的潜力,且适合于多个域的混合相干合成系统的构建。高精度的光谱、相位和光强等特性的探测,以及高精度的多参量主动控制,将会是多域混合相干合成系统构建中必须解决的难题,也是相关研究中需要重点研究的关键技术。

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