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基于深脊结构的宽带直接调制晶体管激光器研究

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摘 要:提出并数值研究了一种引入铟铝砷层作为载流子阻挡层的深脊晶体管激光器。该结构能够有效提升载流子注入效率,进而实现晶体管激光器带宽拓展。仿真结果表明,引入铟铝砷层的晶体管激光器的-3 dB 带宽相比传统晶体管激光器结构有显著的提升。该结构的提出可以为直接调制激光器提供新的选择。

关键词:晶体管激光器;InAlAs 限制层;深脊波导;调制带宽;小信号频率响应

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0 引言

随着 5G/6G、数据中心互联和大带宽光接入应用的发展,直接调制激光器作为光通信系统的前端光源,其调制带宽面临着更高的技术要求。一部分载流子在有源区发生辐射复合,另一部分载流子因无法快速完成复合而发生堆积,导致自发复合寿命处于纳秒量级,严重制约激光器的直接调制带宽^[1]。晶体管激光器(Transistor Laser, TL)兼具晶体管电流控制功能与激光器光发射特性,为解决上述问题提供了新途径。其发射极注入的电子一部分在基区的量子阱中与空穴发生复合形成激光并从端面输出,另一部分未复合的载流子在集电结反向偏压作用下被扫入集电极,形成集电极电流^[2]。因此载流子在基区的有效复合时间由 ns 量级降低为 ps 量级^[3],弛豫振荡峰得到抑制,显著提升直接调制带宽,为突破直调激光器的带宽限制提供了全新的路径^[4-5]。

2004 年, FENG M 团队首次在 III-V 族异质结双极晶体管(Heterojunction Bipolar Transistor, HBT)的基区中引入量子阱结构,成功实现激光发射^[6]。2006 年,该团队进一步设计并验证了一种基于铝镓砷/铟镓磷/砷化镓/铟镓砷(AlGaAs/InGaP/GaAs/InGaAs)材料的量子阱晶体管激光器,实现了 13.5 GHz 的-3 dB 调制带宽^[7],是晶体管激光器带宽突破的重要里程碑。但是该异质结双极发光晶体管仅能在 200 K 下连续工作,在室温下不能激射,低温依赖严重限制了其实际应用。2009 年, FENG M 团队设计了一种无共振倾斜电荷二极管激光器^[8]。结果表明,快速的自发复合寿命可以实现无谐振光学响应,提升高速工作性能并增强对高频光通信调制的适应性。该结构在宽频率范围内均呈现出平稳衰减特性,无明显谐振峰,-3 dB 带宽约为 5.6 GHz,具有高速调制潜力。紧接着,该团队设计了一种含隧道结的 GaAs 基隧穿晶体管激光器(Tunnel Junctions-Transistor Laser, TJ-TL),通过在集电极区引入高掺杂隧道结,实现激光输出的电压调控,显著提升了信号处理的灵活性,使调制带宽突破 20 GHz^[9-10]。2008 年中国科学院半导体研究所提出了深脊结构晶体管激光器。深脊 TL 中量子阱有源材料位于重掺杂的基区材料上方,其发射区脊波导刻蚀穿过量子阱材

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料停止于p型基区材料之中^[11],以减少p型材料的光吸收以及掺杂杂质扩散对量子阱材料质量的损害,实现了在-40℃连续工作。但是波导侧壁裸露的量子阱材料表面可能存在大量的非辐射复合中心,会显著损害器件的光电性能,导致调制带宽难以提升^[12-13]。2022年,伊朗阿莫卡比尔理工大学设计并仿真了具有三个量子阱的垂直腔隧穿渐变基区晶体管激光器,相较于单量子阱结构,多量子阱结构能更有效地增强光功率输出。该团队通过在垂直腔晶体管激光器中引入隧穿注入与渐变基区结构,有效缩短了载流子输运与俘获时间,使器件调制带宽随隧穿概率提升而显著增大,最终实现10.3 GHz的调制带宽,同时降低了阈值电流并提高了电流增益^[14]。次年,该团队针对双量子阱垂直腔隧穿注入晶体管激光器开展仿真研究,通过提升隧穿概率、减小基区与量子阱宽度并将量子阱位置移向发射极,使器件调制带宽最高提升至28.5 GHz,同时阈值电流降低45%^[15]。本论文在传统深脊波导结构基础上,分别在上下限制层(GRIN-SCH)两侧引入p型和n型钢铝砷(InAlAs)层,利用钢铝砷/钢镓铝砷(InAlAs/InGaAlAs)异质结的大导带偏移增强对载流子的限制作用,实现晶体管激光器光电性能提升和直接调制带宽增强。采用共基极(Common Base, CB)偏置条件,相较于传统深脊晶体管激光器,引入InAlAs层的晶体管激光器结构可将器件的-3 dB带宽从32 GHz提升至37 GHz。该结构为直接调制激光器的进一步发展提供了新思路。

1 传统深脊波导晶体管激光器结构与特性

本文采用经典漂移-扩散模型描述载流子输运过程、热电子发射模型用于表征异质结输运过程、有效折射率法用于计算横向光学模式。增益计算基于 4×4 k.p能带理论方法并考虑价带混合效应。

传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器结构如图1所示,包含发射极、基极和集电极三个电极。该器件的外延结构参数如表1所示,包括 $3 \mu\text{m}$ n掺杂InP衬底($1.5 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$)、未掺杂的 $\text{In}_{0.7617}\text{Ga}_{0.0745}\text{As}_{0.1638}$ P集电区、 300 nm p型掺杂的 $\text{In}_{0.7617}\text{Ga}_{0.0745}\text{As}_{0.1638}$ P基区层($3 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$)、 50 nm 未掺杂 $\text{In}_{0.5}\text{Ga}_{0.28}\text{Al}_{0.22}\text{As}$ 下限制层(GRIN-SCH)、多量子阱层、 50 nm 未掺杂 $\text{In}_{0.5}\text{Ga}_{0.28}\text{Al}_{0.22}\text{As}$ 上限制层组成。多量子阱结构的发射波长为 $1.3 \mu\text{m}$,包括4个 $\text{In}_{0.71}\text{Ga}_{0.15}\text{Al}_{0.14}\text{As}$ 势阱和5个 $\text{In}_{0.5}\text{Ga}_{0.28}\text{Al}_{0.22}\text{As}$ 势垒。发射区为 $2 \mu\text{m}$ 厚的n型掺杂的InP($1.5 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$)。脊波导刻蚀停止在基区层中,这是深脊波导结构的关键特征。器件工作温度为300 K,器件腔长为 $200 \mu\text{m}$,发射脊宽度为 $2 \mu\text{m}$,端面反射率为30%。

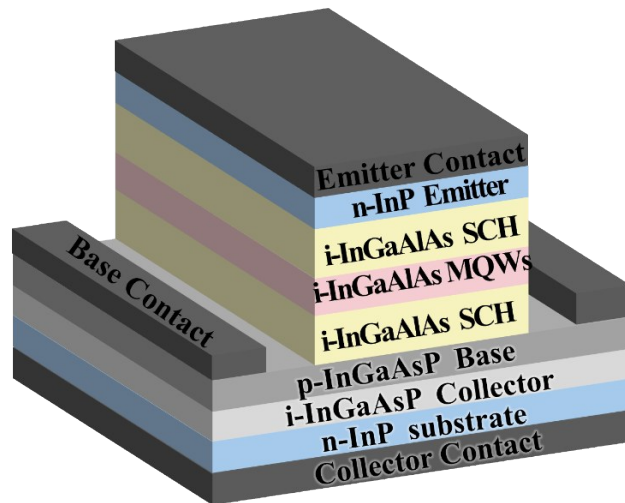


图1 传统深脊波导晶体管激光器结构图

Fig.1 Schematic diagram of a traditional deep-ridge waveguide transistor laser

图2(a)给出了传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器共发射极(Common emitter, CE)模式下的电流增益特性,其中发射极接地,施加集电极电压并注入基极电流。由图2可见,当基极电流为8 mA时电流增益可达4.3,表明器件具有良好的电流放大能力。该特性由图2(b)的电流分布解释:发射区注入的电子进入量子阱后,仅有一部分参与辐射复合形成光输出,其余电子在集电结反向偏置的抽运作用下被扫入集电极并形成集电极电流,从而产生较高的电流增益。图2(c)为CE模式下的低信号频率响应曲线,在偏置电流为3倍阈

表 1 传统深脊波导晶体管激光器外延结构参数

Table 1 Parameters of the epitaxial structure for traditional deep-ridge waveguide transistor lasers

Layer	Material	Thickness	Doping
n+ Emitter	InP	2000 nm	$1.5 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$
i upper GRIN-SCH	InGaAlAs	50 nm	undoped
i 4×quantum well	InGaAlAs	5 nm	undoped
i 5×quantum barrier	InGaAlAs	10 nm	undoped
i lower GRIN-SCH	InGaAlAs	50 nm	undoped
p+ base	InGaAsP	300 nm	$3 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$
i buffer layer	InGaAsP	50 nm	undoped
n+ substrate(collector)	InP	3000 nm	$1.5 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$

值电流时,器件的-3 dB小信号调制带宽约为3 GHz;随着基极偏置电流进一步增大,带宽提升幅度有限,同时低频段出现一定的响应下凹,表明CE模式下调制响应可能受到载流子存储效应及相关动力学过程的影响。图2(d)为共基极模式下不同偏置电流时的小信号频率响应曲线,在发射极偏置电流为3倍阈值电流时,-3 dB带宽可达12 GHz,显著高于CE模式。该差异与两种偏置方式下的主导载流子输运与电荷存储过程不同有关,CB模式中调制响应更受电子输运与集电结抽运过程影响,而CE模式中空穴输运及基区电荷存储效应更为突出;由于电子迁移率通常高于空穴,CB模式可获得更高的调制带宽。仿真结果表明,该结构的小信号频率响应曲线在CE模式下低频凹陷严重、带宽窄无法满足当前高速应用。CB模式下,小信号频率响应不平坦,峰值随偏置电流增大而升高,在高速调制模式下会限制调制信号质量和传输距离。

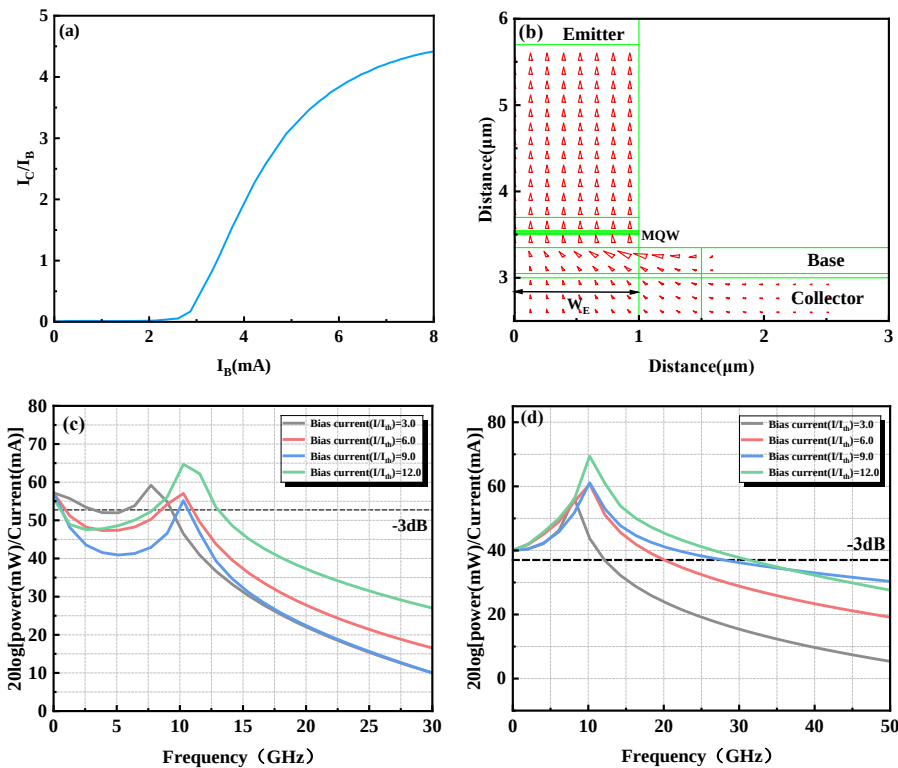


图2 传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器特性。(a)CE模式下电流增益曲线;(b)电流密度分布图;(c)CE模式下不同偏置电流对小信号频率响应的影响;(d)CB模式下不同偏置电流对小信号频率响应的影响

Fig.2 Characteristics of the traditional deep-ridge waveguide transistor laser. (a) Current gain curve under CE mode; (b) Current density distribution; (c) Effect of different bias currents on small-signal frequency response under CE mode; (d) Effect of different bias currents on small-signal frequency response under CB mode

2 InAlAs层对直接调制带宽的优化

如图3所示,在传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器结构的基础上,分别在基极上方和发射极下方引入p型 $\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Al}_{0.47}\text{As}$ 层和n型 $\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Al}_{0.47}\text{As}$ 层。在没有特别说明情况下, InAlAs 层的掺杂浓度和厚度分别为 $9 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$ 和100 nm,其余各层材料相关参数均与上述传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器参数相同。图4分别给出了处于共发射极模式放大状态时,传统深脊波导晶体管激光器和引入 InAlAs 层的晶体管激光器能带图,可以看出电子从发射区进入量子阱中,一部分复合发光,另一部分被反偏的集电极电压抽取到集电区,形成集电极电流。从图4(b)可以看出引入 InAlAs 层后,在基区和量子阱之间形成较高的势垒,可将电子限制在量子阱中,有效提高了量子阱中的稳态载流子浓度^[15],小信号响应带宽展宽。

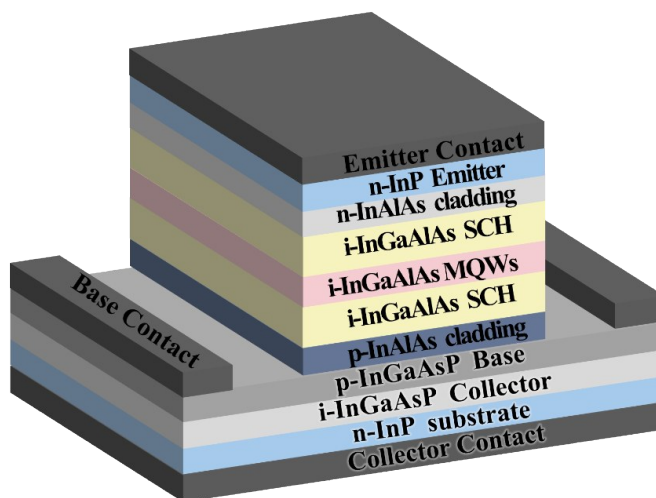


图3 含有 InAlAs 层的晶体管激光器结构图
Fig.3 Schematic diagram of a transistor laser with InAlAs layer

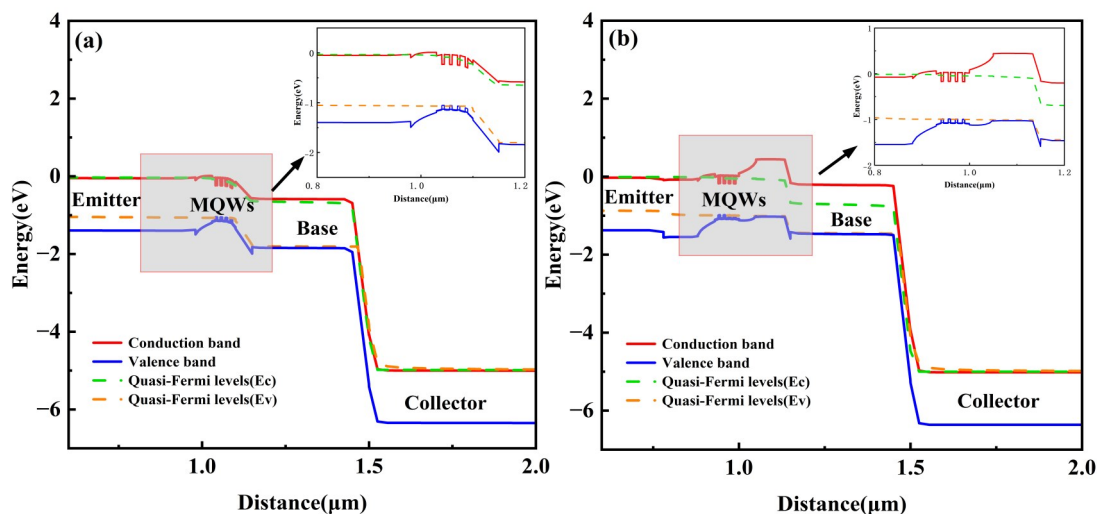


图4 两种结构的能带图。(a)传统深脊波导结构TL;(b)含有 InAlAs 层结构TL
Fig.4 Energy band diagrams of the two structures. (a) Traditional deep-ridge waveguide TL; (b) TL with InAlAs layer

图5(a)为含有 InAlAs 层的晶体管激光器在共发射极模式下的电流增益曲线,激光器的阈值电流为0.5 mA,在激光器激励之后,其电流放大系数急剧下降。这是因为 InAlAs 层的引入将载流子集中在量子阱中,势垒限制了其向集电极的扩散,所以相比传统深脊波导晶体管激光器结构,电流放大系数由4.3降低至 10^{-6} 量级。这一现象可以进一步由图5(b)中电流分布图说明,可以明显看到该结构集电区几乎没有载流子。图5(c)为该器件在共发射极模式时不同偏置电流下的小信号频率响应曲线,可以看出随着偏置电流的增加,

弛豫振荡峰的峰值在向右移且响应曲线更为平坦,这是因为偏置电流越大,激光器有源区内的光子密度就越高,同时电流越大,阻尼越强,导致曲线越来越平坦,峰值不再尖锐。器件的-3 dB带宽可达8 GHz,显著高于传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器的小信号调制带宽。与此同时,低频段仍可观察到响应下凹现象,推测主要与寄生电容引入的电学带宽受限有关^[17-18]。图5(d)给出了CB模式下不同偏置电流对小信号频率响应的影响。随着偏置电流由3倍阈值电流增加至12倍阈值电流,器件的调制带宽由18 GHz增加至38 GHz,较传统深脊波导结构晶体管激光器的带宽实现了显著提升。该优化主要归因于引入InAlAs层后对载流子泄露的抑制及注入效率的提高,使量子阱有源区中的稳态载流子密度增大,从而提升弛豫振荡频率并拓展调制带宽。

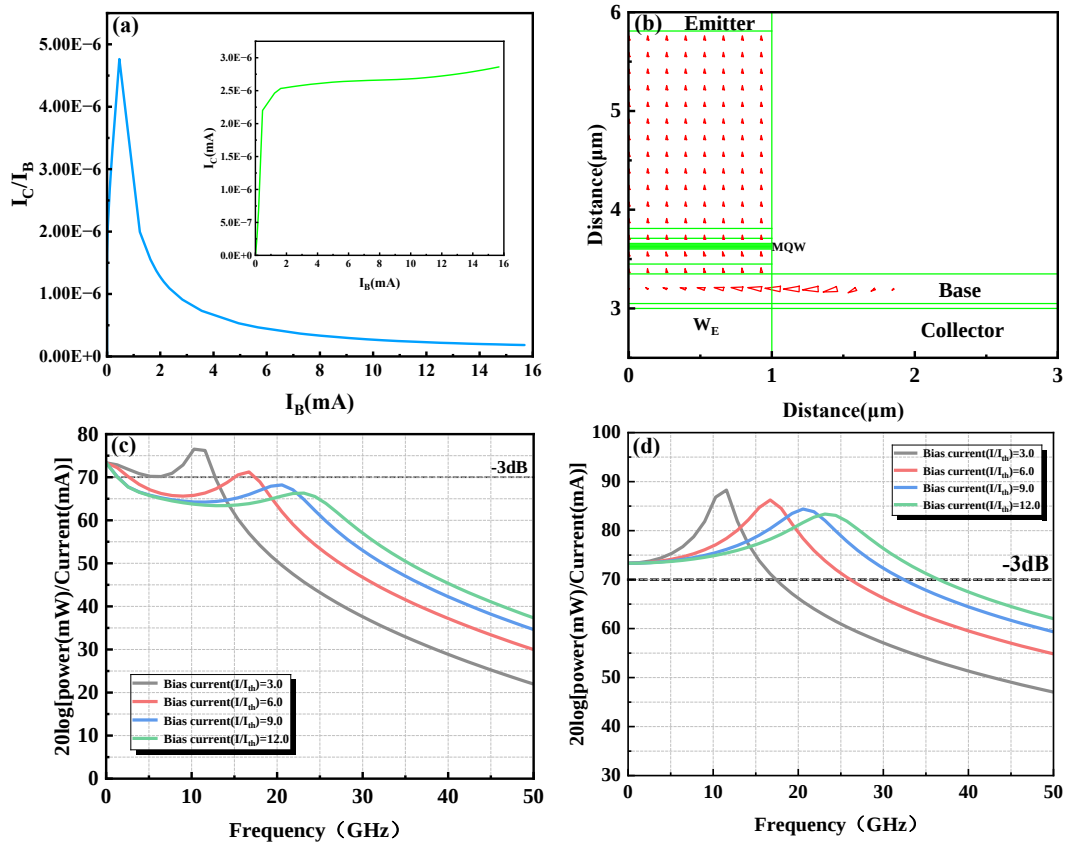


图5 含InAlAs层的深脊结构晶体管激光器特性。(a)CE模式下电流增益曲线;(b)电流密度分布图;(c)CE模式下不同偏置电流对小信号频率响应的影响;(d)CB模式下不同偏置电流对小信号频率响应的影响

Fig.5 Characteristics of the deep-ridge transistor laser with InAlAs layer. (a) Current gain curve under CE mode; (b) Current density distribution; (c) Effect of different bias currents on small-signal frequency response under CE mode; (d) Effect of different bias currents on small-signal frequency response under CB mode

图6给出了两种结构在CE模式下的光功率随基极电流的变化关系。从图6可以看出深脊波导结构的TL的阈值电流为0.3 mA,当基极偏置电流增加至2.8 mA后光输出功率逐渐趋于饱和。这是因为该器件中量子阱有源区中载流子的注入主要依赖于基区载流子输运,所以基区载流子浓度增加到一定程度后,受限于载流子泄露等因素,光功率呈现饱和趋势。相比之下,含InAlAs层的TL阈值电流为0.5 mA,但其光功率未饱和,这主要归因于InAlAs层对载流子输运与能带的调控作用,一方面其势垒作用可抑制载流子向非有源区泄露、提高向量子阱的有效注入效率,使载流子更容易在量子阱附近积累并发生辐射复合;另一方面,InAlAs层的引入改善了器件的载流子分布与输运条件,从而减弱了CE模式下因基区载流子“存储/供给受限”带来的功率饱和现象,使得输出功率随 I_B 提升而持续增加。

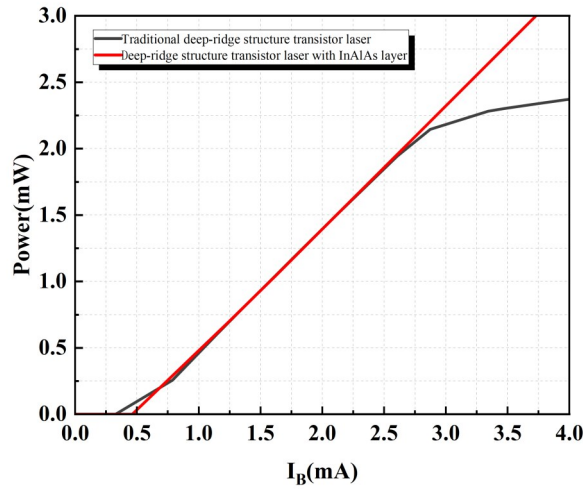


图6 两种结构下的PI曲线图
Fig.6 PI curves of the two structures

2.1 InAlAs层厚度对小信号频率响应的影响

图7是在InAlAs掺杂浓度为 $3 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$ 时,InAlAs层厚度对小信号频率响应曲线的影响,分别比较了共发射极(CE)和共基极(CB)两种模式。如图7(a)所示,在CE模式下,当InAlAs层厚度由75 nm增加到235 nm时,器件的-3 dB带宽呈增大趋势,弛豫振荡峰值表现出一定的幅度衰减。同时,在低频至中频范围内响应曲线出现先降后升的“凹陷”,该现象表明CE模式下的调制响应除受激光本征弛豫振荡限制外,还显著受到电学通道的带宽约束;基区载流子复合相关的时间常数以及米勒效应引入的等效电容会导致电学传递函数在中频段提前衰减,从而在电学响应与光学弛豫振荡主导机制切换过程中形成幅度下凹^[18]。从图7(b)中可以看到在CB模式下,随着InAlAs层厚度从75 nm增加至235 nm,弛豫振荡峰位置整体向高频移动,-3 dB带宽随之展宽。这一趋势是因为InAlAs层增厚导致更大的光场限制因子,从而使光场集中于量子阱有源区,提高有源区的光-载流子作用,从而提升弛豫振荡频率并改善高频调制能力。

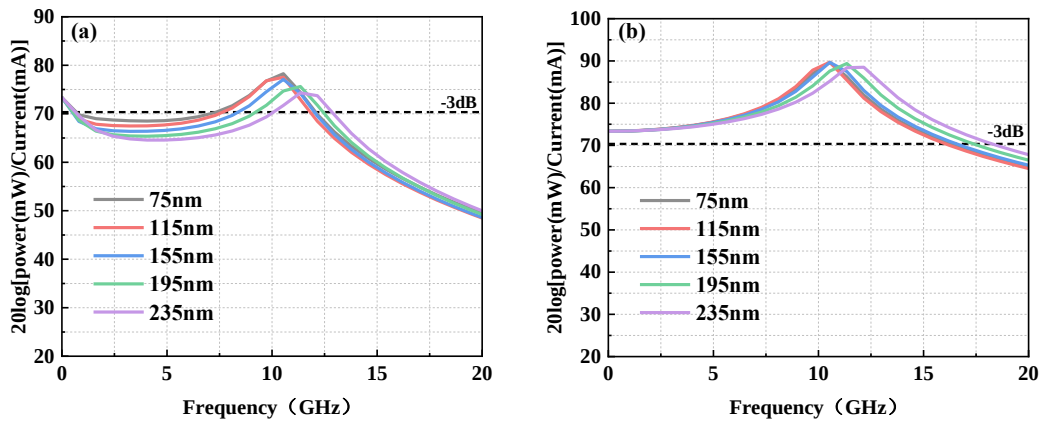


图7 InAlAs层厚度对小信号频率响应的影响。(a)共射极(CE)模式;(b)共基极(CB)模式

Fig.7 Effect of InAlAs layer thickness on small-signal frequency response. (a) Common-Emitter (CE) mode; (b) Common-Base (CB) mode

2.2 InAlAs层掺杂浓度小信号频率响应的影响

图8给出了含InAlAs层的晶体管激光器在CE与CB两种偏置模式下,InAlAs层厚度为115 nm时,小信号频率响应随InAlAs层掺杂浓度变化的规律。如图8(a)所示,在CE模式下,随着掺InAlAs层掺杂浓度增大,器件的-3 dB带宽由7.5 GHz增加至17.5 GHz,呈现显著提升趋势。该现象表明提高InAlAs层掺杂浓度可以优化载流子输运特性。较高掺杂浓度有助于降低阻挡层的串联电阻,同时增强对载流子泄漏的抑制能

力,从而提高基区向有源区的有效注入效率,减少电荷存储时间,使器件在高频下仍能维持较稳定的载流子浓度分布,进而改善调制响应并拓展带宽。如图8(b)所示,在CB模式下,掺杂浓度从 $1 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$ 增加至 $9 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$ 时,调制带宽从15 GHz提高至25 GHz,表现出和CE模式相同的增长趋势,说明InAlAs层掺杂浓度的提升在两种模式下均有利于提高器件的高频调制能力,其作用机制主要与载流子输运改善和注入效率提升有关。

值得注意的是,在相同的掺杂浓度下,CB模式的调制带宽明显高于CE模式,这一差异与两种偏置方式下主导的电荷控制机制不同有关。CE模式下调制信号通过基极电流注入实现,基区存在一定的载流子存储效应及米勒电容影响,使得电学带宽受到限制;而CB模式下基极接地,调制路径中电荷存储效应相对减弱,且电子输运在调制过程中占主导作用。由于电子迁移率通常高于空穴,基区载流子传输与受激辐射两种机制协同作用于共基极模式,有效缩短了载流子在基区的有效寿命。因此CB模式能够实现更宽的小信号调制带宽^[19]。

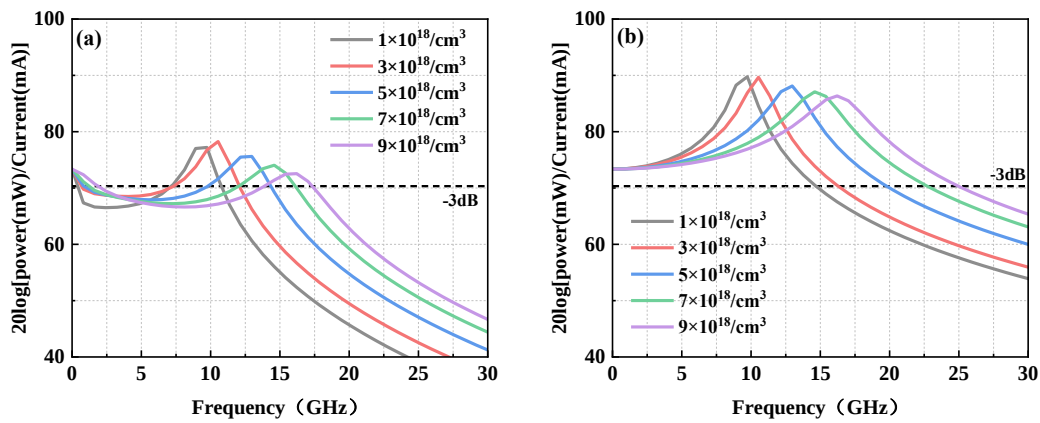


图8 InAlAs层掺杂浓度对小信号频率响应的影响。(a)共射极(CE)模式;(b)共基极(CB)模式
Fig.8 Effect of InAlAs layer doping concentration on small-signal frequency response. (a) Common-Emitter (CE) mode; (b) Common-Base (CB) mode

3 结论

本文提出并数值模拟了引入InAlAs层的深脊结构晶体管激光器,系统研究了偏置电流、InAlAs层厚度和掺杂浓度等关键参数对其小信号频率响应的影响,并从能带调控与载流子输运角度进行了分析。在CB模式下,当InAlAs层掺杂浓度和厚度为 $9 \times 10^{18} / \text{cm}^3$ 和100 nm,偏置电流为12倍阈值电流时,器件的调制带宽达到38 GHz。该结果表明,InAlAs层的引入能够有效抑制载流子的泄漏,提高注入效率,使量子阱有源区中的稳态载流子密度增大,从而提升弛豫振荡频率并拓展调制带宽。增加InAlAs层厚度能够产生更大的光场限制因子,使光场集中于量子阱有源区,提高有源区的光-载流子作用,从而提升弛豫振荡频率并改善高频调制能力。InAlAs层掺杂浓度的提升有利于提高器件的高频调制能力。上述结果为高带宽直接调制激光器提供了一种有效的思路。

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Research on Broadband Direct-modulated Transistor Lasers Based on Deep-ridge Structures

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Abstract: In high-speed fiber-optic communication systems, modulation bandwidth is a critical performance indicator for characterizing data transmission rates. Owing to the short carrier recombination lifetime in their active regions, transistor lasers have become a major research focus. Nevertheless, their direct modulation bandwidth is typically limited by carrier leakage, which significantly degrades device performance. In this work, a deep-ridge waveguide transistor laser with an InAlAs carrier blocking layer is proposed and numerically studied. The proposed structure effectively improves carrier injection efficiency and thus achieves bandwidth enhancement in transistor lasers. The physical models primarily employed in this work include the classical drift-diffusion model for carrier transport, the thermionic emission model for heterojunction transport, and the effective index method for the calculation of transverse optical modes. The optical gain is computed using the 4×4 $k \cdot p$ band theory with the valence band mixing effect fully considered. Numerical simulations are carried out to comparatively analyze the current gain, current distribution, and bias-dependent small-signal frequency response of both the conventional deep-ridge waveguide transistor laser and the device with embedded InAlAs layers. Furthermore, the influences of key

structural parameters, including the thickness and doping concentration of the InAlAs layers, on the -3 dB modulation bandwidth of the proposed device are systematically investigated. For the conventional deep-ridge waveguide transistor laser, a current gain of up to 4.3 is achieved at a base current of 8 mA, indicating excellent current amplification performance. At a bias current of 3 times the threshold current, the -3 dB small-signal modulation bandwidth under CE mode is approximately 3 GHz. As the base bias current further increases, the improvement in bandwidth becomes limited; the -3 dB bandwidth reaches 12 GHz at an emitter bias current of 3 times the threshold current. For comparison, the deep-ridge transistor laser with InAlAs layers is investigated under identical conditions. At a bias current of 3 times the threshold current, the -3 dB small-signal modulation bandwidth under CE mode is extended to 8 GHz. At an emitter bias current of 3 times the threshold current, the -3 dB bandwidth reaches 18 GHz, and it can be further enhanced to 38 GHz at 12 times the threshold current, demonstrating a significant improvement in the modulation bandwidth. Furthermore, the effects of InAlAs layer thickness and doping concentration on the -3 dB bandwidth are studied for the proposed structure. The results reveal that under CB mode, the device achieves a modulation bandwidth of 38 GHz when the doping concentration and thickness of the InAlAs layer are set to $9 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and 100 nm, respectively, at a bias current of 12 times the threshold current. Simulation results show that the introduction of the InAlAs layer can confine the optical field within the quantum-well active region, enhancing the light-carrier interaction in the active area. This in turn increases the relaxation oscillation frequency and improves the high-frequency modulation capability of the device. Meanwhile, increasing the doping concentration of the InAlAs layer optimizes carrier transport characteristics, improves the effective injection efficiency from the base region into the active region, and reduces the charge storage time. As a result, the device can maintain a relatively stable carrier concentration distribution at high frequencies, further refining the modulation response and extending the modulation bandwidth.

Key words: Transistor laser; InAlAs confinement layer; Deep-ridge waveguide; Modulation bandwidth; Small-signal frequency response

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