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U. Simon

Charles E. Miller
Haverford College

C. C. Bradley

R. G. Hulet

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Difference-frequency generation in AgGaS₂ by use of single-mode diode-laser pump sources

U. Simon, C. E. Miller, C. C. Bradley, R. G. Hulet, R. F. Curl, and F. K. Tittel

Departments of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Chemistry, and Physics, Rice Quantum Institute, Rice University, Houston, Texas 77251-1892

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We explored the suitability of visible III–V single-mode cw diodes for difference-frequency generation of tunable infrared radiation by mixing a red single-mode cw III–V diode laser with a tunable single-frequency cw Ti:sapphire laser in AgGaS₂. More than 1 μ W of cw tunable, infrared ($\lambda \approx 5 \mu\text{m}$), narrow-band coherent radiation was generated with type I noncritical phase matching. The wavelength and output-power characteristics of this novel tunable all-solid-state laser source are described, and we demonstrate the applicability of the source to high-resolution molecular spectroscopy by obtaining a test spectrum. The feasibility of a more compact solid-state cw laser spectrometer based on the mixing of two single-mode diode lasers (808 and 690 nm) as pump sources in AgGaS₂ is shown (infrared power generated ≈ 3 nW).

There is a need for continuous improvement of convenient laser-based spectroscopic sources in high-resolution spectroscopy. Because virtually all fundamental vibrational modes of molecules and molecular ions lie in the 2- to 20- μm wavelength region, tunable monochromatic probe lasers in this wavelength region are particularly useful for high-sensitivity, high-resolution (<100-MHz), and time-resolved molecular spectroscopy. In particular, cw laser sources have the greatest potential for providing an optimum combination of spectral control and frequency stability. Although cw tunable laser sources, such as color-center lasers,¹ lead-salt diode lasers,² and CO and CO₂ sideband lasers,³ exist in this spectral region, each type of laser suffers from practical drawbacks, such as the requirement of cryogenic cooling, operational wavelength ranges that do not reach regions of great interest, incomplete coverage of their nominal operational wavelength range, and lack of portability and ruggedness.

Instead of the source's being based on an infrared laser, tunable radiation can be generated by difference-frequency generation (DFG) in a suitable nonlinear medium. The spectroscopic source originally developed by Pine,⁴ in which an Ar⁺ laser is mixed with a cw dye laser in LiNbO₃, has proved useful for high-resolution spectroscopy but is limited to wavelengths <4 μm by the infrared transmission characteristics in LiNbO₃. Using LiIO₃ as the nonlinear medium, Oka and co-workers extended the long-wavelength limit for cw DFG spectroscopic sources to nearly 5 μm .⁵ Recently we demonstrated the operation of continuously tunable cw DFG spectrometer in the 4- to 9- μm region based on type I noncritical phase matching in AgGaS₂^{6,7} pumped by two single-frequency dye/Ti:sapphire lasers.

Recent advances in the development of high-power single-mode III–V diode-laser technology⁸ offer the possibility of using fixed or tunable cw or pulsed diode lasers as pump sources in DFG. Because of the compact size and direct

electric excitation of diode lasers, robust, portable spectrometers especially suitable for applications in sensitive and selective environmental monitoring of trace species can be constructed with a diode-laser-based DFG source. In this Letter we describe a new difference-frequency mixing spectrometer based on the use of single-mode III–V diode lasers. Potentially, infrared radiation from 3 to 6 μm by DFG in AgGaS₂ with type I noncritical phase matching can be generated by mixing III–V diode lasers (AlGaInP, AlGaAs, InGaAs, and InGaAsP).⁹

The usefulness of single-mode diode lasers for nonlinear frequency-conversion experiments has been demonstrated. Efficient frequency doubling of AlGaAs diode-laser emission with a resonator for enhancement of the infrared light field within the nonlinear material has been reported in KNbO₃.^{10,11} In addition, efficient sum-frequency generation of blue light has been accomplished by mixing a Nd:YAG laser with a single-mode AlGaAs diode laser in a monolithic KNbO₃ or KTP resonator.^{12,13} Sum-frequency generation with a single-mode diode laser has also been obtained without an enhancement cavity.^{12,14}

In the development of a compact DFG spectrometer based on two single-mode diode lasers, we made use of the already-existing DFG spectrometer.^{6,7} In the first step, the dye laser was replaced by a single-mode diode laser, which was then mixed with the Ti:sapphire laser. Finally, two single-mode diode lasers were mixed in the AgGaS₂ crystal.

The experimental configuration used in the first step of this work is shown in Fig. 1. The outputs of the cw tunable Ti:sapphire ring laser (Coherent 899-29) operating in the wavelength range 690–840 nm and a single-mode diode laser polarized for 90° type I ($e \rightarrow o + o$) phase matching in AgGaS₂ were spatially overlapped with a polarization cube. The visible beams were focused into a 45-mm-long AgGaS₂ crystal to a beam waist of $\sim 40 \mu\text{m}$ with a plano-convex lens with a focal length of

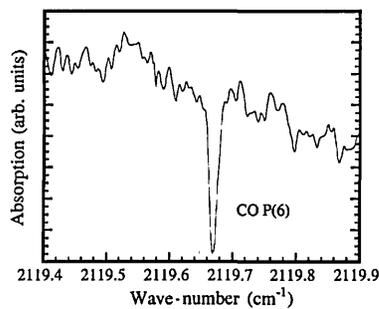


Fig. 3. CO absorption spectrum near 2119 cm^{-1} detected with the diode/Ti:sapphire laser pump configuration.

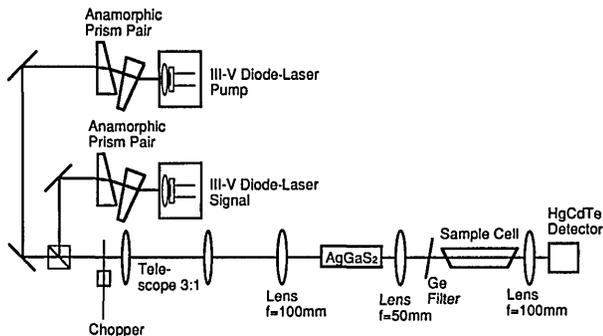


Fig. 4. All-solid-state laser-pumped compact DFG spectrometer with two single-mode diode lasers.

in the AgGaS_2 crystal resulting from mechanical instabilities of the experimental setup.

Another laser diode [Toshiba TOLD 9215(s)], emitting up to 9 mW of power in a single mode at 671.4 nm, was phase matched with the Ti:sapphire laser at 772.8 nm. For 5.2-mW diode-laser power and 1.15-W Ti:sapphire laser power, the infrared power at 1954.3 cm^{-1} was $\sim 1.2\text{ }\mu\text{W}$. To investigate the effect of the non-Gaussian diode-laser beam on the DFG conversion efficiency, we repeated the experiment with the DCM dye laser set to the same wavelength and power level as the diode laser. The infrared output of the dye/Ti:sapphire laser combination, like that of the diode/Ti:sapphire laser combination, showed a linear dependence of infrared power on the input signal power, but the slope was a factor of 3 greater. Thus, as might be expected, the non-Gaussian diode-laser mode does not mix so effectively with the pure TEM_{00} Gaussian mode of the Ti:sapphire signal source as does the pure TEM_{00} Gaussian mode from the dye laser. In future research, better characterization of the diode laser beam spatial modes will help to clarify the consequences of using non-Gaussian beams.

Finally, the feasibility of mixing two single-mode diode lasers in AgGaS_2 to generate tunable infrared radiation was also demonstrated. Figure 4 shows a scheme of the experimental setup used in an all-diode-laser DFG experiment. The radiation from each diode laser was collimated and then converted to a square beam with anamorphic prism pairs. After being spatially overlapped by a polarization cube, the beams traversed a 3:1 telescope and were focused into the AgGaS_2 nonlinear crystal. Using a Toshiba TOLD 9140(s) diode laser and a Sharp LT010MD

diode laser emitting at 690 and 808 nm with power levels of 10.1 and 1.93 mW, respectively, we were able to generate as much as 3.3 nW of infrared radiation at $\sim 2115\text{ cm}^{-1}$.

In conclusion, difference-frequency mixing in AgGaS_2 with diode/Ti:sapphire and a diode/diode pump laser configurations has been demonstrated for what is to our knowledge the first time to produce tunable infrared radiation at a wavelength of $\sim 5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$. DFG with diode lasers was not so efficient as that found with dye/Ti:sapphire lasers, presumably because of the poorer spatial mode quality of the diode lasers. The optical setup used in this research, to focus the visible light into the crystal and to collimate the generated infrared radiation, was optimized for the dye/Ti:sapphire pump laser configuration. By optimization of the spatial overlap of the diode-laser beams in terms of the size and location of the beam waists in the crystal and by use of broadband antireflection-coated optics, we expect much higher visible-to-infrared conversion efficiencies.

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