

Characterization of cascable excitability in a Silicon-On-Insulator microring.

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High-Q-factor Silicon-On-Insulator microrings both self-pulsate and are excitable. In this paper, we experimentally demonstrate that this excitability is cascable. Moreover, we show how, using a Coupled Mode Theory description of the ring, an adiabatic elimination of the fast field variable allows to calculate both the self-pulsation and the excitability onsets. The excitability region of a microring is merely centered at the blue-side of the ring's resonance, as the self-pulsation onset there is a subcritical Andronov-Hopf bifurcation. A proper characterization of this excitability will help to understand how microrings could be used as a basic component in photonic spiking neural networks.

Introduction

For a well-chosen wavelength and power setting of the input light, self-pulsation and/or excitability is observed in numerous passive microcavities, such as 2D Photonic Crystal (PhC) resonators [1], PhC nanocavities [2], Silicon-On-Insulator (SOI) microdisks [3] and SOI microrings [4, 5]. In all those cavities, a high Q/V -ratio enhances light-matter interaction. In Silicon-on-Insulator (SOI) cavities, Two Photon Absorption (TPA) generates both free carriers and heat. Other heating mechanisms are surface state absorption and Free Carrier Absorption (FCA). The presence of the free carriers induces a blue-shift of the resonance wavelength, known as Free Carrier Dispersion (FCD), while the heating of the cavity induces a red-shift due to the thermo-optic effect. The difference in timescale between the fast free carrier dynamics and the slow heating effects results in self-pulsation in whispering gallery mode cavities such as microdisks and microrings [6, 4, 3, 5]. In InP-based 2D PhC resonators or PhC nanocavities a similar type of self-pulsation is visible [2, 1]. Moreover, close to the self-pulsation region excitability is perceived both in In-P PhC cavities and SOI microrings [2, 1, 5].

Experimental set up and results

We designed an all-pass ring with a $550\text{ nm} \times 220\text{ nm}$ cross section, a $4.5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ radius, a 250 nm gap, with a bus waveguide bended with the same curvature as the ring. This ring has a resonance at 1530.708 nm with $\delta\lambda_{3dB} \approx 20\text{ pm}$ (with resonance splitting $\delta\lambda_{ps} \approx 20\text{ pm}$) and extinction ratio 8 dBm . A temperature controller guarantees that chip temperature deviations are below $\pm 0.03\text{ K}$. Light of a tunable laser (TL) is coupled in and out the chip by grating couplers. The ring output is measured with a 10 GHz photodiode

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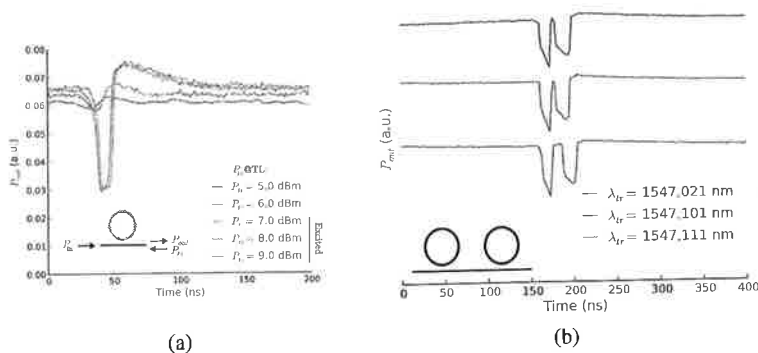


Figure 1: (a) If the trigger power P_{tr} is sufficiently high (≥ 7 dBm@TL) the ring excites with a fixed pulse shape, while for lower trigger powers subthreshold oscillations are visible. The 4 dBm pump light is detuned at $\delta\lambda = -4$ pm from the $\lambda_r = 1530.708$ nm resonance. The trigger light is tuned $\delta\lambda_{tr} = 9$ pm near another ring resonance at $\lambda_r = 1550.671$ nm. Power values are those at the output of the lasers. Due to the grating coupler the on-chip input power of the ring is expected to be ~ 6 dBm lower. If the resonances of two identical all-pass rings with common bus waveguide are close enough to each other they will show excitability for the same pump wavelength and power. Both rings have a $5.0 \mu\text{m}$ radius. The excitability is measured with the pump at $\lambda = 1529.007$ nm and $P_{in} = 13.60$ dBm, while $P_{tr} = 12.00$ dBm. Trigger pulse and pump light are now co-directional. On-chip powers are therefore expected to be resp. 10.00 dBm and 18.00 dBm lower, as ~ 4 dB is lost in a splitter used to combine pump and trigger signals.

and visualized with a 1 GHz real-time scope. When this microring is pumped with a CW input signal, with well-chosen input wavelength and power, sufficiently strong perturbations can trigger excitations (Fig. 1(a)).

To experimentally investigate the cascability of ring excitability, we did similar measurements of two identical all-pass rings with a $550 \text{ nm} \times 220 \text{ nm}$ cross section, a $5.0 \mu\text{m}$ radius, and a 225 nm gap, connected to the same bus waveguide. The spacing of the ring resonances at $\sim 1529 \text{ nm}$ is 52 pm , while $\lambda_{3dB} \approx 30 \text{ pm}$. For some pump settings they are both excitable for the same input power and wavelength (e.g., over a $\sim 90 \text{ pm}$ λ_{tr} -region in the upper three curves in Fig.). As the trigger signal excites both rings at the same time, the time-lapse between the two excitations is solely caused by the reaction of the second ring on the first ring's excitation. This is a sign of cascability of the pulse mechanism.

Theoretical analysis

This dynamic behaviour can be described accurately using temporal coupled mode theory [3]. The light that circulates in the cavity can be represented by a complex amplitude. The temperature difference of the cavity with the surroundings ΔT and the amount of free carriers N count as two additional dynamic variables. This model allows to calculate realistic steady-state curves. From linear stability analysis the oscillation onset can be identified as

an Andronov-Hopf bifurcation [3, 5]. Moreover, phase-plane analysis illustrates that the self-pulsation is caused by the interplay between temperature and free carrier effects, indicating that the fast light dynamics (i.e. the cavity build-up time) are less relevant [1, 5]. However, a thorough analysis of the influence of the different material parameters on the oscillation and excitability onset is still missing, as it is not straightforward to calculate bifurcation diagrams of this 4D-system.

In this paper, we eliminate the fast light dynamics in the equations of motion and rescale ΔT and N to resp. $\Theta = \Delta T \frac{2Q \frac{dn}{dT}}{n_g}$ and $n = N \frac{2Q \frac{dn}{dN}}{n_g}$. As $\delta = (\omega - \omega_r) \tau_{ph}$ is the detuning of the input light to the resonance frequency ω_r of a cavity with photon lifetime τ_{ph} (and thus $Q = \omega_r \tau_{ph}/2$), Θ and n can be interpreted as the absolute value of the induced detuning shift caused by resp. ΔT and N . We then end up with a dimensionless 2D-system:

$$\frac{d\Theta}{dt} = -\Theta + \frac{p(1+efn)}{(1+fn)^2 + (\delta + \Theta - n)^2}, \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{dn}{dt} = \frac{1}{\epsilon} \left[-n + \left(\frac{pq}{(1+fn)^2 + (\delta + \Theta - n)^2} \right)^2 \right]. \quad (2)$$

For the power and energy normalisation we used the thermal ($P_0^{th} = \frac{\rho_{Si} c_{p,Si}}{4 \frac{dn}{dT} \tau_{th} \eta_{lin} \Gamma_{th}} \frac{V_{th}}{Q_i} \left(\frac{1+k}{k} \right)^2$)

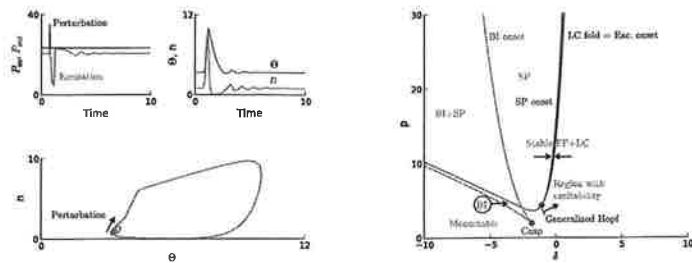
and electric ($P_0^{el} = \sqrt{\frac{\hbar \omega^2}{4 \frac{dn}{dN} \tau_{fc} \Gamma_{FCA} \beta_{Si}^2} \frac{V_{FCA}}{Q_i^{3/2}} \left(\frac{1+k}{k} \right)^{3/2}}$) characteristic intrinsic power of the cavity and

Here, τ_{th} and τ_{fc} are the relaxation times for resp. the temperature and the free carriers; β_{Si} is the constant governing TPA; $c_{p,Si}$ the thermal capacity; ρ_{Si} the density of silicon and n_g is the group index. We also use the effective volumes V_α and confinements Γ_α corresponding with a physical effect α defined in [3, 7]. η_{lin} is the fraction of the linear loss that is absorbed (≈ 0.4 in SOI [6, 7]). Q_i is the intrinsic Q-factor of this cavity. Similar to [7], $k = \frac{\tau_c}{\tau_i}$ is the ratio of 'good' loading (lifetime τ_c) to the parasitic and intrinsic loss channels (lifetime τ_i) of the resonator. The loaded Q-factor of the cavity is then $Q = Q_i k / (1+k)$. For a critically coupled cavity $k = 1$.

$p = P_{in} / (P_0^{th} \frac{1+k}{2})$ is the normalized version of the input power and $q = \frac{P_0^{th}}{P_0^{el}}$; determines the relative importance of the thermo-optic effect versus FCD. $f = \alpha_H^{-1}$ compares the broadening of the resonance width due to FCA with FCD, with α_H the Henry factor [2]. $e = \frac{1+k}{k \eta_{lin}}$ and ef represents the additional heating due to FCA. $\epsilon = \tau_{fc} / \tau_{th}$, while time is expressed in units τ_{th} .

Eq. 1-2 still exhibit excitability (Fig. 2(a), simulated with Caphe [8]), while the dimensionality reduction allows a semi-analytic calculation of both the bistability (BI) onset and the Hopf bifurcation, i.e., the self-pulsation (SP) onset (Fig. 2(b)). A fold bifurcation of limit cycles (LC) curve starts from a Generalized Hopf (GH) bifurcation on the Hopf bifurcation curve. In the thin region between the LC fold and Hopf bifurcation curves a stable fixed point (FP) co-exists with a stable LC. Thereby, for $\delta > \delta_{GH}$ and p sufficiently strong, but still smaller than the LC fold, the microring is excitable. The LC fold is calculated using PyDSTool [9]. The microring is excitable mainly at the blue side of the resonance.

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(a) Example timetrace of excitability at $\delta = 0.5$ (b) Bifurcation plane: power p vs detuning δ .

Figure 2: Eq. 1-2 can be used to simulate and analyse the excitability mechanism in a microring. We illustrate our approach for a typical critically coupled all-pass SOI microring with self-pulsing behaviour ($q = 0.397$, $\varepsilon = 0.0815$, $f = 0.0714$, $e = 5$).

Conclusion

Cascadable excitability in a silicon-on-insulator all-pass microring is experimentally observed. If the fast light dynamics are neglected, both the self-pulsation and excitability onsets can be analytically calculated. Thereby, it is possible to predict the size of the excitability region for a given microring. This analysis can be used in the design of microring based all-optical neural networks.

Acknowledgments

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