Characterization of SiGe/Ge Heterostructures and Graded Layers Using Variable Angle Spectroscopic Ellipsometry

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Variable angle spectroscopic ellipsometry (VASE) has been used to characterize Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Ge superlattices (SLs) grown on Ge substrates and thick Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Ge heterostructures grown on Si substrates. Our VASE analysis yielded the thicknesses and alloy compositions of all layers within the optical penetration depth of the surface. In addition, strain effects were observed in the VASE results for layers under both compressive and tensile strain. Results for the SL structures were found to be in close agreement with high resolution x-ray diffraction measurements made on the same samples.

The VASE analysis has been upgraded to characterize linearly graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ buffer layers. The algorithm has been used to determine the total thickness of the buffer layer along with the start and end alloy composition by breaking the total thickness into many (typically > 20) equal layers. Our ellipsometric results for 1 μm buffer layers graded in the ranges 0.7 ≤ x ≤ 1.0 and 0.5 ≤ x ≤ 1.0 are presented, and compare favorably with the nominal values.

INTRODUCTION

Characterization of semiconductor superlattice (SL) structures is typically done by x-ray diffraction (XRD) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM). Both XRD and TEM can be used to quantify SL ordering and periodicity. In addition, XRD can give the average value of the composition. Both techniques have limitations; TEM is destructive, XRD requires relatively thick samples (~1000 Å), and neither technique can be used to quantify individual interfaces or quantum wells. Recently, variable angle spectroscopic ellipsometry (VASE) has been shown to be a powerful, non-destructive technique for the post-deposition characterization of Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Si SLs and other multilayer heterostructures [1,2]. In these studies VASE has been used to determine layer thicknesses, alloy composition, oxide thickness, number of superlattice periods, and sample homogeneity. In this current work we will concentrate on Ge rich Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Ge SLs and heterostructures.

Graded composition Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layers are used in the base of Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Si heterojunction bipolar transistors to increase device speed. Graded composition Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layers (graded to achieve x ≈ 0.3) are also used as buffers to relieve strain in the growth of n-type Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Si modulation doped field effect transistors (MODFET) structures. In previous VASE analysis of MODFETs, only the high energy portion of the ellipsometric spectra was used. Thus, a graded composition layer analysis was avoided, since the graded layer was buried below the optical penetration depth of the probing light at these energies. In this work a simple algorithm for the calculation of the Fresnel reflection coefficients of a linearly graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layer has been developed. This allowed a graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layer to be characterized in terms of its thickness, and Si content at the substrate and ambient surfaces.

BACKGROUND

To determine the properties of multilayer structures the measured ellipsometric angles, {tan Ψ(λ), cos Δ(λ)}, must be compared to results calculated from well defined models. Linear regression analysis (LRA) is used to minimize the unbiased estimator, σ:

$$
\sigma^2 = \frac{1}{n - m - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left\{ (\tan \Psi_i^c - \tan \Psi_i)^2 + (\cos \Delta_i^c - \cos \Delta_i)^2 \right\}
$$

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where \( n \) is the number of observed data points and \( m \) is the number of free parameters used in the model. The superscripts \( e \) and \( c \) refer to the experimentally observed data and the corresponding results calculated by the model, respectively. In order to construct a model, the dielectric function of all the constituent materials must be known. The dielectric function of composite layers can be determined using effective medium approximations (EMAs) [3]. The energy shift algorithm [4] is used to interpolate between \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) dielectric functions published at discrete alloy compositions [5]. The algorithm requires a knowledge of the functional dependence of the critical point (CP) energies with the alloy composition, usually the \( E_\alpha(x) \), \( E_1(x) \), and \( E_2(x) \) CP energies. To improve the analysis of Ge rich \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) materials the energy shift algorithm has been modified to include the effects of the \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) CP energy [6].

Fig. 1 shows the \( E_1 \) and \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) CP energies for strained and relaxed \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) layers. The in-plane strain, \( \varepsilon \), in the strained \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) layer results from the lattice mismatch between the layer and the substrate. The shifts in the \( E_1 \) and \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) CP energies for a biaxial (001) strain are given by [7]:

\[
\Delta E_1 = \frac{+\Delta_1}{2} + E_H - \frac{1}{2}(\Delta_1^2 + 4E_2^2)^{1/2} \\
\Delta(E_1 + \Delta_1) = -\frac{-\Delta_1}{2} + E_H + \frac{1}{2}(\Delta_1^2 + 4E_2^2)^{1/2}
\]

where the hydrostatic shift, \( E_H \), and uniaxial shear, \( E_S \), are given by:

\[
E_H = 2\varepsilon(1 - C_{12}/C_{11})
\]

\[
E_S = (2/3)^{1/2} D_3^2 (1 + 2C_{12}/C_{11}) \varepsilon
\]

Table I: Comparison of target sample structure with that determined by HRXRD and VASE. The period is the sum of the Ge and SiGe layer thicknesses, and \( x(\text{avg}) \) is the average silicon content in one period. The parameters of the VASE analysis are the oxide, Ge and SiGe layer thicknesses, and the silicon content, \( x \), of the SiGe layer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>( x(\text{avg}) )</th>
<th>( d(\text{Ge}) )</th>
<th>( d(\text{SiGe}) )</th>
<th>( x )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HA57</td>
<td>target</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>6.2&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA57</td>
<td>HRXRD</td>
<td>201.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>141.8&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>59.3&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>26.6&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA57</td>
<td>VASE</td>
<td>202.8</td>
<td>8.4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>127.5</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>±3.9</td>
<td>±3.5</td>
<td>±1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA58</td>
<td>target</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>7.8&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA58</td>
<td>HRXRD</td>
<td>202.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>141.8&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>27.5&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA58</td>
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<td>204.5</td>
<td>8.4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>126.9</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>±4.7</td>
<td>±4.4</td>
<td>±2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Calculated from \( d(\text{Ge}) \), \( d(\text{SiGe}) \), and \( x \).

<sup>b</sup>Estimated from the period, \( x(\text{avg}) \), and shutter opening/closing times.

\( \sigma = 0.0137, d(\text{oxide}) = 17.9 \pm 0.4 \text{ Å} \).

\( \delta \sigma = 0.0167, d(\text{oxide}) = 25.5 \pm 0.6 \text{ Å} \).

\( C_{ij} \) are the elastic stiffness constants, \( E_1 \) is the hydrostatic deformation potential, and \( D_3^2 \) is an intraband deformation potential for the \( \Lambda_3 \) valence band for a [001] uniaxial strain. The energy shift algorithm assumes the functional dependence of the relaxed \( E_1 \) and \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) CP energies shown in Fig. 1. Therefore, when modeling strained \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) layers the strain induced shifts in the \( E_1 \) and \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) will cause the value of the Si content, \( x \), to be over- or under-estimated for a compressive or tensile strain, respectively.

SiGe/Ge SUPERLATTICE STRUCTURES ON Ge SUBSTRATES

Two fifty period \( Si_xGe_{1-x}/Ge \) SL structures, HA57 and HA58, were grown by Si molecular beam epitaxy (MBE) on Ge (100) substrates at Hughes Research Laboratories. The samples were first characterized by high resolution x-ray diffraction (HRXRD) [8], the results are shown in Table I along with the target structures. Each sample was then measured by VASE at several angles of incidence (69°, 73°, and 77°) which were chosen to increase the sensitivity of the ellipsometric angles to the sample structure parameters [9]. The measured \( \tan \Psi, \cos \Delta \) spectra for sample HA57 are shown in Fig. 2 along with the spectra generated from the best fit model. Due to the strong absorption in the low wavelength region, discrepancies between the measured and calculated spectra in this region are a result of devia-

Figure 1: \( E_1 \) (long dash) and \( E_1 + \Delta_1 \) (short dash) critical point energies for relaxed and strained \( Si_xGe_{1-x} \) layers. The relaxed curves (Ref. 6) are shown as solid lines. The strain induced splitting (dashed lines) was calculated using Eqs. 2 and 3. For \( x > 0.5 \) the substrate is Si and the strain is compressive, and for \( x < 0.5 \) the substrate is Ge and the strain is tensile.
The agreement between the HRXRD and VASE results is quite good, especially when comparing the period and $x_{\text{avg}}$. There is, however, a substantial difference between the individual layer thicknesses and $x$. The Si$_{x}$Ge$_{1-x}$ layer is under a tensile strain as a result of being sandwiched between the thicker Ge layers. This tensile strain accounts for the lower $x$ value obtained by VASE. The differences in the layer thicknesses may be a result of interfacial layers which are not currently accounted for in the model.

The second sample, CL171, was modeled over the spectral range 300 nm to 760 nm. Over this range the Si$_{x}$Ge$_{1-x}$ layer will act as the substrate due to the increased thicknesses of both the Ge and SiGe layers. The measured VASE data is shown in Fig. 5 along with spectra generated from the best fit model; the resulting structure parameters are shown in Fig. 4. Modeling the
Table II: Results of VASE analysis of graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layers on Si substrates. The nominal thickness of all samples is 1 μm. The samples were linearly graded from 100% Si at the substrate to $x_n$(nom) at the surface. The parameters of the VASE analysis are the oxide thickness, buffer layer thickness (D), and the Si content at the surface ($x_n$). The Si content at the substrate was held constant at 100%. A value of $n = 30$ was used to model all three samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>$\sigma$</th>
<th>d(oxide)</th>
<th>$D$</th>
<th>$x_n$</th>
<th>$x_n$(nom)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HA82</td>
<td>0.0522</td>
<td>44.8 ± 0.9</td>
<td>1.04 ± 0.04</td>
<td>76.7 ± 0.6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA83</td>
<td>0.0524</td>
<td>59.3 ± 1.1</td>
<td>1.02 ± 0.03</td>
<td>66.7 ± 0.6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA17</td>
<td>0.0202</td>
<td>43.0 ± 0.4</td>
<td>0.97 ± 0.01</td>
<td>58.7 ± 0.3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ge layer as Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ resulted in a ~25% decrease in $\sigma$. Since the Si content of this layer should in fact be 0%, the value of 5.8% can be attributed to a compressive strain which results in an over-estimate of the Si content.

**SiGe GRADED LAYERS**

Three continuously, linearly graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layers were grown by Si MBE on Si (100) substrates at Hughes Research Laboratories; the nominal structures are described in Table II. Graded layers are simulated in the VASE model by breaking the layer into $n+1$ sub layers. The thickness of the $i$-th sub layer is:

$$d_i = \begin{cases} 
D/2n & i = 0, n \\
D/n & 1 \leq i < n 
\end{cases}$$

where $D$ is the total layer thickness. For a linearly graded layer the Si content of the $i$-th layer is given by:

$$x_i = \frac{(n - i)x_0 + ix_n}{n}$$

where $x_0$ and $x_n$ are the Si content at the substrate and surface, respectively. As $n \to \infty$ this model will more closely approximate a continuously graded layer. However, values of $n > 20$ were found to yield nearly identical results in the VASE analysis for the graded samples used in this study.

The graded samples were measured by VASE at three angles of incidence: 70°, 75°, and 77°. Fig. 6 shows the experimental data for sample HA17 along with the ellipsometric angles generated from the best fit model. The fitting is nearly perfect in the cos $\Delta$ spectrum and in the long wavelength region of the tan $\Psi$ spectrum. The poor fitting in the low wavelength region of the tan $\Psi$ spectrum is most likely due to poor surface
quality. Because the graded layers are uncapped, the surface region of the graded layers are expected to be strained which can cause the surface to become rough. Table II summarizes the results of the VASE analysis. It can be seen from this table that the thickness values are very close to the nominal values. The values for the Si content at the surface ($x_n$), however, are consistently much higher than the nominal values. These discrepancies can be caused by the compressive strain in the surface region of the layer which would result in an overestimate of $x$. The growth log notes that the surface morphology of sample HA83 is poor when compared with sample HA82. This may be the cause of the larger discrepancy in $x_n$ for sample HA83.

CONCLUSIONS

VASE has been used to characterize Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Ge SL structures grown on Ge substrates. The values of the period and $x$(avg) determined by VASE show excellent agreement with those same values determined by HRXRD. Due to strain effects or interfacial layers not accounted for in the VASE models, the individual layer thicknesses and $x$ determined by the two methods do not agree as closely. Thick Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$/Ge heterostructures grown on Si substrates have also been characterized by VASE. Results show close agreement with the nominal structure. In addition VASE analysis provides a qualitative assessment of the surface roughness and strain in the various layers of the structures. Finally, VASE has been used to characterize continuously, linearly graded Si$_x$Ge$_{1-x}$ layers in terms of the layer thickness and Si content at the surfaces. Results agree extremely well with the target structure, especially when strain in the surface region of these uncapped graded layers is taken in to account.

REFERENCES
