



Metglas thin film based magnetostrictive transducers for use in long period fibre grating sensors

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ABSTRACT

Metallic glass alloy Metglas 2826 MB based amorphous magnetic thin films were fabricated by the thermal evaporation technique. Transmission electron micrographs and electron diffraction pattern showed the amorphous nature of the films. Composition of the films was analyzed employing X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy and energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy techniques. The film was integrated to a long period fibre grating. It was observed that the resonance wavelength of the fibre grating decreased with an increase in the magnetic field. Change in the resonance wavelength was minimal at higher magnetic fields. Field dependent magnetostriction values revealed the potential application of these films in magnetostrictive sensor devices.

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1. Introduction

Magnetostrictive materials are currently of great interest due to their application potential in sensors and actuators [1–3]. Highly magnetostrictive materials are useful for ultrasound generators, magnetostrictive optical wavelength tuners and magnetostrictive delay lines [4]. Some of the requirements for practical applications of magnetostrictive materials include the capability to provide high saturation magnetostriction at low applied fields, ease of fabrication in a desired shape and low cost.

Metallic glass alloy Metglas 2826 MB based amorphous alloys are the best known candidates for magnetostrictive sensors because these amorphous alloys exhibit large saturation magnetostriction, high saturation magnetization, low anisotropy energies and low coercivity [5–7]. At present these alloys are available only in the form of ribbons of thickness ranging from 10 to 50 μm . A series of post treatment process such as high temperature anneal-

ing and epoxy treatment are further required for amorphous alloy ribbons to be used as sensors. Therefore there are many difficulties in fabricating systems based on amorphous ribbons for micro-sensor applications. Magneto elastic materials in the form of thin films are an alternative to ribbons and they can be integrated easily in Micro-Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS) and Nano-Electro Mechanical Systems (NEMS) [8]. This not only allows the miniaturization of sensor elements, but also enables the same micro-fabrication technologies to be used in the production of both electronic and magnetic devices. The integration of magnetic components into MEMS (MagMEMS) offers the advantages of implementing wireless technology [9]. In comparison with other MEMS technologies, for example those incorporating piezoelectric materials, MagMEMS offer a high power density, low performance degradation, fast response times and ease of fabrication.

Thin films based on metallic glasses can be prepared by techniques such as thermal evaporation, electrodeposition, molecular beam epitaxy, pulsed laser deposition and sputtering. Vapour deposition offers a simple alternative to sputter deposition in obtaining thin films of supersaturated solid solutions and other metastable states. Some attempts to prepare Metglas 2826 MB thin films by thermal evaporation have been reported in the literature [10–15]. Thin films of $\text{Fe}_{40}\text{Ni}_{38}\text{Mo}_4\text{B}_{18}$ were prepared by the flash evaporation technique [10]. Electron microscopy and diffraction investigations on these films showed that the films decompose

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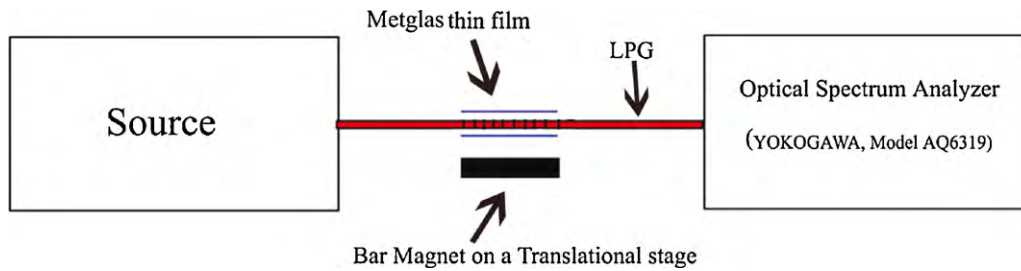


Fig. 1. Schematic of the experimental set up for measuring magnetostriction.

in an eutectic fashion with thermal annealing. Magnetic studies were not carried out on these samples and the main focus of the paper was on the structural evolution of these films with thermal annealing. An alloy film deposited from a target of composition $\text{Fe}_{40}\text{Ni}_{38}\text{Mo}_4\text{B}_{18}$ was studied previously by our group [11–15]. When Metglas thin films are grown it is necessary that their composition is determined as accurately as possible and technique like XPS is very useful in such studies. Moreover, the as prepared amorphous magnetic thin films usually present high coercivity due to stresses in the films. The magnetic property of such films strongly depends on the magnitude of magnetoelastic anisotropies. So the measurement of magnetostriction is also important in the study of the amorphous ferromagnetic thin films.

Optical fibre long period grating (LPG) can be utilized to quantify the magnetostriction in thin films. It is a non-destructive technique. Optical fibre long period grating based sensing methods offer other advantages of electromagnetic interference immunity, compactness, ease of fabrication and multiplexing [16].

LPGs are usually fabricated by exposing the core of a photosensitive optical fibre to a spatially varying ultra-violet beam [17]. Typically, the impinging UV beam is periodic in space and results in a regular pattern of refractive index modulation in the fibre core. For these gratings the energy typically couples from the fundamental guided mode to discrete, forward propagating cladding mode. Each LPG with a given periodicity Λ selectively filters light in a narrow band width centred on the peak wavelength of coupling λ_i [18]

$$\lambda_i = [n_{eff}(\lambda_i) - n_{cladd}^i(\lambda_i)]\Lambda \quad (1)$$

where n_{eff} is the effective index of refraction of the propagating core mode, n_{cladd}^i is the index of refraction of the i th cladding mode, Λ is the period of grating and λ_i is the coupling wavelength. The value of n_{eff} depends on the core and cladding refractive index while the value of n_{cladd}^i depends on the core, cladding and air indices. When a tensile stress is applied to the optical fibre long period grating, the periodic spacing changes and thereby causes the coupling wavelength to shift. This provides a sensitive mechanism to measure the stress/strain and also the magnetostriction of a material attached to the fibre grating.

Few reports exist there in the literature describing the possible use of magnetostrictive transducers in fibre optic based sensors [19–21]. Sedlar et al. [19] reported the magnetic field sensing properties of ferrite coated single mode optical fibres. Rengarajan and Walser [20] reported the fabrication of a high speed fibre optic sensor for magnetic field mapping. Their magnetostrictive transducer consisted of a multilayer film of $\text{Co}_{50}\text{Fe}_{50}/\text{Ni}_{80}\text{Fe}_{20}$. Chen et al. [21] reported the low field magnetostriction in an annealed Co–30% Fe alloy. Thick sheets of Co–Fe were bonded to a fibre Bragg grating sensor for magnetostriction measurements under different external magnetic fields. The majority of the studies concentrated on single mode fibres with an interferometer configuration for sensing the magnetic field. Further, the transducers were in the form of ribbons which were attached to the fibre using an epoxy. Long

period grating based fibre sensors in combination with a thin film magnetostrictive transducer is a better alternative for sensing the parameters such as magnetic field and strain. A survey of the literature reveals that not much work has been done on exploring the possibilities of Metglas thin film-LPG based magnetostrictive sensors. The combined use of Metglas thin films and an external magnetic field can provide excellent tuning and chirping of long period fibre gratings. The integration of a magnetostrictive material to an optical fibre long period grating can thus find potential applications in magnetic field sensing, wavelength tunable optical filters and multiplexing devices. Therefore, the integration of Metglas thin films on to an optical fibre long period grating not only enable us in measuring magnetostriction of amorphous thin films but also help us in realizing possible magnetostrictive sensor devices.

The present work reports on the preparation of Metallic glass alloy Metglas 2826 MB based amorphous thin films and their integration into an optical fibre long period grating for potential magnetostrictive sensor applications. As prepared amorphous thin films were characterized using transmission electron microscopy and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy. The film was coupled to a long period fibre grating. The attenuation band of the Metglas thin film coupled LPG had dependence on the strength of the magnetic field. Field dependent magnetostriction values were calculated from the shift in the central wavelength of the attenuation band. The results are presented here.

2. Experiment

Long Period Grating was realized by exposing a photosensitive fibre, Newport F-SBG-15 to an excimer laser operated at 248 nm. Point to point technique was used for writing the grating and the grating period was 575 μm . The grating was written over a length of 2 cm. Metglas thin films of thickness around 100 nm were deposited simultaneously onto a silicon substrate, NaCl substrate and an optical fibre long period grating, employing the thermal evaporation technique. Commercially available Metglas 2826 MB ribbon of composition $\text{Fe}_{40}\text{Ni}_{38}\text{Mo}_4\text{B}_{18}$ was employed as a source material to deposit thin films. The films were deposited by thermal evaporation using a current of 25 A at a base pressure of 1×10^{-5} mbar. A base pressure of $\sim 1 \times 10^{-5}$ mbar was achieved by a diffusion pump backed with a rotary pump. Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) experiments were carried out on films coated on NaCl substrates. A JOEL JEM-2200 FS electron microscope operated at 200 kV was used for this. The compositions of the films were analyzed using an energy dispersive X-ray spectrometer which was attached to the TEM column. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were carried out on films prepared on silicon substrates employing an Omicron Nanotechnology Multiprobe Instrument. XPS spectra were obtained using a high resolution hemisphere analyzer EA 125 HR equipped with a detection system consisting of seven channeltrons. A monochromatic Al K α source of energy $h\nu = 1486.6$ eV was used to probe the films which was attached to

a molybdenum sample holder. Pressure in the XPS chamber during measurements was maintained at $\sim 5 \times 10^{-10}$ mbar. Room temperature magnetization measurements were carried out using a vibrating sample magnetometer (DMS 1660 VSM) with an external field varying from -2 to $+2$ kOe. Magnetostriction was measured using an instrument with an optical fibre long period grating device, as shown in Fig. 1. A bar magnet ($l = 5$ cm, $b = 1$ cm and $h = 1$ cm) was mounted with its long axis parallel to the optical fibre as shown in Fig. 1. The bar magnet was placed on a translation stage so that the position of magnet with respect to the optical fibre can be varied with a precision of 0.01 mm. In the present configuration, the magnetic field direction is parallel to the fibre axis and thus the field direction is along the easy magnetic axis of the deposited thin film. The magnetic field strength was measured using a hall probe attached to a gauss meter and the measured field ranged from 1370 to 160 G when the distance between the bar magnet and optical fibre was varied from 3 to 20 mm. The measured magnetic fields were 1370, 1180, 1010, 500, 265 and 160 G for 3, 4, 5, 10, 15 and 20 mm distances respectively. The transmission spectrum of the long period grating was recorded at different magnetic fields using an optical spectrum analyzer (Yokogawa, Model AQ6319) with a wavelength resolution of 10 pm. The source used for the spectral measurement was a Broad Band Source (BBS), Yokogawa AQ4305. In the transmission spectrum, which is a plot of intensity vs. wavelength, loss peaks were observed at resonant wavelength corresponding to the coupling of core mode to cladding mode. This loss peaks were shifted depending on the axial strain applied to fibre by the coated magnetostrictive material under different magnetic fields. The coupling wavelength of LPG was noted at different magnetic fields and magnetostriction was calculated from the shift in the coupling wavelength.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Structure and composition

3.1.1. Transmission electron microscopy

Fig. 2 shows a TEM bright field image of the as deposited films. One can clearly notice that the microstructure exhibits very poor contrast typical of an amorphous material. The electron diffraction pattern shown in Fig. 3 is characteristic of an amorphous material.

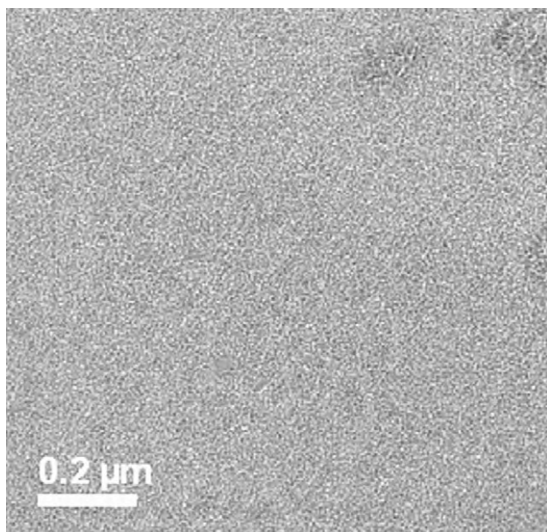


Fig. 2. TEM bright field image of vapour deposited Metglas thin film.

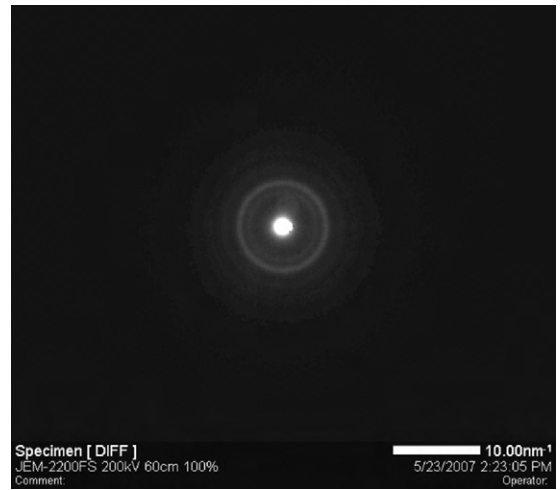


Fig. 3. Electron diffraction pattern of vapour deposited Metglas thin film.

3.1.2. XPS analysis

XPS survey scan was collected for films deposited on silicon substrate and is depicted in Fig. 4. The spectrum exhibits characteristics photoelectron lines of Fe and Ni. The survey scan also exhibited lines corresponding to the emission of Auger electrons (Ni LMM, Fe LMM). The peak positions of Ni LMM and Fe LMM were 641 and 784 eV respectively which is in line with the reported values [22]. Boron and molybdenum were not detected in the XPS survey scan. The absence of molybdenum and boron in XPS indicates that the film is deficient in boron and molybdenum. In XPS the relative sensitivity of Fe, Mo and B compared to Ni is 0.86, 0.64 and 0.06 respectively. The low sensitivity for B is due to the small photoionization cross-section for boron. However we were able to detect Mo and B in Metglas 2826 MB ribbon (the source material used for evaporation). The spectrum for B 1s and Mo 3d acquired from Metglas ribbon is shown Fig. 5(a) and (b) respectively. B 1s line was centred on 189.4 eV. The peak positions of Mo 3d_{5/2} and Mo 3d_{3/2} were 228.1 and 231.25 eV respectively and the 3d doublet separation was 3.15 eV. The scan for B 1s and Mo 3d lines in thin films (Fig. 5(c) and (d)) does not show these elements in thin films. Since the detection limit of XPS is in the range 0.1–1 at.% we attribute the absence of Mo and B peaks in the XPS to the absence of these elements in the film. Fig. 6 shows an EDS profile from the prepared amorphous thin film. Energy dispersive X-ray analysis confirmed

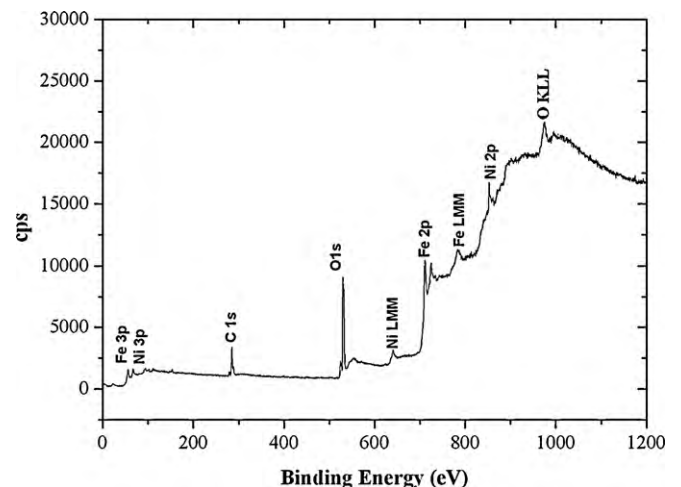


Fig. 4. XPS survey scan for Metglas based thin film.

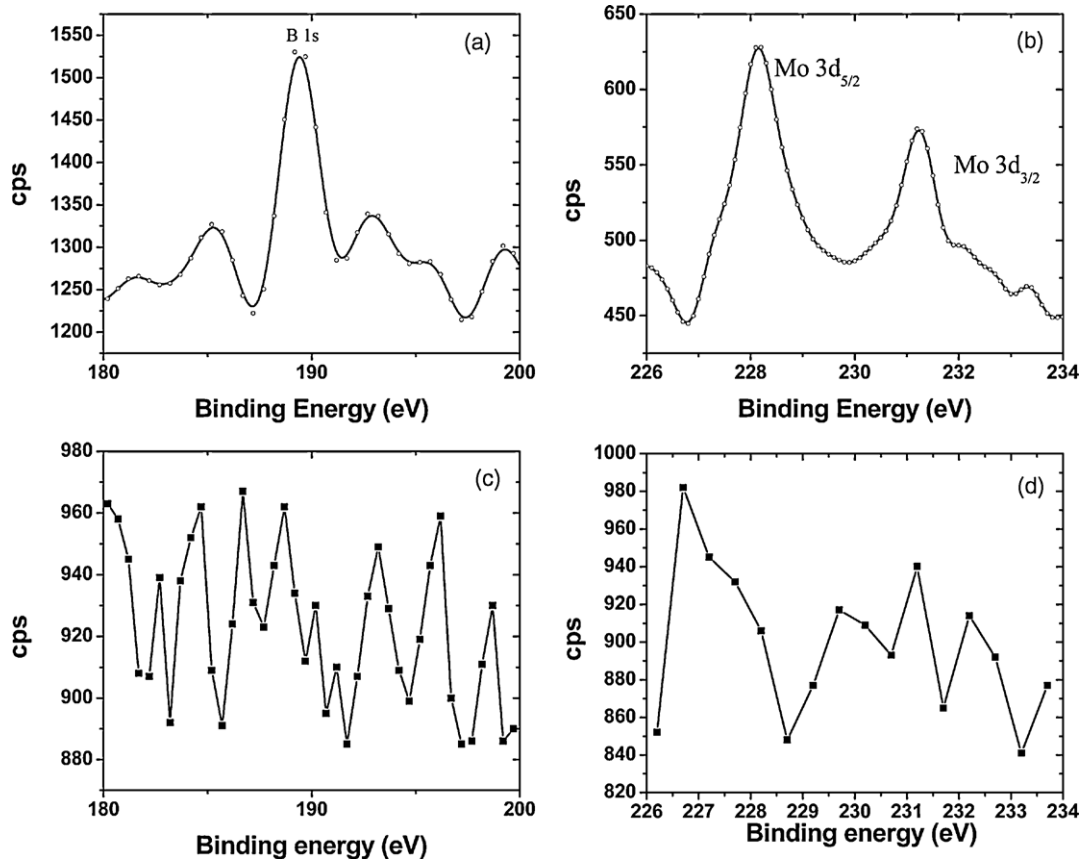


Fig. 5. (a) B 1s spectrum of the source material used for evaporation (Metglas 2826 MB ribbon) (b) Mo 3d of the source material used for evaporation (Metglas 2826 MB ribbon) (c) XPS scans for B 1s in thin films and (d) XPS scans for Mo 3d in thin films.

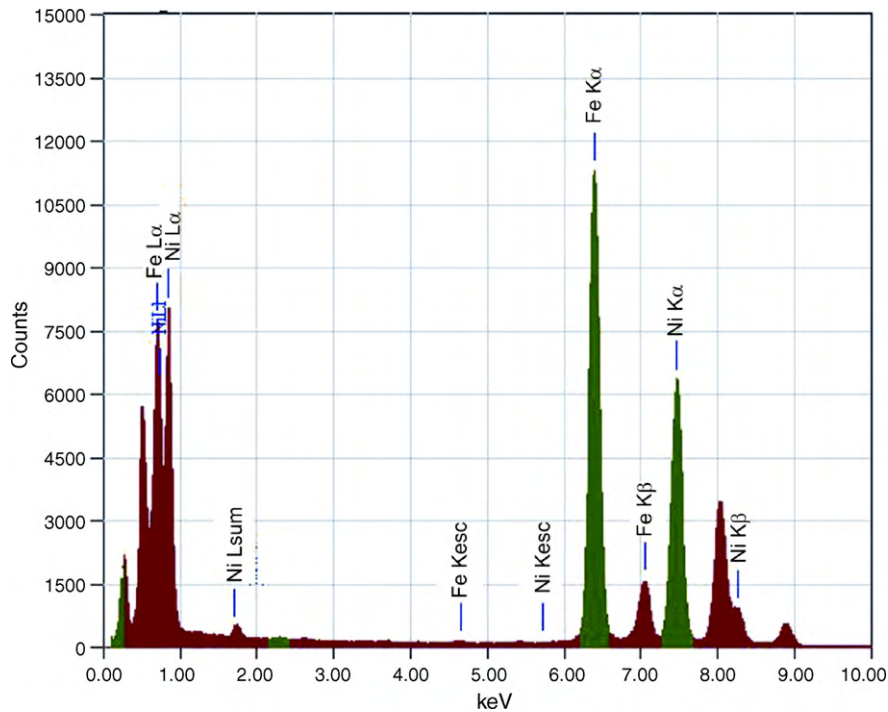


Fig. 6. EDS profile of Metglas based thin films.

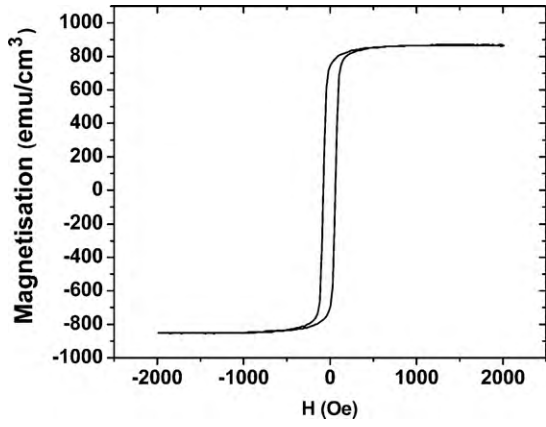


Fig. 7. Room temperature M - H curve for Metglas film in a parallel field.

the presence of iron and nickel and the composition of the film was found to be $\text{Fe}_{55}\text{Ni}_{45}$.

3.2. Magnetic properties

Fig. 7 shows room temperature hysteresis loop for thin film in parallel field. The saturation magnetization was found to be 865 emu/cm^3 and the saturation was achieved at a field of 1000 Oe . The coercivity was $\sim 60 \text{ Oe}$. Even in the absence of crystalline anisotropy, the origin of coercivity can be due to magnetoelastic anisotropies arising from stresses in the film.

In order to gain further insight into the magnetostrictive properties of the film, the magnetostriction was determined at various magnetic fields. The magnetostriction was measured using an instrument with an optical fibre grating device as shown in Fig. 1. The shift in the coupling wavelength due to the magnetostrictive strain was obtained with an optical spectrum analyzer.

For long period gratings, the energy typically couples from the fundamental guided mode to discrete, forward propagating cladding mode. The energy transferred to a cladding mode is then absorbed in the protective coating elsewhere in the fibre, which gives rise to an absorption band in the transmission spectrum of a fibre containing such a grating. The peak wavelength of absorption is defined by Eq. (1). When a tensile stress is applied to the optical fibre long period grating the periodic spacing changes and thereby causes the coupling wavelength to shift.

The axial strain sensitivity of LPGs [18] may be assessed by differentiating Eq. (1)

$$\frac{d\lambda}{d\varepsilon} = \frac{d\lambda}{d(\delta n_{\text{eff}})} \left(\frac{dn_{\text{eff}}}{d\varepsilon} - \frac{dn_{\text{cl}}}{d\varepsilon} \right) + \Lambda \frac{d\lambda}{d\Lambda} \quad (2)$$

The sensitivity comprises the material effects i.e. the change in fibre dimension and the strain-optic effect as well as waveguide effects arising from the slope of the dispersion term $d\lambda/d\Lambda$.

When an axial strain is applied to a fibre grating, the resonant wavelength of the fibre grating will shift because the Λ of the grating will increase and at the same time the effective refractive index of both core and cladding modes will decrease due to the photoelastic effect of the fibre.

The amount of wavelength shift is given by [23]

$$\frac{\delta\lambda}{\lambda} = \gamma \frac{(1 - p_{\text{co}})n_{\text{eff}} - (1 - p_{\text{cl}})n_{\text{cl}}}{n_{\text{eff}} - n_{\text{cl}}} \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

Here p_{co} and p_{cl} are the elastooptic parameters of core and cladding correspondingly, n_{eff} and n_{cl} are the effective refractive indices of core mode and cladding mode, ε is the strain induced on the fibre grating and γ is a generalized sensing parameter which essentially represents a feedback due to the presence of the grating in dispersive fibre [24]. The values of p_{co} and p_{cl} are normally in the range 0.20 – 0.25 for silica fibre and for a simplified case one can assume $p_{\text{co}} \approx p_{\text{cl}} = p_e$ where p_e is the effective elastooptic parameter for silica. p_e is defined as

$$p_e = \frac{n^2}{2} [P_{12} - \nu(P_{11} + P_{12})]$$

Here n is the refractive index of fused silica, ν is the Poisson ratio and P_{11} and P_{12} are the two strain-optic coefficients.

The effective photoelastic parameter, p_e is about 0.22 for a silica fibre. Considering $\gamma \approx 1$ and the strain is homogeneous and isotropic, Eq. (3) simplifies to its more common form

$$\frac{\delta\lambda}{\lambda} = [1 - p_e] \varepsilon \cong 0.78 \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

This allows the magnetostriction of the sample (ε_s) to be directly determined by [21]

$$\varepsilon_s = \left(\frac{l_f}{l_s} \right) \varepsilon = \left(\frac{l_f}{l_s} \right) \frac{1}{0.78} \frac{\delta\lambda}{\lambda} \quad (5)$$

The factor (l_f/l_s) is introduced to accommodate the difference in length between the fibre grating (l_f) and the sample (l_s). In the present experiment we have used $l_f = 2 \text{ cm}$ and $l_s = 2 \text{ cm}$.

Fig. 8(a)–(e) shows the transmission spectra in the wavelength range 1625 – 1665 nm of the Metglas thin film coated LPG for magnetic fields ranging from 160 to 1370 G . The peak position was determined by fitting the experimental spectra using the Lorentzian function (red line in the transmission spectra). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this text, the reader is referred to the web version of the article.)

Fig. 8(f) shows resonance wave length vs. applied magnetic field. For magnetic fields in the range 160 – 500 G the change in the resonance wavelength was minimal. Possible reasons can be the insensitiveness of the fibre grating to very small strains or the changes if any may be less than the resolution of the spectrometer. There is a decrease in the resonance wavelength position from 1643.34 to 1643.17 nm as the magnetic field increases from 500 to 1180 G . For higher magnetic fields the change is minimal since the film has reached its magnetic saturation (Fig. 7).

Magnetostriction values calculated at different fields using the Eq. (5) are shown in Fig. 9. The saturation magnetostriction was found to be $\sim 130 \text{ ppm}$ and the magnetostriction was saturated at fields of $\sim 1200 \text{ G}$. Two points are to be noted here; (1) magnetostriction values presented in Fig. 9 corresponds to that for a Metglas thin film/silica fibre system rather than that for a free standing Metglas thin film and (2) magnetostriction values presented here are based on the assumption that the strain induced on film and fibre are equal in magnitude. In an ideal case one should also consider the elastic properties of both transducer and sensor while calculating the magnetostriction [25,26]

The origin of magnetostriction in amorphous ferromagnetic materials has been addressed previously [27]. In macroscopically isotropic amorphous ferromagnets the average magnetic anisotropy is zero. However the material can be considered as consisting of very small structural units with strong uniaxial anisotropy and with easy axis varying randomly from site to site. These structural units exhibit spontaneous magnetostrictive strains, like small crystalline ferromagnets with corresponding orientation of easy axes [27]. The units are mechanically coupled and the macroscopic strain manifests itself by elastic strain transfer from one

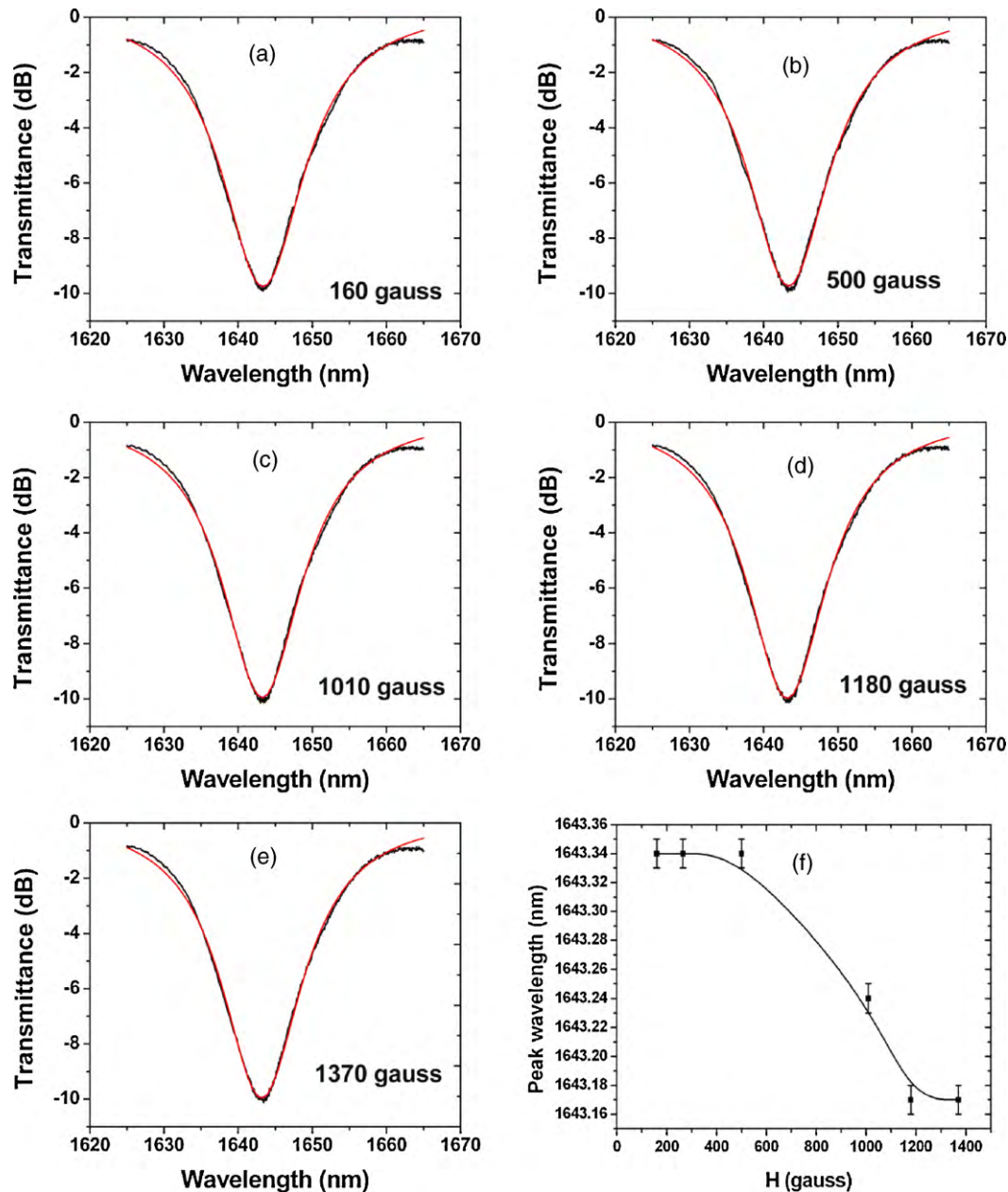


Fig. 8. (a) LPG Transmission spectrum at a magnetic field of 160 G (b) 500 G (c) 1010 G (d) 1180 G and (e) 1370 G. Variation of peak position with applied magnetic field is shown in (f).

unit to another. The summation of these elastic strains is non-zero due to the anisotropic elastic properties of the structural units [28].

Coupling of magnetostriction in Metglas thin films with long period fibre grating shows the applicability of this device for magnetic field sensors as well as for position sensing applications. The use of optical fibre for magnetic field sensing offers many advantages compared to its electronic counterpart, such as remote sensing, multiplexing different point sensors on a single fibre and sensing under hazardous conditions. It will be worth comparing the saturation magnetostriction in the present experiment with previously reported ones. The saturation magnetostriction of 130 ppm is comparable with the observations of Chen et al. [21] in annealed Co–Fe samples. But the field required for saturation in the present experiment is much larger (~1200 G) than the reported one (~600 G). Saturation magnetostriction of thin films in the present case is much larger than the magnetostriction exhibited by Metglas

2826 MB ribbons which is ~12 ppm. What is evident here is that from a material point of view, the thin film form of metallic glass alloy Metglas 2826 MB is promising for magnetostriction applications due to their comparable saturation magnetostriction with the bulk counterparts. But from a device point of view, improvements are necessitated. The shift in the LPG spectrum with an external magnetic field is small and high resolution spectrometers are necessary for detecting it. A fibre grating with good axial sensitivity will be a better choice from an application point of view. Further, scope exists in amplifying the strain, for e.g. using a multilayer stack of alternative magnetostrictive material (Metglas) and a non-magnetic thin film and a variety of applications such as wavelength tunable optical signal filter, wavelength channel add/drop multiplexer or a signal compensator is possible. Even though optimizations are required from an application point of view, the present study was successful in demonstrating a novel way to explore magnetostriction in metallic glass thin films.

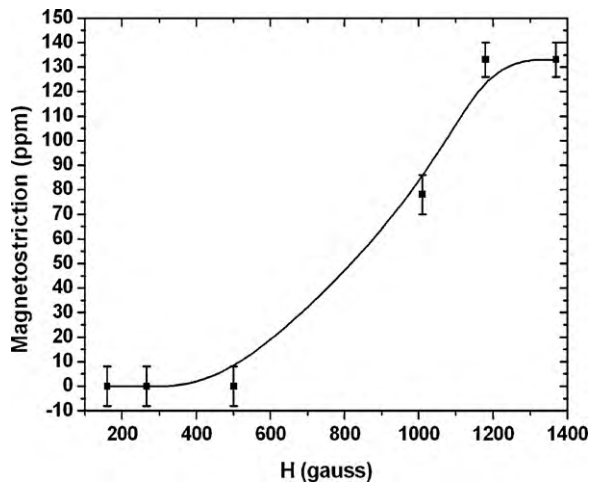


Fig. 9. Magnetostriction coefficient for Metglas films at different magnetic fields.

4. Conclusions

Metglas 2826 MB based amorphous thin films were prepared by the thermal evaporation technique. Transmission electron microscopy studies showed the amorphous nature of the sample. The presence of iron and nickel were established using X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy and energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy techniques. The film was integrated to a long period fibre grating. The central wavelength of the attenuation band in the transmission spectrum of the long period grating decreased with an increase in the magnetic field. This dependence was due to the transfer of strain from film to fibre on application of a magnetic field. The change in the resonance wavelength was minimal once the film achieved its magnetic saturation. The magnetostriction properties exhibited by this film imply the potential application of this material in magnetostrictive sensor devices.

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