Integrity-Modulated Fiber-Optic Sensor: A Novel Grid Measurement Unit

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Abstract—This article presents a novel approach to physical-displacement-based power grid measurement via an intensity-modulated fiber-optic sensor (IMFOS). An IMFOS utilizes one fiber to transmit the intensity modulated light from its electro-optic controller to a fiber-optic probe. The power grid voltage and current can induce physical displacements in transducers via the piezoelectric effect and the Lorentz law, respectively, which then result in a distance change between the optical probe and the reflective surface of the transducers. In parallel, multiple fibers are used to collect the reflective light for electro-optic conversion. A National-Instruments-based characterization platform is set up for performance evaluation. The testing result demonstrates that the IMFOS is immune to the inherent dc and low-frequency saturation issues prevalent in conventional potential and current transformers. Finally, the IMFOS is implemented in a universal grid analyzer to illustrate its applicability for phasor estimation in actual power grids.

Index Terms—Intensity-modulated fiber optic (IMFO), power grid measuring, universal grid analyzer (UGA).

I. INTRODUCTION

HIGH-FIDELITY monitoring devices, such as phasor measurement units (PMUs), play an essential role in improving the reliability and resilience of the power grid by providing real-time measurements of voltage and current [1]–[6]. As the feedback from power system actuators, precise and real-time measurements are the solid foundations and strong supports for power system automation applications, such as distributed energy source controls [7], damping controls [8], power system situational awareness [9], and event localization [10]. For instance, by using the synchrophasors provided by multiple PMUs, a damping controller can mitigate major categories of frequency oscillations and allow more renewable electricity in power grids.

Conventional electromagnetic potential transformers (PTs) and current transformers (CTs) are widely installed to provide a measurement interface for grid monitoring devices. By using both CT and PT, PMUs and the supervisory control and data acquisition systems can provide real-time measurements to the grid control center. Unfortunately, such magnetic-core-based PT/CTs have inherent weaknesses, such as magnetic saturation, electromagnetic interference (EMI) sensitivity, and poor linearity, which typically become one of the bottlenecks for reliable and accurate grid measurements [11]–[13]. For example, the dc component under the fault conditions can cause the saturation of transducers, which would have an adverse impact on the protection functions of the relay and consequently on the system stability [14]. Moreover, the conventional PT and CT require a direct physical connection to a conductor for sensing and, thus, are usually equipped with oil or sulfur hexafluoride gas for insulation. Such specific requirements complicate their installation process and increase overall maintenance costs, especially under conditions of harsh and explosive environments [15], [16]. The electric- and magnetic-field-based noncontact sensor was developed and tested for the synchronized measurement of a high-voltage transmission line, which would dramatically reduce manufacturing and installation costs [17], [18]. However, these wireless sensors lack robustness and can produce large harmonic distortions.

Applications of fiber-optic sensors can be a powerful tool for the measurement of various physical parameters [19], [20]. Since fiber-optics use light rather than electricity, the fiber-optic sensor is not sensitive to EMI and, thus, is superior in such applications with minimal need for dielectrics. Moreover, the optical sensors are able to address the saturation concerns inherent in existing electromagnetic CT and PT. For the application of power grid sensing, the most common approach of existing optical sensors has relied on the interaction between light and an electromagnetic field based on the Faraday and Pockels effects, which rotates an optical probe field polarization state in proportion to the magnetoelectric fields and measures the
changes in light phase and polarity, in turn indicating various electric and magnetic phenomena [17]–[26]. However, the effects of light polarization, temperature, filtration calibration, and birefringence drift all adversely impact the performance of these sensors. Moreover, the specialized polarization required by components, coupled with the calibration process, makes the sensor design costly to manufacture.

Compared with the light polarization modulation method, the intensity-modulated fiber-optic (IMFO) approach has merits in its simplicity and robustness [27], [28]. Unlike the light polarization modulation technology, the IMFO does not require interferometry or lasers and is less susceptible to the effects of temperature and vibration. Since IMFO is a promising technology for physical parameter measurement, this article investigates the feasibility of exploiting this technology for power grid voltage and current measurement, with the expectation to overcome the inherent weaknesses in conventional transducers. The proposed intensity-modulated fiber-optic sensor (IMFOS) transmits 850-nm infrared light to its probes via a center fiber. Since the power grid voltage and current can induce physical displacements in transducers via the piezoelectric effect and Lorentz law, respectively, a distance change between the optical probe and the reflective surface of the transducers will occur. Meanwhile, six fibers around the center fiber are used to collect the reflective light, with strength dependent directly on the displacement caused by the physical phenomena of interest. With this in mind, a prototype of IMFOS was fabricated for 120-V/60-Hz power grid monitoring. To evaluate the performance of the prototype sensor, a characterization platform based on the National Instruments (NI) PXI system is built to conduct laboratory experiments, including steady-state dc offset, low frequency, and dynamic tests. Finally, the IMFOS is also implemented with a GPS-time synchronized distribution level platform, universal grid analyzer (UGA), to demonstrate its applicability for phasor measurement. The frequency error (FE), dc offset, low frequency, and dynamic tests are explored in an actual distribution platform based on the National Instruments (NI) PXI system is built to conduct laboratory experiments, including steady-state dc offset, low frequency, and dynamic tests. Finally, the IMFOS is also implemented with a GPS-time synchronized distribution level platform, universal grid analyzer (UGA), to demonstrate its applicability for phasor measurement. The frequency error (FE), dc offset, low frequency, and dynamic tests are explored in an actual distribution level power grid. The contributions are summarized as follows.

1) A novel physical-displacement-based power grid measuring technology via an IMFOS is presented, including both real-time voltage and current sensing. Both the working principle and the prototype development of the IMFOS are presented.

2) An NI-based characterization platform is set up for performance evaluation.

3) To thoroughly compare with existing CTs and PTs, multiple experiments are conducted to verify and evaluate the performance of the IMFOS. The IMFOS is also implemented with a PMU in real-world power systems.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. Section II provides the principle of voltage and current probe design based on IMFO technology. Section III presents the mechanism of multireceiving fibers for sensitivity enhancement. Section IV details the IMFOS prototype for distribution power grid sensing. Section V presents the characterization test and UGA implementation to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed IMFOS. Finally, Section VI concludes this article.

II. PRINCIPAL OF THE INTENSITY-MODULATED OPTICAL PROBE

In this section, theoretical foundations for the power grid voltage and current sensing via IMFO technology are discussed. The designs of voltage and current probes are given.

A. Voltage Sensing

According to the piezoelectric effect, a physical displacement will be induced proportional to the potential difference between the two faces of the piezoelectric material [30]. Fig. 1 shows the structure of the voltage probe. The power grid voltage \( V_{in} \) is divided via the series capacitor \( C \) and the piezoelectric transducer. The relationship between the applied voltage \( V_{in} \) and the corresponding displacement \( \Delta h \) of the piezoelectric transducer in height can be expressed as follows:

\[
\Delta h = crV_{in}
\]

where \( c \) is the constant piezoelectric coefficient of the piezoelectric transducer and \( r \) is the reactance ratio between \( C \) and the piezoelectric transducer. According to (1), in response to the applied voltage, the piezoelectric transducer will experience a physical displacement, consequently changing the distance between the fiber probe and the reflective surface of the piezoelectric material.

Fig. 1 shows the structure of the voltage probe. To measure the distance, LED light is launched from the electro-optic (EO) controller into a transmitting fiber and then bounced back by the reflective surface of piezoelectric material into receiving fibers. The light propagates via the receiving fibers and is detected by the light-sensing end. Then, the power of the received optical light is converted into an electric current by using a photodiode. Finally, an EO circuit is utilized to generate the output voltage, \( V_{out} \), after filtering and amplification. Therefore, the power grid voltage \( V_{in} \), which is proportional to the displacement of the piezoelectric material, is sensed and converted into \( V_{out} \). The parameters of the IMFOS are listed in Table I.

B. Current Sensing

To sense the current, the IMFOS uses the fiber optic to measure the beam displacement caused by the Lorentz force [31]. Under the Lorentz law, a force \( F \) is applied to a charged
TABLE I
PARAMETERS OF THE IMFOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value/descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$V_{in}$ range</td>
<td>1−120 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$I_{in}$ range</td>
<td>1−30 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_{out}$ range</td>
<td>0−5 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transimpedance gain</td>
<td>$5 \times 10^8$ V/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LED emitting wavelength</td>
<td>850 nm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of the fiber probe</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass core diameter</td>
<td>200 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic cladding</td>
<td>230 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerical aperture</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltage probe material</td>
<td>PZT-4 piezoceramic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltage probe size</td>
<td>12×1.5×0.5 mm$^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum distance range</td>
<td>500 μm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling rate</td>
<td>50 kHz to 2 MHz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen in (5) that the beam will experience a displacement $\Delta y$, which is proportional to $I_{in}$, toward the direction of the optical probe. Meanwhile, light is launched from the light source into the transmitting fiber and then reflected by the reflective surface of the conductor into the receiving fibers. The light will propagate via the receiving fibers and be detected by the light-sensing end. Therefore, the power grid current $I_{in}$ will be sensed in IMFOS. Then, a similar procedure as discussed in the voltage sensor will be used to convert the receiving optical power into output voltage, $V_{out}$. The parameters of the current sensor are listed in Table I.

Fig. 2. Structure of the current probe in IMFOS.

Fig. 3. Probe of optical IMFOS.

Fig. 4. Reflective light and Transmitting light. Receiving fiber tube Transmitter fiber permanent magnet Magnetic core Conductor mirror. The maximum dc sensitivity for one fiber probe occurs at the smallest probe-mirror distance, whereas the maximum sensitivity is achieved at a

III. MULTIRECEIVING FIBERS

To increase the sensitivity of IMFOS, the multifiber structure is utilized, comprising multiple multimode receiving fibers and one transmitting fiber. The arrangement of the fibers is illustrated in Fig. 3. The transmitting fiber is placed in the center of the bundle and is then symmetrically surrounded by multiple receiving fibers. All of the fibers are held in a tube, such that the ends of each fiber are adjacent by a distance $d$ to the mirror onto transducers exhibiting physical displacement. Because the light is bounced back in all directions on the reflective surface, as shown in Fig. 3, the multiple receiving fiber design is beneficial to capture more reflective light and improve the sensitivity.

In the sensitivity test, the fiber is mounted on a micrometer translator, which can be displaced manually against a mirror mounted on the piezoelectric transducer. The PZT-4 cylinder of 2-inch outer diameter and 3-inch length is utilized, which can vibrate in response to the applied voltage. In the test, the probe is manually displaced by a step of 25.4 μm using the translator. Figs. 4 and 5 illustrate the comparison between multifibers and single fibers with respect to dc and ac displacement sensitivity over $d$, respectively. For dc displacement sensitivity, it represents the relationship between reflected light power with the probe-mirror distance. For ac displacement sensitivity, it represents the relationship between signal voltage level and probe-mirror distance. With a higher dc and ac sensitivity, a stronger reflected light and a higher voltage of the received signal can be obtained, which indicates an enhanced ability to detect the displacement.

According to the results shown in Fig. 4, the maximum dc sensitivity for one fiber probe occurs at the smallest probe-mirror distance, whereas the maximum sensitivity is achieved at a

particle in a perpendicular direction to both the magnetic field and the current, which can be expressed as follows:

$$ F = il \times B $$

(2)

where $B$ is the flux density, $i$ is the current in the conductor, and $l$ is the length of the conductor.

As shown in Fig. 2, the power grid current $I_{in}$ is split into the shunt and the conductor $a$, which is placed in a gap in the magnetic core. A force applied to the conductor $a$ can be expressed as follows:

$$ F_a = \frac{\mu i_a}{2\pi d} B l $$

(3)

where $i_a \ll I_{in}$ and also satisfying $i_a = K_c I_{in}$ where $K_c$ is the current divider coefficient depending on shunt parameters. The force $F_a$ creates a displacement $\Delta y$ of the conductor beam as

$$ \Delta y = \frac{5F_a L^3}{384EI\pi d} $$

(4)

where $\frac{5}{384}$ is a constant that depends on how the beam is mounted. $E$ is the modulus of elasticity of the material from which the beam is fabricated, and $L$ is the moment of inertia of the cross section of the beam. $L$ is the length of the beam. Substituting (3) into (4), we can get the following:

$$ \Delta y = \frac{5\mu I_{in} B L^3 K_c}{384EI\pi d}. $$

(5)
greater distance for the multifiber probe. Moreover, a significantly higher light power is detected in the multifiber probe. From Fig. 4, the maximum dc displacement sensitivity of the multifiber probe is achieved in the region of 300–600 μm with a significantly higher power of detected light. The largest detected light power of a multifiber probe is 300 μW compared to 110 μW of a single-fiber probe, which indicates the coupler used in the multifiber probe increases the detected light power by about two times larger than that of a single-fiber probe. It can be seen from Fig. 5 that the maximum ac displacement sensitivity of the multifiber probe is approximately 13 dB higher than that of a single-fiber probe. The increased sensitivity makes a multifiber probe a better choice for applications that require high-quality measurements.

### IV. Prototype Development

In this section, the prototype of the IMFOS is built for a 120-V/60-Hz distribution power grid. The systematic diagram can be seen in Fig. 6. The maximum and minimum detectable voltages are 120 V and 1 V, respectively. The maximum and minimum detectable currents are 30 A and 1 A, respectively. The voltage specification is determined by the selection of series capacitor $C$ and piezoelectric transducer, whereas the current specification is determined by the selection of the conductor. The IMFOS consists of four major components, including a voltage probe, a current probe, an EO controller, and an Aux Processor. A photograph of the prototype is shown in Fig. 7. It is noted that there is no mutual influence between the voltage and the current probes. For the voltage channel, the physical displacement on the piezoelectric transducer is induced in response to the applied voltage via the piezoelectric effect. For the current channel, the physical displacement occurs on the conductor via the Lorentz law. These two displacements are mutually independent of each other and will be captured via two separate optical fiber probes.

The sensor uses an LED emitting at 850-nm wavelengths as a light source with a silicon PIN diode to sense the displacement as discussed in Section III. The fiber probe consists of seven identical multimode fibers with a 200-μm diameter glass core and a 230-μm plastic cladding, with a numerical aperture of 0.37. The transmitting fiber is surrounded by multiple receiving fibers distributed in a fixed geometric pattern. For a voltage probe, a bimorph transducer element constructed from PZT-4 piezoceramic (Navy Type I) with nominal dimensions of $12 \times 1.5 \times 0.5$ mm$^3$ is utilized \[32\]. It is noted that this kind of piezoelectric material has a cantilever resonance frequency of around 1.5 kHz. Actually, a variety of geometries can be leveraged with dimension selection beforehand to realize a predefined resonance frequency considering the tradeoff between sensitivity and bandwidth. For the current probe, a copper bus bar with a shunt is used as a conductor to pass and divide the current. Voltage drop is taken from the bus bar via its resistive divider for measurement.
As shown in Fig. 4, the reflected optical power increases with the displacement distance until 500 μm and gradually decreases thereafter. Thus, the quiescent operation point is set at 280 μm with the highest-slope region of the optical response. A photodiode converts the received optical signal into an electric signal in its EO controller. The IMFOS can provide both analog and digital outputs that are converted from the optical signal. The analog output is in the range of 0–5 V. On the other hand, the digital output can be accessed via the network interface. The output waveforms of amplifiers and sensors under test are simultaneously recorded via PXIe 6366 with a 50-kHz sampling rate. As illustrated in Fig. 9, since the PXIe-5423, amplifiers, and IMFOS support bayonet neill-concelman (BNC) ports, the voltage and current signals are sent by BNC cables from the PXIe-5423 to the amplifier and then to the IMFOS. The output signals from IMFOS are converted to general-purpose signal cables and then received by the PXIe-6366.

A. Steady-State Test

In the steady-state test, the steady sinusoidal signal is generated in the NI PXIe 5423 and then fed into the voltage and current amplifiers. The amplitude and frequency responses of the IMFOS are tested, and the results are shown in Fig. 10. For the amplitude response as shown in Fig. 10(a), by analyzing the amplitude response result, the coefficient of determination $R^2$ of the linear regression can be calculated as follows:

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_i (V_i - f_i)^2}{\sum_i (V_i - \bar{V})^2}$$  \hspace{1cm} (6)

where $V_i$ and $f_i$ are the voltage-fitted values at index $i$. $\bar{V}$ is the mean of voltage measurements. In the best case, the voltage values match the fitted values so that $R^2$ is equal to 1. $R^2$ of the current measurement can be calculated in a similar method. As illustrated in Fig. 10(a), $R^2$ is larger than 0.99, which demonstrates the high linearity of the IMFOS. For the frequency response, it is discovered that the IMFOS has a flat region from 10 to 1000 Hz, as illustrated in Fig. 10(b). The overall spectral characteristic of the prototype is impacted by various factors, including piezoelectric/conductor material, low-pass filter in its EO controller, transmitting fiber, and fiber mounting strategy. The effective frequency response range can be defined as the frequencies with amplitudes above the flat region, i.e., 10–3000 Hz. The narrow frequency range is one disadvantage of the proposed sensor. To improve it, one potential solution is to apply an effective filter to filter out the resonant region of the transducer.

B. DC Offset and Low-Frequency Tests

The dc offset and low-frequency tests are conducted by comparing the magnetic CT and PT since the magnetic core transducer is susceptible to dc and low-frequency injection. In this section, the Agilent 6812B and Omicron CMC256 are used to produce voltage and current signals, respectively. First, a 60-Hz sinusoidal waveform superposed with a 20% dc component is generated. From the results presented in Figs. 11 and 12, the saturation effect caused by the dc component can be observed in the output of the magnetic transducer while no negative impact is found for the IMFOS, which demonstrates dc immunity in IMFOS. From Figs. 11(b) and 12(b), the magnetic PT and a PXIe-8135 and then sent to a PXIe 5423 for digital-to-analog (DA) conversion. The output analog signal of the PXIe 5423 is then fed into the voltage or current amplifier for sensor characterization. The Trek PZD 700A and AETECHRON 7228 are utilized as the voltage and current amplifiers, respectively. The output waveforms of amplifiers and sensors under test are simultaneously recorded via PXIe 6366 with a 50-kHz sampling rate. As illustrated in Fig. 9, since the PXIe-5423, amplifiers, and IMFOS support bayonet neill-concelman (BNC) ports, the voltage and current signals are sent by BNC cables from the PXIe-5423 to the amplifier and then to the IMFOS. The output signals from IMFOS are converted to general-purpose signal cables and then received by the PXIe-6366.
CT have severe second- and third-harmonic distortions, which make their output unreliable under this circumstance. Thus, the IMFOS outperforms the magnetic-based sensor when the input signal has a dc offset, which could be caused by various factors, such as geomagnetic disturbance, transient grounding fault, or electromagnetic pulse-E3 (EMTP3) [12], [29]. Fig. 13 shows the results of the low-frequency test. A 14.5-Hz sinusoidal frequency component is injected into the sensors under test. Similarly, a severe distortion can be seen for magnetic PT and CT, whereas the saturation effect is successfully eliminated in IMFOS, indicating that the low-frequency signal can be accurately measured by utilizing optic-electric technology. To have a quantitative comparison among the IMFOS, PT, and CT, the voltage and current errors under three test cases are listed in Table II. It can be clearly observed that the voltage errors of the IMFOS are as low as those of the PT under both dc offset and low-frequency tests. However, the current errors of the IMFOS are much lower than those of CTs under two test cases. These results indicate that the voltage measurement accuracy of the IMFOS is as good as PTs, whereas the current measurement accuracy is better than CTs under dc offset and low-frequency test cases.

C. Dynamic Test

The aim of the dynamic test is to assess the capability of the IMFOS for capturing the dynamic behavior of the input signal.
Step change and ramp for the amplitude and frequency are tested referring to the IEEE C37.118 standard [33]. For the frequency step change test, the frequency of the input signal jumps up from 60 to 61 Hz, stays at 61 Hz for 2 s, and then jumps back down to 60 Hz. For the frequency ramp test, the frequency of the input signal first ramps up from 59.5 to 60.5 Hz in 2 s at a rate of 0.5 Hz/s, stays at 60.5 Hz for 2 s, then ramps down from 60.5 to 59.5 Hz in 2 s at a rate of −0.5 Hz/s. The amplitude dynamic tests employ similar change characteristics as the frequency dynamic tests. The testing results are shown in Figs. 14 and 15. The recursive discrete Fourier transform is adopted for the frequency calculation, and the root mean square is calculated to obtain voltage and current amplitude. From the results, the reference signal and output of IMFOS match well, which verifies the ability of the IMFOS to track the dynamic behavior of signals. Again, a quantitative analysis of the IMFOS is listed in Table II under the dynamic test. The results show that both the voltage and current measurements are very precise under dynamic tests.
In addition, the average FE is 2 mHz, which is lower than the PMU frequency measurement requirement under a frequency ramp test listed in the IEEE C37.118.1 [33].

**D. Implementation in UGA**

To demonstrate the applicability of IMFOS for phasor estimation in an actual power grid, the IMFOS is implemented in the UGA platform, referred to as IMFOS-UGA, as shown in Fig. 16. The IMFOS is connected to a distribution power grid and provides input signals to a UGA for synchronized frequency, angle, and magnitude measurements. For the sake of comparison, a normal UGA with accuracies of 1 mHz for the frequency, 0.05 V for the voltage magnitude, and 0.05° for the angle is set up as a reference. The two UGAs are time synchronized by GPS signal throughout the test; thus, the measurements can be aligned with the coordinated universal time (UTC) timestamp. The results of the frequency, angle, and voltage magnitude measurements are shown in Fig. 17(a)–(c). It can be seen in Fig. 17 that the IMFOS-UGA has the capability to synchronously capture the trends of its frequency, angle, and amplitude over time. The FE and TVE are as small as 2 mHz and 0.029%, which are sufficient to comply with the 5 mHz and 1% requirement of the IEEE PMU standard C37.118.1 [33]. It is worth mentioning that UGA is utilized as an example platform for synchronized power grid monitoring. Since the output analog signal of the sensor is 0–5 V dc, it is easily integrated with any other kinds of existing power grid measurement devices, such as PMUs and power quality analyzers, for repeatable tests.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

In this article, the IMFOS was developed to monitor grid voltage and current via the measurement of the physical displacement of transducers caused by the piezoelectric effect and the Lorentz force with the advantage of simplicity. The IMFO light was transmitted to the transducers via a one-center fiber...
and reflected by the mirrors in the transducers. Then, multiple multimode fibers symmetrically surrounding the center fiber with enhanced sensitivity were exploited to collect the reflected signal to its EO controller. A prototype was built to demonstrate the feasibility; its performance was evaluated via an NI-based characterization platform under conditions of both steady and dynamic states, dc, and low-frequency interferences. Experimental results demonstrated its linearity and ability to capture dynamic changes in measured voltage and current signals. This also verified its merit for dc and low-frequency immunity compared to the conventional magnetic PT and CT, indicating that the IMFOS would be a promising tool for electric grid monitoring. Finally, the prototype of IMFOS was implemented on the UGA platform to demonstrate its applicability for distribution power grid phasor monitoring. The FE and TVE of the IMFOS-UGA met the 5 mHz and 1% requirements outlined in the IEEE PMU C37.118 standard.

It is noted that the major elements of the IMFOS, including LED, fiber, conductor, piezoelectric material, and copper busbar, are commonplace. With high-volume production in mind, the cost of the IMFOS will no doubt be competitive with conventional PT and CT. Future research will focus on noise reduction and robustness improvement. Penitential solutions include 1) integration of an effective filter to filter out the resonant region and low-frequency noise, and 2) temperature compensation for the whole EO system.

REFERENCES


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