

US Patent & Trademark Office

Patent Public Search | Text View

United States Patent Application Publication

20250255038

Kind Code

A1

Publication Date

August 07, 2025

Inventor(s)

LAN; Yung-Ling et al.

SEMICONDUCTOR LIGHT EMITTING DEVICE

Abstract

A semiconductor light emitting device includes a multi-quantum-well structure, a first capping layer, a second capping layer, and an electron barrier layer stacked in order. The multi-quantum-well structure includes a plurality of alternately-stacked potential barrier layers and potential well layers. The first capping layer is a semiconductor layer, and the second capping layer is a p-doped semiconductor layer. Each of the first and second capping layers has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of each of the potential barrier layers, and the aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer is larger than that of at least a portion of the electron barrier layer. A method for preparing the semiconductor light emitting device is also provided.

Inventors: LAN; Yung-Ling (Wuhu, CN), LING; Chan-Chan (Wuhu, CN), TSAI; Chi-Ming (Wuhu, CN), CHANG; Chia-Hung (Wuhu, CN)

Applicant: XIAMEN SAN'AN OPTOELECTRONICS CO., LTD. (Xiamen, CN)

Family ID: 76654451

Appl. No.: 19/189903

Filed: April 25, 2025

Foreign Application Priority Data

CN

201710638217.9

Jul. 31, 2017

Related U.S. Application Data

parent US continuation 18541090 20231215 parent-grant-document US 12302666 child US 19189903

parent US continuation 18096628 20230113 parent-grant-document US 11848401 child US 18541090

parent US continuation 17209485 20210323 parent-grant-document US 11557693 child US 18096628

parent US continuation-in-part 16716598 20191217 parent-grant-document US 10978612 child US 17209485
parent US continuation-in-part 16426016 20190530 parent-grant-document US 10535796 child US 16716598
parent WO continuation-in-part PCT/CN2018/078654 20180312 PENDING child US 16426016

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: H10H20/812 (20250101); H10H20/816 (20250101); H10H20/825 (20250101)

U.S. Cl.:

CPC H10H20/812 (20250101); H10H20/816 (20250101); H10H20/825 (20250101);

Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION [0001] This application is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/541,090, filed on Dec. 15, 2023, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/096,628, filed on Jan. 13, 2023, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/209,485, filed on Mar. 23, 2021, which is a continuation-in-part (CIP) of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/716,598, filed on Dec. 17, 2019, which is a CIP of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/426,016, filed on May 30, 2019, which is a CIP of International Application No. PCT/CN2018/078654, filed on Mar. 12, 2018, which claims priority to Chinese Invention patent application Ser. No. 20/171,0638217.9, filed on Jul. 31, 2017. The entire content of each of the aforesaid patent applications is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

[0002] The disclosure relates to a semiconductor device, and more particularly to a semiconductor light emitting device and a method for preparing the same.

BACKGROUND

[0003] A gallium nitride (GaN)-based light emitting diode (LED) includes a p-type semiconductor layer providing electron holes and an n-type semiconductor layer providing electrons, having between them a P-N junction that converts electrical energy to luminous energy. When electric current passes through the LED in the forward direction, the electrons provided by the n-type semiconductor layer recombines with the electron holes in the p-type semiconductor layer, releasing energy corresponding to the band gap between the conduction band and the valence band. The energy released may either be thermal energy or light, and the light may be emitted outwards.

[0004] However, when epitaxially growing the p-type semiconductor layer, growth conditions such as the growth temperature may cause a p-type dopant (e.g. magnesium) to spread to a quantum well structure, thus negatively affecting the material quality of a potential well layer in the quantum well structure. This may, in turn, lower the luminous efficiency of the LED. In addition, how to reduce electron overflow and electron tunneling effect between the n-type semiconductor layer and the p-type semiconductor layer remains a problem to be solved.

SUMMARY

[0005] Therefore, the object of the disclosure is to provide a semiconductor light emitting device that can alleviate the drawback of the prior art. A method for preparing the semiconductor light emitting device is also provided.

[0006] According to one aspect of the disclosure, a semiconductor light emitting device includes an

n-type semiconductor layer, a multi-quantum-well structure, a first capping layer, a second capping layer, an electron barrier layer, a p-type semiconductor layer, and a p-type contact layer stacked in order.

[0007] The multi-quantum-well structure includes a plurality of alternately-stacked potential barrier layers and potential well layers.

[0008] The first capping layer is one of an undoped semiconductor layer and a p-doped semiconductor layer, and the second capping layer is a p-doped semiconductor layer. The second capping layer is directly formed on the first capping layer. Each of the first and second capping layers has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of each of the potential barrier layers, and the aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer is larger than that of at least a portion of the electron barrier layer.

[0009] According to another aspect of the disclosure, a method for preparing a semiconductor light emitting device includes: [0010] growing an n-type semiconductor layer on a growth substrate; [0011] growing a multi-quantum-well structure on the n-type semiconductor layer, the multi-quantum-well structure including a plurality of alternately stacked potential barrier layers and potential well layers; [0012] growing a first capping layer on the multi-quantum-well structure, the first capping layer being an undoped layer; [0013] growing directly on the first capping layer a second capping layer, the second capping layer being a p-doped layer with a p-type dopant; and growing an electron barrier layer on the second capping layer; and [0014] growing sequentially a p-type semiconductor layer and a p-type contact layer on the electron barrier layer.

[0015] The first capping layer has a growth temperature between that of the potential barrier layers and that of the potential well layers. The second capping layer has a growth temperature lower than that of the potential well layers. Each of the first and second capping layers has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of each of the potential barrier layers, and the aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer is larger than that of at least a portion of the electron barrier layer.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] Other features and advantages of the disclosure will become apparent in the following detailed description of the embodiment with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

[0017] FIG. 1 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view of a first embodiment of a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure;

[0018] FIG. 2 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view of a second embodiment of a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure;

[0019] FIG. 3 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view of a third embodiment of a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure;

[0020] FIG. 4 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view of a fourth embodiment of a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure; and

[0021] FIG. 5 is a process flow embodiment of a method of preparing a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0022] Referring to FIG. 1, a first embodiment of a semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure includes a growth substrate **100**, and an n-type semiconductor layer **200**, a multi-quantum-well structure **300**, a first potential barrier layer **310**, a first capping layer **410**, a second capping layer **420**, an electron barrier layer **500**, a p-type semiconductor layer **600**, and a p-type contact layer **700** stacked in order on the growth substrate **100**.

[0023] The growth substrate **100** may be made of one of sapphire, gallium nitride (GaN), and silicon, but is not limited in this respect.

[0024] In certain embodiments, in order to reduce the strain caused by lattice mismatch between the growth substrate **100** and the n-type semiconductor layer **200**, the semiconductor light emitting device may further include a buffer layer **800** formed between the n-type semiconductor layer **200** and the growth substrate **100**. A material for making the buffer layer **800** is selected from the group consisting of aluminum nitride (AlN), GaN, aluminum gallium nitride (AlGaN), aluminum indium gallium nitride (AlInGaN), indium nitride (InN), indium gallium nitride (InGaN), and combinations thereof. In certain embodiments, the buffer layer **800** may be an Al.sub.l-xGa.sub.xIn.sub.yN layer, wherein x and y represent mole fractions, $0 \leq x < 1$ and $0 \leq y < 1$.

[0025] The multi-quantum-well structure **300** includes a plurality of alternately-stacked second potential barrier layers **301** and potential well layers **302**. The repetition period of a combination of one of the second potential barriers layers **301** and one of the potential well layers **302** of the multi-quantum-well structure **300** is between 3 and 20. The band gap of each of the second potential barrier layers **301** is larger than that of each of the potential well layers **302**. Each of the second potential barrier layers **301** is one of an undoped semiconductor layer and an n-doped semiconductor layer.

[0026] The first potential barrier layer **310** is an undoped semiconductor layer having one of a single-layer structure and a multi-layered structure. In certain embodiments, the first potential barrier layer **310** may be an undoped GaN (u-GaN) layer, an undoped AlGaN (u-AlGaN) layer, a u-GaN/u-AlGaN multi-layered structure, or an undoped InGaN/undoped AlInGaN/u-AlGaN multi-layered structure.

[0027] The first capping layer **410** is formed for reducing the spreading of p-type doping materials in the second capping layer **420**, the electron barrier layer **500** and the p-type semiconductor layer **600** to the multi-quantum-well structure **300** which may cause a reduction of the luminous efficiency of the semiconductor light emitting device. The first capping layer **410** may be an undoped semiconductor layer. However, in certain embodiments, the first capping layer **410** may be a p-doped semiconductor layer which is formed due to diffusion of a p-type dopant in the second capping layer **420**. Specifically, the first capping layer **410** is intended to be undoped, but due to the possible epitaxial defects in the first capping layer **410**, the p-type dopant in the second capping layer **420** may diffuse into the first capping layer **410** and dope the first capping layer **410**.

[0028] The second capping layer **420** is a p-doped semiconductor layer doped with the p-type dopant as mentioned above. The second capping layer **420** is directly formed on the first capping layer **410**. The second capping layer **420** has a p-type doping concentration higher than that of the p-type semiconductor layer **600** and lower than that of the p-type contact layer **700**. The high level of p-type doping increases electron hole injection effect and allows the second capping layer **420** to act as a hole injection layer. Specifically, the second capping layer **420** has a p-type doping concentration ranging between $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $5 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. In certain embodiments, the second capping layer **420** has a p-type doping concentration ranging between $5 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $2 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. The second capping layer **420** has a thickness larger than that of each of the potential well layers **302** of the multi-quantum-well structure **300**. Specifically, the second capping layer **420** has a thickness less than 40 nm. Each of the first and second capping layers **410**, **420** have a band gap larger than that of each of the second potential barrier layers **301**. The second capping layer **420** has a band gap not larger than the electron barrier layer **500**. The larger band gap of each of the first and second capping layers **410**, **420** reduces the electron overflow and increases the hole injection effect.

[0029] In certain embodiments, the first capping layer **410** is an undoped Al.sub.xN layer or a p-doped Al.sub.xN layer, wherein x represents aluminum mole fraction and $x=1$; the second capping layer **420** is a p-doped Al.sub.xGa.sub.(1-x)N layer, wherein x represents aluminum mole fraction. The aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer **410** is larger than that of the second capping layer **420**.

[0030] Each of said first and second capping layers **410**, **420** has an aluminum mole fraction that is

larger than that of each of the second potential barrier layers **301**. The aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer **410** is larger than that of at least a portion of the electron barrier layer **500**. In the first embodiment, the aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer **410** is larger than that of the electron barrier layer **500**.

[0031] In the first embodiment, the electron barrier layer **500** is an AlGaInN-containing layer having an aluminum mole fraction ranging from 0.02 to 0.25, which is less than that of the first capping layer **410**. To be specific, the electron barrier layer **500** is an $\text{Al}_{0.02\leq x\leq 0.25}\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{In}_y\text{N}$ layer, wherein $0.02\leq x\leq 0.25$, and may be doped with p-type impurity using ion implantation technique. In this embodiment, the electron barrier layer **500** has an aluminum content which decreases in a direction from the multi-quantum-well structure **300** to the p-type contact layer **700**.

[0032] In certain embodiments, the second capping layer **420** is an AlGaInN-containing layer having an aluminum mole fraction not larger than that of the electron barrier layer **500**. To be specific, the second capping layer **420** is an $\text{Al}_{0\leq x<1}\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{In}_y\text{N}$ layer, wherein x and y represent mole fractions, $0\leq x<1$ and $0\leq y<1$. However, since the second capping layer **420** has a thickness larger than that of the electron blocking layer **500**, a total aluminum content of the second capping layer **420** is larger than that of the electron blocking layer **500**.

[0033] Referring to FIG. 2, a second embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure is shown to be generally similar to the first embodiment, except that in the second embodiment, the electron barrier layer **500** includes a first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** and a second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** that are sequentially formed on the second capping layer **420** in such order. In the second embodiment, the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** is an AlN-containing sublayer. The first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** may be an Al_xN layer, wherein $x=1$. The second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** is an AlGaInN-containing sublayer. The second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** may be an $\text{Al}_{0\leq x\leq 0.35}\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{In}_y\text{N}$ layer, wherein $0\leq x\leq 0.35$. The second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** has a thickness larger than that of the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1**. The first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** has an aluminum mole fraction that is higher than that of the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**. The first capping layer **410** has an aluminum mole fraction that is larger than that of the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**.

[0034] Referring to FIG. 3, a third embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure is shown to be generally similar to the second embodiment, except that in the third embodiment, the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** and the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** are sequentially formed on the second capping layer **420** in such order.

[0035] Referring to FIG. 4, a fourth embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device according to the disclosure is shown to be generally similar to the second embodiment, except that in the fourth embodiment, the electron barrier layer **500** further includes a third electron barrier sublayer **500-3** formed on the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** opposite to the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1**. In the fourth embodiment, the third electron barrier sublayer **500-3** is an AlN-containing sublayer that has a thickness and an aluminum mole fraction similar to those of the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1**. To be specific, the third electron barrier sublayer **500-3** may be an Al_xN layer, wherein $x=1$. Each of the first and third electron barrier sublayers **500-1**, **500-3** has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**, and the aluminum mole fraction of the first capping layer **410** is larger than that of the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**. In addition, each of the first and third electron barrier sublayers **500-1**, **500-3** has a thickness less than that of the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**, and at least one of the first and third electron barrier sublayers **500-1**, **500-3** has a thickness less than 5 nm.

[0036] Referring to FIG. 5, an embodiment of a method for preparing the first embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device of the present disclosure includes growing the n-type semiconductor layer **200** on the growth substrate **100**, growing the multi-quantum-well structure **300** including a plurality of alternately stacked second potential barrier layers **301** and potential well layers **302** on the n-type semiconductor layer **200**, growing the first potential barrier layer **310**

on the multi-quantum-well structure **300**, growing the first capping layer **410** being an undoped layer on top of the first potential barrier layer **310**, growing the second capping layer **420** being a p-doped layer with a p-type dopant directly on the first capping layer **410**, growing the electron barrier layer **500** on the second capping layer **420**, and growing sequentially the p-type semiconductor layer **600** and the p-type contact layer **700** on the electron barrier layer **500**.

[0037] For certain embodiments, in which the first capping layer **410** has epitaxial defects, during growth of the second capping layer **420**, the p-type dopant may diffuse into the first capping layer **410** so that the first capping layer **410** becomes a p-doped semiconductor layer.

[0038] The n-type semiconductor layer **200**, the multi-quantum-well structure **300**, the first capping layer **410**, the second capping layer **420**, the electron barrier layer **500**, the p-type semiconductor layer **600** and the p-type contact layer **700** are grown using epitaxial technique.

[0039] In certain embodiments, the method further includes growing the buffer layer **800** on the growth substrate **100** before growth of the n-type semiconductor layer **200**.

[0040] Each of the potential well layers **302** has a growth temperature lower than that of each of the second potential barrier layers **301**. The first potential barrier layer **310** has a growth temperature equal to that of each of the second potential barrier layers **301**.

[0041] The first capping layer **410** has a growth temperature between that of the second potential barrier layers **301** and that of the potential well layers **302**, and the second capping layer **420** has a growth temperature lower than that of the potential well layers **302**. The low growth temperature of each of the first and second capping layers **410**, **420** relative to the second potential barrier layers **301** prevents lowering of the crystal quality of the multi-quantum-well structure **300** and spreading of the p-type impurity.

[0042] However, the quality of the first and second capping layer **410**, **420**, especially the second capping layer **420** whose growth temperature is lower than that of each of the potential well layers **302**, may be negatively affected by the lower growth temperature, and thus the second capping layer **420** has a thickness less than **40** nm. However, the thickness of the second capping layer **420** may affect the properties of the light emitting device and should be controlled within a desired range. In certain embodiments, the thickness of the second capping layer **420** is between **200 Å** to **350 Å**, and the thickness of the first capping layer **410** is between **2 Å** to **10 Å**.

[0043] The method for preparing the second embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device of the present disclosure is generally similar to that for preparing the first embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device, except that the electron barrier layer **500** is grown by first growing the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** on the second capping layer **420** and then growing the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** on the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1**.

[0044] The method for preparing the third embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device of the present disclosure is generally similar to that for preparing the second embodiment of the light emitting device, except that the electron barrier layer **500** is grown by first growing the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2** on the second capping layer **420** and then growing the first electron barrier sublayer **500-1** on the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**.

[0045] The method for preparing the fourth embodiment of the semiconductor light emitting device of the present disclosure is generally similar to that for preparing the second embodiment of the light emitting device, except that the step of growing the electron barrier layer **500** further includes growing the third electron barrier sublayer **500-3** on the second electron barrier sublayer **500-2**.

[0046] In the description above, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details have been set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the embodiment. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that one or more other embodiments may be practiced without some of these specific details. It should also be appreciated that reference throughout this specification to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” an embodiment with an indication of an ordinal number and so forth means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic may be included in the practice of the disclosure. It should be further appreciated that in the description,

various features are sometimes grouped together in a single embodiment, figure, or description thereof for the purpose of streamlining the disclosure and aiding in the understanding of various inventive aspects, and that one or more features or specific details from one embodiment may be practiced together with one or more features or specific details from another embodiment, where appropriate, in the practice of the disclosure.

[0047] While the disclosure has been described in connection with what is considered the exemplary embodiment, it is understood that this disclosure is not limited to the disclosed embodiment but is intended to cover various arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent arrangements.

Claims

1. A semiconductor light emitting device, comprising: an n-type semiconductor layer, a multi-quantum-well structure, a first capping layer, a second capping layer, an electron barrier layer, a p-type semiconductor layer, and a p-type contact layer stacked in order, wherein said multi-quantum-well structure includes a plurality of alternately-stacked potential barrier layers and potential well layers; wherein said first capping layer is one of an undoped semiconductor layer and a p-doped semiconductor layer, said second capping layer being a p-doped semiconductor layer; wherein said second capping layer has an aluminum mole fraction not larger than that of said electron barrier layer; and wherein said second capping layer has a thickness larger than that of said electron barrier layer.
2. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second capping layer is directly formed on said first capping layer.
3. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first capping layer has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of each of said potential barrier layers.
4. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the aluminum mole fraction of said first capping layer being larger than that of said second capping layer.
5. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the thickness of said second capping layer is larger than that of each of said potential well layers of said multi-quantum-well structure.
6. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second capping layer has a p-type doping concentration higher than that of said p-type semiconductor layer and lower than that of said p-type contact layer.
7. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second capping layer has a p-type doping concentration between $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $5 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$.
8. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the thickness of said second capping layer is less than 40 nm.
9. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second capping layer is an aluminum gallium indium nitride (AlGaInN)-containing layer.
10. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a growth substrate formed on said n-type semiconductor layer opposite to said multi-quantum-well structure.
11. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 10, further comprising a buffer layer formed between said n-type semiconductor layer and said growth substrate, said buffer layer being made from a material selected from the group consisting of AN, gallium nitride (GaN), AlGaIn, aluminum indium gallium nitride (AlInGaIn), indium nitride (InN), indium gallium nitride (InGaIn), and combinations thereof.
12. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein each of said potential barrier layers in one of an undoped semiconductor layer and an n-doped semiconductor layer.
13. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said electron barrier

layer includes a first electron barrier sublayer and a second electron barrier sublayer.

14. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 13, wherein said first electron barrier sublayer and said second electron barrier sublayer are sequentially formed on said second capping layer in such order.

15. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 14, wherein said first capping layer has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of said second electron barrier sublayer.

16. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 15, wherein said first electron barrier sublayer has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of said second electron barrier sublayer.

17. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 16, wherein said electron barrier layer further includes a third electron barrier sublayer formed on said second electron barrier sublayer opposite to said first electron barrier sublayer.

18. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 17, wherein said third electron barrier sublayer has an aluminum mole fraction larger than that of said second electron barrier sublayer.

19. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 18, wherein said third electron barrier sublayer has a thickness less than that of said second electron barrier sublayer.

20. The semiconductor light emitting device as claimed in claim 14, wherein said second electron barrier sublayer has a thickness larger than that of said first electron barrier sublayer.
