Effects of defect states on the performance of perovskite solar cells*

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Abstract: We built an ideal perovskite solar cell model and investigated the effects of defect states on the solar cell's performance. The verities of defect states with a different energy level in the band gap and those in the absorption layer $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$ (MAPbI₃), the interface between the buffer layer/MAPbI₃, and the interface between the hole transport material (HTM) and MAPbI₃, were studied. We have quantitatively analyzed these effects on perovskite solar cells' performance parameters. They are open-circuit voltage, short-circuit current, fill factor, and photoelectric conversion efficiency. We found that the performances of perovskite solar cells change worse with defect state density increasing, but when defect state density is lower than 10^{16} cm⁻³, the effects are small. Defect states in the absorption layer have much larger effects than those in the adjacent interface layers. The perovskite solar cells have better performance as its working temperature is reduced. When the thickness of MAPbI₃ is about 0.3 μ m, perovskite solar cells show better comprehensive performance, while the thickness 0.05 μ m for Spiro-OMeTAD is enough.

Key words: device modeling; defect states; perovskite solar cells

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1. Introduction

Recently, hybrid organic-inorganic perovskites have become favorite solar cell materials owing to their outstanding semiconducting properties, such as high carrier mobility^[1], large absorption coefficient^[2], the direct band gap^[3], long charge-carrier diffusion lengths^[4], and multiple processing^[5-9]. Over a short span of five years, a surprising conversion efficiency ($E_{\rm ffi}$) has been achieved^[10-13]. The 0.1 cm² perovskites solar cells' certified efficiency was 17.8%^[14]. In the laboratory the $E_{\rm ffi}$ of small area devices has increased to nearly 20% [15,16]. The $E_{\rm ffi}$ of the module device can reach to 8.7%[17], which is higher than a lot of other types of solar cells, and approach the level of commercial use. Therefore, perovskite solar cells are considered to be one of the most potential solar cells in the near future [18-20]. The overall performance of perovskite solar cells is improved with V_{oc} and J_{sc} 's increasing. The main reason is that this minimizes the interconnection losses of perovskite solar cells^[21]. However, solar cell materials always have inevitable defect states, such as void, doping, surface or interface and so on, which always decrease solar cells' $V_{\rm oc}$ and $J_{\rm sc}$ then deteriorate the solar cells' performance^[22–25].

Some researchers had performed studies on defects' effects in perovskite solar cell materials. For example, Takashi Minemoto and Masashi Murata^[26,27] studied the impact of band offsets in perovskite solar cells with the one-dimensional device simulator SCAPS. Naikaew *et al.*^[28] investigated the role of phase composition for electronic states in MAPbI₃ prepared from a CH₃NH₃I/PbCl₂ solution, and pointed out that a better understanding of defect formation and degradation is

crucial for successful development of stable solar cells. Rash-keev *et al*.^[29] performed theoretical calculation on the characteristic of organometallic uniaxial ferroelectric semiconductor perovskite MAPbI₃, and point out that a lot of extended defects locate in organometallic solution-processed perovskite films, and these defects have high densities at domain walls and interfaces. Yin *et al*.^[30] calculated the impacts of Cl and O at grain boundaries of CH₃NH₃PbI₃, and pointed out that the small Urbach tail^[31] is in the sharp optical absorption edge introduced by the defect effects in the crystal.

In this paper, we analyze the impacts of defect states in the absorption layer and the adjacent interfaces on perovskite solar cells' performance^[32]. With a similar modeling method, we had detected the defect effects in CuInGaSe₂ solar cells^[33]. Here we study the key feature parameters of perovskite solar cells with different energy level in the band gap and their defect states. Additionally, we also simulated the work temperature of perovskite solar cells and the thicknesses of absorber layer (MAPbI₃) and hole transport material (Spiro-OMeTAD).

2. Theoretical model and device simulation parameters

We used the software SCAPS as the simulation platform^[34]. In SCAPS we solve the Poisson equation and both continuity equations for electrons and holes iteratively. They are given respectively by Equations (1)–(7):

$$f_{t}(x) = \frac{c_{n}n(x) + e_{p} + e_{p}^{\text{opt}}(x)}{c_{n}n(x) + e_{p} + e_{p}^{\text{opt}}(x) + e_{n} + c_{p}p(x) + e_{n}^{\text{opt}}(x)},$$
(1)

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Parameter	TCO	Buffer	IDL1	Absorber	IDL2	HTM
Thickness (nm)	500	50	10	330	10	350
$E_{\rm g}$ (eV)	3.5	3.2	1.55 (variable)	1.55 ^[1]	1.55 (variable)	$3.00^{[36]}$
$N_{\rm t} ({\rm cm}^{-3})$	10^{15}	10^{15}	10^{17}	2.5×10^{13}	10^{17}	10^{15}

Table 1 Parameters of device simulation

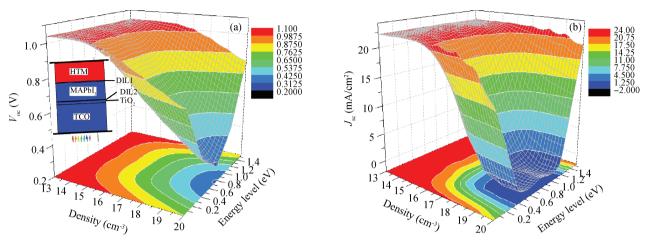


Figure 1. (Color online) The change of the (a) V_{oc} as well as (b) J_{sc} versus the defect state density in MAPbI₃. The insert Figure 1(a) is the typical structure model of a perovskite solar cell.

$$\phi(\lambda, x) = \phi_{\text{inc}}(\lambda) f_{c}(\lambda, x) \exp\left[-\int_{0}^{x} \alpha(\lambda, \xi) d\xi\right], \quad (2)$$

$$e_{\mathrm{n,p}}^{\mathrm{opt}}(x) = \int_{\lambda_1}^{\lambda_2} \sigma_{\mathrm{n,p}}^{\mathrm{opt}}(\lambda, x) \phi(\lambda, x) \mathrm{d}\lambda, \tag{3}$$

$$\alpha(\lambda, x) = \alpha_{b-b}(\lambda) + \sum_{\forall defects} \alpha_{n}(\lambda, x) + \alpha_{p}(\lambda, x),$$
 (4)

$$\alpha_{\rm n}(x,\lambda) = f_{\rm t}(x) N_{\rm t}(x) \sigma_{\rm n}^{\rm opt}(\lambda), \qquad (5)$$

$$\alpha_{p}(x,\lambda) = [1 - f_{t}(x)] N_{t}(x) \sigma_{p}^{opt}(\lambda), \qquad (6)$$

$$f_{c}(\lambda,x) = \frac{1 + R_{b} \exp\left[-2 \int_{x}^{L} \alpha(\lambda,\xi) d\xi\right]}{1 - R_{f} R_{b} \exp\left[-2 \int_{0}^{L} \alpha(\lambda,\xi) d\xi\right]}.$$
 (7)

Here, f_t is the occupation probability of all defects, n and pare the electron and hole density respectively, $c_{\rm n},\,c_{\rm p}$ are capture constants, e_n , e_p are constants describing thermal emission from the trap centre, $e_{\rm n}^{\rm opt}$, $e_{\rm p}^{\rm opt}$ describe the optical emission, $\phi_{\rm inc}$ the incoming light flux and f_c an optical confinement factor. The absorption coefficient $\alpha(\lambda, x)$ is the sum of all absorption processes that are considered. SCAPS considers the band to band absorption α_{b-b} and absorption of the impurity photovoltaic effect α_n and α_p , R_b the reflection at the back and R_f the internal reflection at the front^[35].

In the device simulation, we considered a typical and ideal perovskite solar cell (inset of Figure 1(a)). The layered structure of the perovskite solar cell is: TCO (SnO₂)/buffer (TiO₂)/interface defect layer1 (IDL1)/absorber (MAPbI₃)/interface defect layer2 (IDL2)/HTM (Spiro-OMeTAD). The parameters of TCO are from SnO₂:F, the parameters of the buffer are from TiO₂, the parameters of the absorber are from MAPbI₃, and the parameters of HTM are

from 2,2',7,7'-tetrakis (N, N-p-dimethoxy-phenylamino)-9, 9'-spirobifluorene (Spiro-OMeTAD). There is an interface IDL1 between the buffer and absorber layers, and another interface IDL2 between the absorber and HTM layers. In order to explain this structure more clearly, Table 1 summarizes the input parameters for each layer. Here, the thicknesses of HTM and absorber were obtained from the literature: efficiency of the solar cell is 15.4%^[6], E_g is the band gap energy, and N_t is the defect density.

3. Results and discussion

As the perovskite absorption layer absorbs photons in the light, the photons whose energy are larger than the band gap of the absorption layer excite the valence band electron of the absorption layer to their conduction band, the appropriate hole stays in the valence band. When the conduction band energy level of the absorption layer is higher than that of the electron transport layer or the hole barrier layer, the conduction band electron of the absorption layer transfers to the conduction band energy level of the electron transport layer or the hole barrier layer. Finally, the electron transfers to the anode and external circuit^[37]. If there are some unavoidable defects densities in the band gap of solar cell materials, they will affect the performance of the cell.

3.1. Effects of the defect state to MAPbI₃

Figures 1 and 2 show the effects of defect states to MAPbI₃.

Theoretically, the locations of the density of defect states changes from the top of the valance band to the bottom of the conduction band. Figure 1(a) shows that the V_{oc} varies with the density of defect states in MAPbI₃. From Figure 1(a), we can see that when the density of defect states in MAPbI₃ increases

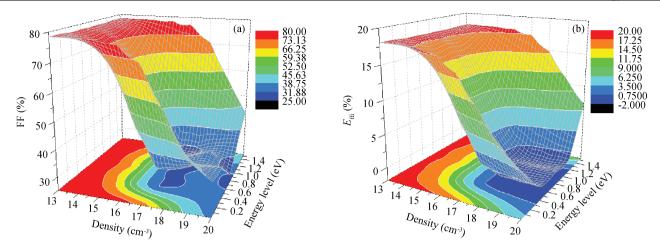


Figure 2. (Color online) The change of the (a) FF and (b) $E_{\rm ffi}$ versus the defect state density in MAPbI₃.

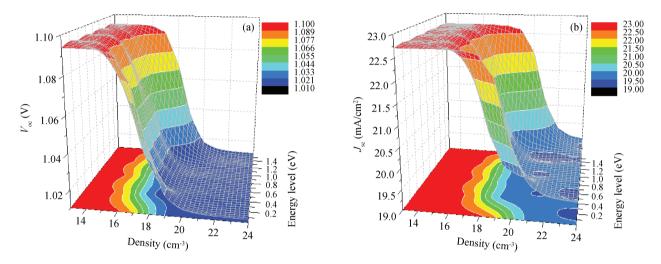


Figure 3. (Color online) The change of the (a) V_{oc} and (b) J_{sc} versus the defect state density in IDL1.

from 2.5 \times 10^{13} to 2.5 \times 10^{16} cm $^{-3}$, the $V_{\rm oc}$ reduces from 1.038 to 0.814 V. In addition, when the density of defect states is lower than 2.5 \times 10^{16} cm $^{-3}$, the $V_{\rm oc}$ keeps smaller change at about 0.9 V, and the positions of the density of defect states have almost no effect on $V_{\rm oc}$. Moreover, if the density of the defect state is larger than 2.5 \times 10^{16} cm $^{-3}$, the $V_{\rm oc}$ decreases to about 0.3 V, and the $V_{\rm oc}$ is not of practical application value.

Figure 1(b) shows the change of $J_{\rm sc}$ versus the density of defect states in MAPbI₃. We find that the $J_{\rm sc}$ changes slightly from 17.27 to 22.17 mA/cm² as the density of the defect state is lower than 2.5 × 10¹⁶ cm⁻³. We also notice that once the density of the defect state is higher than 2.5 × 10¹⁶ cm⁻³, the $J_{\rm sc}$ falls quickly with the increasing of density of the defect state. From another aspect, we find that if the density of the defect state is higher than 2.5 × 10¹⁶ cm⁻³, the density of the defect state locates near the bottom of the conduction band or on the top of the valance band, the $J_{\rm sc}$ still keeps an ideal value near 20.0 mA/cm².

Figures 2(a) and 2(b) show the change of the FF and $E_{\rm ffi}$ versus the density of the defect state in MAPbI₃. When the density of the defect state changes from 2.5×10^{16} to 2.5×10^{18} cm⁻³ and near the middle of the band gap, the FF and $E_{\rm ffi}$ decline from 78.38% to 30.35%, 17.94% to 0.07%, respectively. If defect states lie in the middle of the band gap instead of on

the bottom of the conduction band or at the top of the valence band, they have more bad impact on the properties of MAPbI₃ solar cells.

3.2. Effects of the defect state to IDL1 (buffer layer/MAPbI₃)

We study the defect state's effects in the interface IDL1 (buffer layer/MAPbI₃) and IDL2 (absorption layer/HTM). Figures 3 and 4 show the effects of the defect state in IDL1.

From Figure 3, we find that the $V_{\rm oc}$ is idealized and changes slightly around 1.09 V, where the defect state density is smaller than $1.0\times 10^{17} {\rm cm^{-3}}$. We can see that the density of the defect state changes from 1.0×10^{17} to $1.0\times 10^{19} {\rm cm^{-3}}$, the $V_{\rm oc}$ gradually decreases from 1.09 to 1.01 V. When the density of the defect state is up to $1.0\times 10^{19}~{\rm cm^{-3}}$, $V_{\rm oc}$ is about 1.02 V. In addition, the $V_{\rm oc}$ changes slightly with the change of the location in band gap yet in short, the defect state in IDL1 always has a smaller effect on $V_{\rm oc}$.

Figure 3(b) shows the change of the $J_{\rm sc}$. In Figure 3(b), we can see that when the density of the defect state is less than 1.0 \times 10¹⁷ cm⁻³, the defect state in IDL1 always has small effects on $J_{\rm sc}$ (it keeps stable about 22.7 mA/cm²). We also find that the $J_{\rm sc}$ decreases gradually from 22.7 to 20.0 mA/cm² as the

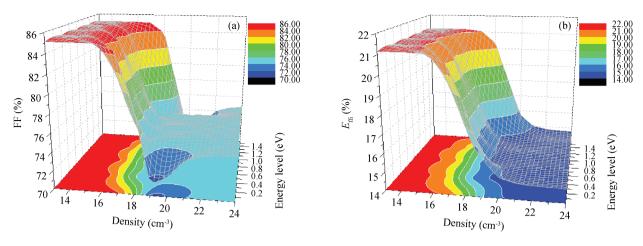


Figure 4. (Color online) The change of the (a) FF as well as (b) Effi versus the defect state density in IDL1.

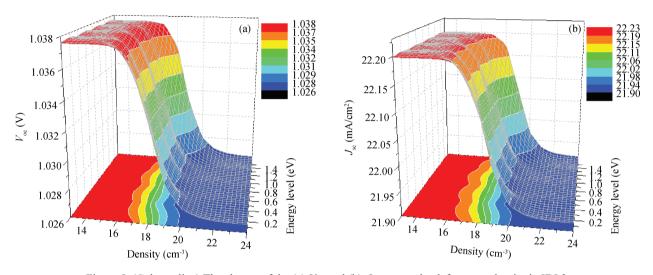


Figure 5. (Color online) The change of the (a) $V_{\rm oc}$ and (b) $J_{\rm sc}$ versus the defect state density in IDL2.

density of the defect state changes from 1.0×10^{17} to 1.0×10^{19} cm⁻³. We can consider that the $J_{\rm sc}$ slowly decreases as the location in the band gap changes between the top of the valance band and the bottom of the conductivity band.

Figure 4 shows the change of the FF and $E_{\rm ffi}$. From Figure 4(a), we can see that the FF has the maximum value of 85.1%, when the density of the defect state is less than 1.0×10^{16} cm⁻³. The $E_{\rm ffi}$ also has its maximum value of 21.1%, while the density of the defect state is smaller than 1.0×10^{15} cm⁻³. From Figure 4(b), we can find that when the density of the defect state achieves the value of 1.0×10^{19} cm⁻³, the FF and $E_{\rm ffi}$ are sensitive to the change of the defect state density. We also find that the FF decreases from 83% to around 70%, while $E_{\rm ffi}$ decreases from 20% to around 14% when the density of the defect state is higher than 1.0×10^{17} cm⁻³.

3.3. Effects of the defect state to IDL2 (HTM/MAPbI₃)

Effects of the defect state of IDL2 on $V_{\rm oc}$ and $J_{\rm sc}$ are shown in Figures 5(a) and 5(b). The $V_{\rm oc}$ is stable with the density of the defect state changing from 1.0×10^{13} to 1.0×10^{17} cm⁻³. When the density of the defect state is smaller than 1.0×10^{17} cm⁻³, the $V_{\rm oc}$ has its maximum value of 1.038 V, the $J_{\rm sc}$ also achieves its maximum value of 22.2 mA/cm². When the den-

sity of the defect state is higher than $1.0 \times 10^{17} \, \mathrm{cm^{-3}}$, the V_{oc} changes from 1.037 to 1.027 V and J_{sc} changes from 22.20 to 21.92 mA/cm² slightly with the variation of the location in the band gap and the density of the defect state.

The changes of the FF (Figure 6(a)) as well as the $E_{\rm ffi}$ (Figure 6(b)) are similar to that of the $V_{\rm oc}$ and $J_{\rm sc}$. When the densities of the defect state are lower than $1.0\times10^{17}~{\rm cm}^{-3}$, the FF changes around 78.1%, and the $E_{\rm ffi}$ changes around 18.0%. When the densities of the defect state are higher than $1.0\times10^{17}~{\rm cm}^{-3}$, the FF changes from 77.8% to 77.5%, while $E_{\rm ffi}$ changes from 17.8% to around 17.4%. We note that the defect state in IDL2 also has smaller effects on $V_{\rm oc}$, $J_{\rm sc}$, FF or $E_{\rm ffi}$.

3.4. The temperature's effects

The temperature (T) effects are shown in Figure 7. The $V_{\rm oc}$ decreases linearly from 1.10 to 0.20 V with the increasing of the temperature from 270 to 700 K. As T changes from 270 to 700 K, the $J_{\rm sc}$ decreases from 22.2 to 21.2 mA/cm², and it is not sensitive to T. FF gradually decreases as T increases from 270 to 700 K. The change of $E_{\rm ffi}$ is similar to that of the $V_{\rm oc}$, $E_{\rm ffi}$ also decreases linearly with the increasing of the temperature from 270 to 700 K. According to our results, perovskite solar cells have a better performance when they work at lower

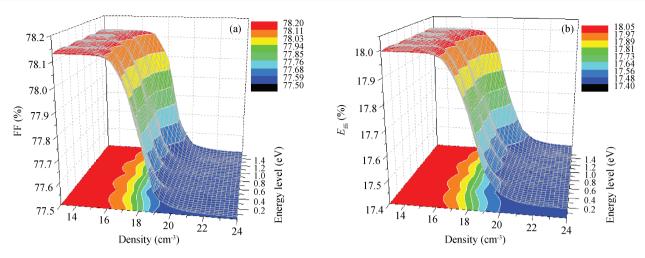


Figure 6. (Color online) The change of the (a) FF as well as (b) Effi versus the defect state density in IDL2.

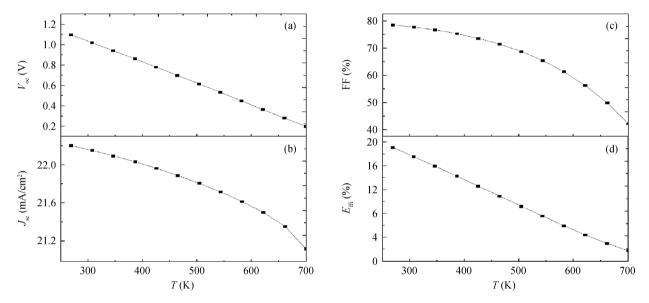


Figure 7. The change of the (a) V_{oc} , (b) J_{sc} , (c) FF as well as (d) E_{ffi} versus temperature (T).

temperature.

3.5. Effects of the thickness (absorption layer and hole transport layer)

Figures 8 and 9 indicate that influences of thickness of MAPbI₃ absorption layer and that of Spiro-OMeTAD hole transport layer, respectively.

In Figure 8(a), as the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.05 to 0.264 μ m, the $V_{\rm oc}$ gradually increases from 0.91 to 1.031 V. The $V_{\rm oc}$ gradually increases from 1.031 to 1.037 V as the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.264 to 0.8 μ m and the thickness of Spiro-OMeTAD is 0.46 μ m. However, the thickness of Spiro-OMeTAD has almost no influence on the $V_{\rm oc}$. In Figure 8(b), the thicknesses of MAPbI₃ and Spiro-OMeTAD have larger effects on $J_{\rm sc}$ than those on $V_{\rm oc}$. As the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.05 to 0.264 μ m, $J_{\rm sc}$ increases sharply from 9.99 to 21.00 mA/cm². When thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.264 to 0.8 μ m, $J_{\rm sc}$ gradually increases from 21.00 to 24.03 mA/cm². The thickness of Spiro-OMeTAD also has almost no influence on $V_{\rm oc}$ and $J_{\rm sc}$.

In Figure 9(a), as the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.05 to $0.3 \mu m$, and when the thickness of Spiro-OMeTAD is less than 0.3 μ m, FF has a maximum value of about 81%. As the thicknesses of MAPbI₃ and Spiro-OMeTAD increase, the FF gradually decreases. $E_{\rm ffi}$ variation trends are similar to that of $V_{\rm oc}$: as the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.05 to 0.22 μ m, $E_{\rm ffi}$ increases from 7.13% to 17.31% (Figure 9(b)). As the thickness of MAPbI₃ increases from 0.3 to 0.8 μ m, $E_{\rm ffi}$ keeps almost stable. It is worth pointing out that compared with the change of the $V_{
m oc}$, $E_{
m ffi}$ is sensitive to the change of the thickness of MAPbI₃. Our results indicate that the performance of perovskite solar cells is little influenced by the thickness of Spiro-OMeTAD. Because the preparation process of Spiro-OMeTAD is very complex, and its price is five times that of gold, so we use the least amount possible in designing the perovskite solar cells.

4. Conclusion

We built an ideal perovskite solar cell, and carried out a theoretical research on the effects of defect states (energy

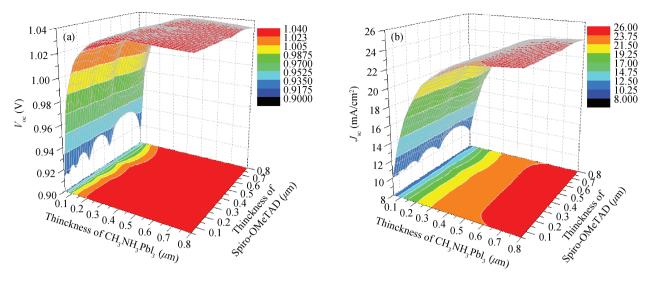


Figure 8. (Color online) The change of the (a) V_{oc} and (b) J_{sc} versus the thickness of MAPbI₃ and Spiro-OMeTAD layers.

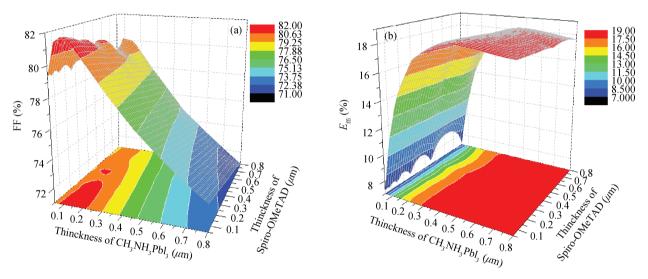


Figure 9. (Color online) The change of the (a) FF and (b) $E_{\rm ffi}$ versus the thickness of MAPbI₃ and Spiro-OMeTAD layers.

level in band gap and defect state densities in absorption layer MAPbI₃, and that in buffer layer/absorbing layer interface as well as in absorption layer/hole layer interface) to its performance. The main results: (1) the defect states have a large effect on the performance of perovskite solar cells when the defect state density is higher than 10^{16} cm⁻³, while defect states have a small effect when the defect state density is lower than 10^{16} cm⁻³; (2) defect states in the absorption layer have a much larger effect than those in the adjacent interface layers; (3) the perovskite solar cells have better performance as its working temperature is reduced; and (4) when the thickness of MAPbI₃ is about 0.3 μ m, the properties of perovskite solar cells are better, and the thickness 0.05 μ m of Spiro-OMeTAD is enough.

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