國 立 清 華 大 學

電機工程學系研究所
碩士論文

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論文中文標題

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中華民國一零三年六月

An Integrated Circuit Design for Silicon-Nanowire

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2016

Abstract

中　文　摘　要

關鍵詞：

Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Poly-silicon nanowire(SiNW) is an interesting and promising one-dimensional nano-structures. Many research of fabrication and electrical properties have been conducted [4]. It was first introduced to the biosensor field in 2001[3] and has become a promising candidate for various features such as high surface-to-volume ratio, ultra sensitivity, label-free electrical detection and real-time measurement.

Although there has been some great advances on nanowire structure design [5], the work of systems-level engineering is still insufficient. Systems designed for specific purpose can help the device to meet practical needs. Such as low noise Moreover, there are still several challenges that may be overcome through a better signal acquisition system [5].

One of the challenges is that the mass production of robust nanowire is still improbable. Element disparity may be a main reason among others. This problem also happens to the measurement of our own nanowire (Fig. 3.5). The nanowire we use is made by Professor Yang's team (National Chiao Tong University). And according to them, the nanowire use thick gate dielectric and have non-regular cross-sectional shape, which result in uncertainties of fabrication [7].

1.2   Introduction

In this project, we design a nanowire readout circuit that is capable of performing both large signal and small signal measurement. Specifically, the circuit has two operation mode. One is large signal mode (LS), which bias nanowire under a drain current (I_d) and finds corresponding gate-to-source voltage (V_{gs}). The other is the small signal mode (SS). It detects and amplifies the current variance of nanowire. We also combines these two function to try a method for solving the disparity problem.

Method for solving the disparity problem

It base on two assumptions.

1. The nanowire transconductance is proportional to the drain-to-source current (Id).

2. The changing of the concentration of targeted biomolecule can be viewed as the small signal voltage input to the gate end of a transistor.

The first assumption implies one can control the nanowire transconductance by the biasing Id. The second assumption means that as long as different nanowire elements have a same transconductance, they produce same output current (small signal). We testify these assumption in chapter 3.

We implement the method through our read-out circuit with large signal mode (LS) and small signal mode (SS). In the beginning of each measurement event, we applied the LS mode to initialized the drain current and gate voltage of nanowire. This is to standardize the transconductance of every nanowire. With nanowire biased under these I_d and V_{gs}, the circuit turn to the SS.

Some minutiae is reviewed in chapter 5. Currently the operation in the first mode is fully manual. In the future work this needs to be modified and may requires digital circuit assistance.

1.3   Design Flow and Chapter Layout

There are six chapters in this thesis, which are sorted according to the design flow.

Chapter 2 are divided into two part. The first part is the literature review. ...
The other is the analysis of measurement data from Yang's team. Most of those are
the drain current of nanowire sweeping along the gate voltage (Id-Vg curves). We
present some of the raw data and the analysis results in this part.

Chapter 3 gives a brief description of nanowire structure. It is then followed by
our own nanowire measurement based on the information in the previous chapter.
The measurement includes:

1. Comparison between front gate and back gate

2. Nanowire transconductance

3. Nanowire drain-to-source resistance

Chapter 4 is an "accessory". We construct an discrete circuit which was designed
for ion-sensitive field-effect transistor (ISFET) [9]. The purpose of this process is
to practice the constant current method. The outcomes are deficient and it is its
reference value which we spotlight.

Chapter 5
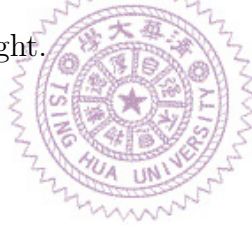
None

Figure 1.1: Design Flow

1.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Our

Chapter 2

Literature Review &

As previously mentioned in the introduction section, the read-out circuit we proposed has two operation mode (DC and AC). The DC mode is for drain current biasing while the AC mode is for current variance measurement. Each of them references different sources.

2.1 DC Sweep and Source Follower

In this section, we review the knowledge and an article that is related to our design of large signal mode (DC).

2.1.1 Constant Current

2.1.2 Source Follower

Fig of source follower As one of the basic single stage amplifier, source follower (common drain) are employed to transfer voltage signal from gate to source while keeping drain current constant. The transfer function can be derived as:

$$\frac{V_{out}}{V_{in}} = \frac{r_{ds}g_m}{1 + r_{ds}g_m} \tag{2.1}$$

$$\approx 1 \qquad \text{for} \quad r_{ds}g_m >> 1 \tag{2.2}$$

g_m is the transconductance ($\frac{\partial I_d}{\partial V_{gs}}$) and r_{ds} is the drain-to-source impedance. Although we haven't seen it is applied to nanowire, there have been several applications

in the read-out circuits of ISFET (Ion-sensitive Field-effect Transistor)[9, 11] for a long time.

In "Rapid Detection of E.coli Bacteria using Potassium-Sensitive FETs in CMOS", ISFET is applied as a biological transducer that convert detected bio-signal into it's input signal on the gate-end, which is resemble to our biosensor of nanowire. An read-out circuit of source follower is served as the analog front-end. The bio-signal induced voltage difference at the ISFET gate-end are converted to the source-end. There is no need for an extra current-to-voltage converter which may import more signal fluctuation such as shot noise or flicker noise. But on the other hand, the circuit requires a biasing current source. This current source may have to be stable, noiseless or wide-range on demand. And since the current value are usually under micro-scale even nano-scale, it is impractical to merely use external current source. The article use two resistors and an op-amp to design a current scale down circuit. Bias current decreases in proportional to the resistance ratio (N) of one resistor to another. Moreover, by keeping Vds at a constant value (0.5v), the circuit also removes the channel affect which is a factor that may effect linearity of the results. It is showed in the schematic below that two op-amp based unit gain buffer are added to force the voltage at drain-end follows the source-end.

Schematic

An issue need to be noticed is the impedance matching between the element and the current source circuit. It is known that the output impedance of current source should be much larger than the input impedance of the biased element. The equation for the output impedance of source follower is:

$$\frac{r_{ds}}{1 + g_m r_{ds}} \tag{2.3}$$

This equation can be simplified as:

$$\frac{1}{g_m} \qquad \text{for} \quad g_m r_{ds} >> 1 \tag{2.4}$$

We also compute the output impedance of the current source circuit:

$$N \times R_i \tag{2.5}$$

R_i is the impedance of the current source I1 in Fig. In the integrated circuit, R_i is not ideal but usually close to the r_{ds} of a single MOSFET.

As mentioned, Eq.2.5 should be far larger than Eq.2.4. However, g_m is proportional to the I_d, which means Eq.2.4 is inversely proportional to N. When the bias current decreases, the output impedance decreases while the input impedance at the ISFET source-end increases. This creates a lower boundary of the bias current.

The source follower structure provides a direct signal transition method. It is a good candidate for the read-out circuit with the aim of detecting transconductance or threshold voltage variance. Nevertheless, post-processing such as amplification and filtering are necessary. The experiment results in the article are untreated. Some strong signal attenuation exist, which are mainly caused by low-frequency noise and ISFET drift [8]. The drift problem are dealt with through some signal processing techniques while noise problems are left untreated.

We constructed this circuit with discrete elements and applied it to our nanowire. The results are presented in chapter 4.

2.2 Small Signal (AC) Measurement Method Review

In previous section, the source follower we mentioned exhibited compelling advantages as a signal processing structure of nano-device. However, the structure overcomes obstacles when being applied to the small signal detection. Parasitic capacitors and resistors can severely influence the results. We take a simple MOSFET for example.

Fig of parasitic mosfet

With the parasitic elements from the figure above are included, we modified the transfer function Eq.2.2

$$\frac{r_{ds}(sC_{gs} + gm)}{1 + r_{ds}(gm + s(C_{gs} + C_s))} \tag{2.6}$$

The equation can be similar to Eq.2.2 which roughly equals to 1 as long as C_s is far more smaller than C_{gs}. Unfortunately, C_s can be large since the output end

of source follower usually connects to the next stage input or even the chip pad. In that case, the parasitic capacitors may attenuate the signal as signal frequency increase.

Parasitic element is an issue and deserve more consideration. Works we present below combine capacitance measurement with nanowire measure.

The measurement system for ZnO-nanowire based sensor array from [1] applies the Time-over-Threshold techniques to its read-out circuit (Fig.2.1). The circuit alternatively charges an on-chip capacitor (C_{int}) with a constant current and discharges it through the nano-material resistance (nanowire). An inverter with its output switches from on to off when the capacitor is charged to its input threshold voltage, and vice versa. This behavior convert information of nanowire such as capacitance and resistance into time information. Both C_{int} and capacitance of nanowire (C_{NW}) (from drain to source) effect charging time and together with the drain-to-source resistance effect the discharging time.

The work presented in [1] doesn't have enough explanation about how do they interpret the capacitance and resistance information. It simply mentioned that a microcontroller is responsible for these calculation. Besides, the work lacks simulation and experiment of using complex elements as measure target. Most of the results are measurement of using concrete resistor as the substitute for nanowire and regard the C_{NW} as 0p. The only nanowire experiment given at last doesn't has good performance.

The recent publicans [2] by the team is more elaborate. In Fig.2.2, nanowire append between point A and B. The charing current is able to be applied from Mp1 or Mp2, which is determined by the "sel" signal with the aid from the MUXs. This is simply mean to perform a reverse measurement and we ignore it by assume sel = 1 and point B is virtually ground. Now, we can see that the circuit design concept is actually same. The current charge both C_{int} and C_{NW}. When the voltage at A exceed the threshold voltage, the output switches to off and feedback to turn off the Mp1. (To be noted that the inverter at the output satge in [1] is replaced by a schmitt trigger.) Then the capacitor discharges through nanowire (r_{ds}). The right-bottom plot in Fig.2.2 defines T_0 as the charging time and T_1 as the discharging

time. The derivation of the R_{NW} and C_{NW} in the work can be simplified as:

$$C_{NW} = T_0 - C_{base} \qquad (2.7)$$

$$R_{NW} = \frac{T_1 R_{par}}{(C_{NW} + C_{base})R_{par} - T_1} \qquad (2.8)$$

$$\text{where} \quad R_{NW}||R_{par} = \frac{T_1}{C_{NW} + C_{base}} \qquad (2.9)$$

C_{base} are the C_{int} plus parasitic capacitance and R_{par} the parasitic resistance. These parasitic elements comes from the transistor in the integrated circuit block such as MUX and Mp. It must be noted that we doesn't concern the hysteresis of the schmitt trigger here owing to simplicity.

None

Figure 2.1: Nanowire Structure

None

Figure 2.2: Nanowire Structure

2.3   Data Analysis

Chapter 3

Nanowire Structure and Measurement

3.1 Brief Description of Nanowire Structure

The nanowire we use is made by Prof.Yang's team (National Chiao Tong University)[6]. A sectional view of the nanowire structure is given below. The fabrication process is based on the poly-silicon sidewall spacer technique. The n-Type doped poly-SiNW FET has 2 to 10 poly-silicon channels. Each channel is 80nm in width and 2µm in length. Large portion of the channel surface is exposed to environment. The exposed region, through several post-process, capture the DNA probe and serve as the sensing site for DNA molecules.[6, 7]
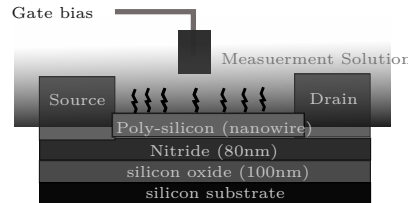

Figure 3.1: Nanowire Structure

3.2 Measurement

This section presents the results.

Front Gate and Back Gate

Two gates are available: floating gate (liquid gate) and back-gate. We choose floating gate as the operation gate in spite of some advantages that back-gate has. One of them is the ability to lower the 1/f noise [12, 10]. However, this only happens in a very high gate voltage, which is not practical in the integrated circuit design. Moreover, the floating gate induces larger drain-current. In other words, it has higher transconductance. And a high transconductance leads to a stronger feedback ability in our design.
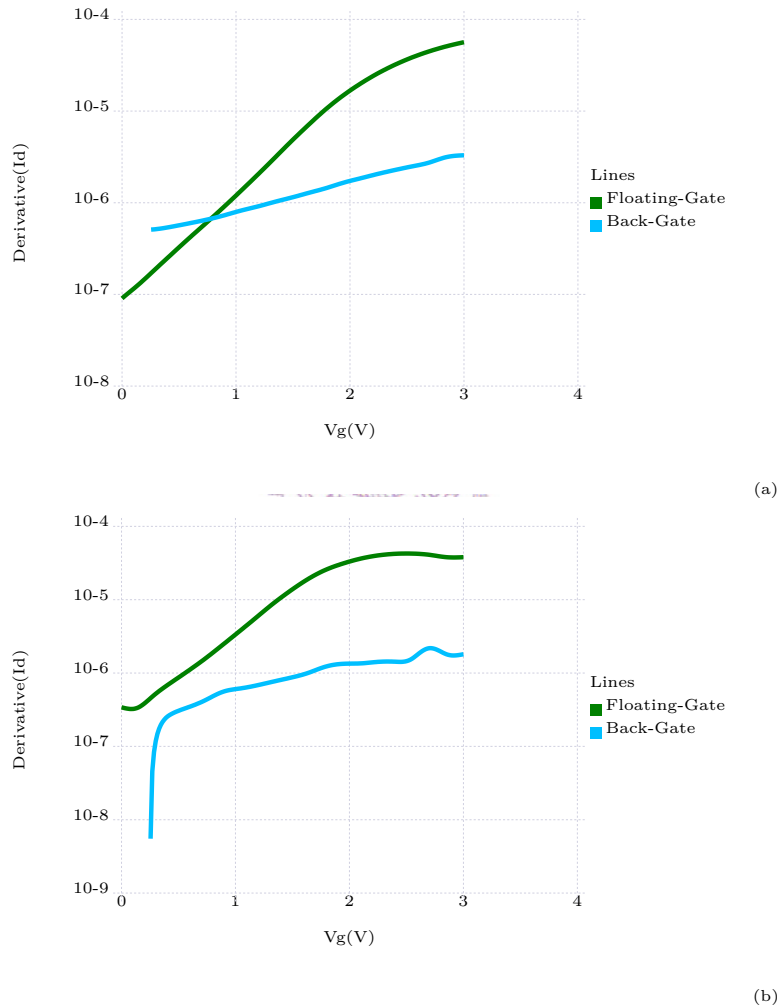
Figure 3.2:

3.2.1 Parameters

The most crucial parameter for our circuit design is the transconductance (gm). The gm is acquired by finding the relation between drain-to-source current (I_d) and gate-source voltage (V_g), and perform differentiation: $\frac{\partial I_d}{\partial V_g}$. use standard PBS as
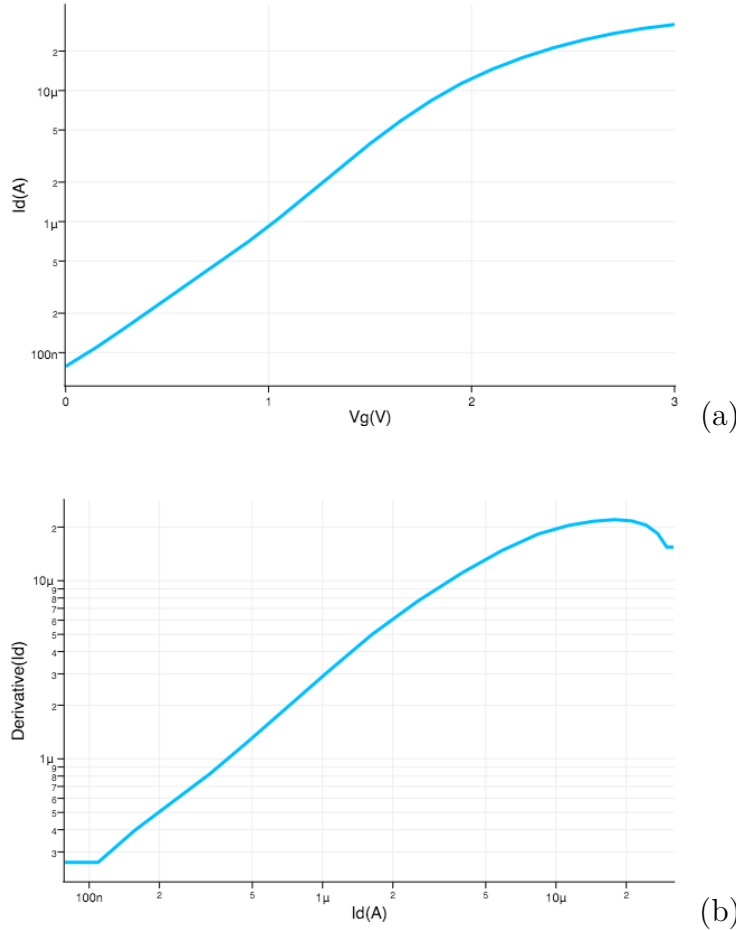

(a)

(b)

Figure 3.3:

The Id-Derivative figures indicates there is a "linear region" where gm is proportional to Id. This property implies the transconductance can be controlled in simple way. As mentioned in introduction, we may find specific bias Id for distinct elements and adjust their transconductance to a same value.

We also prove that the transconductance under this region is unaffected by the drain-source voltage variance.

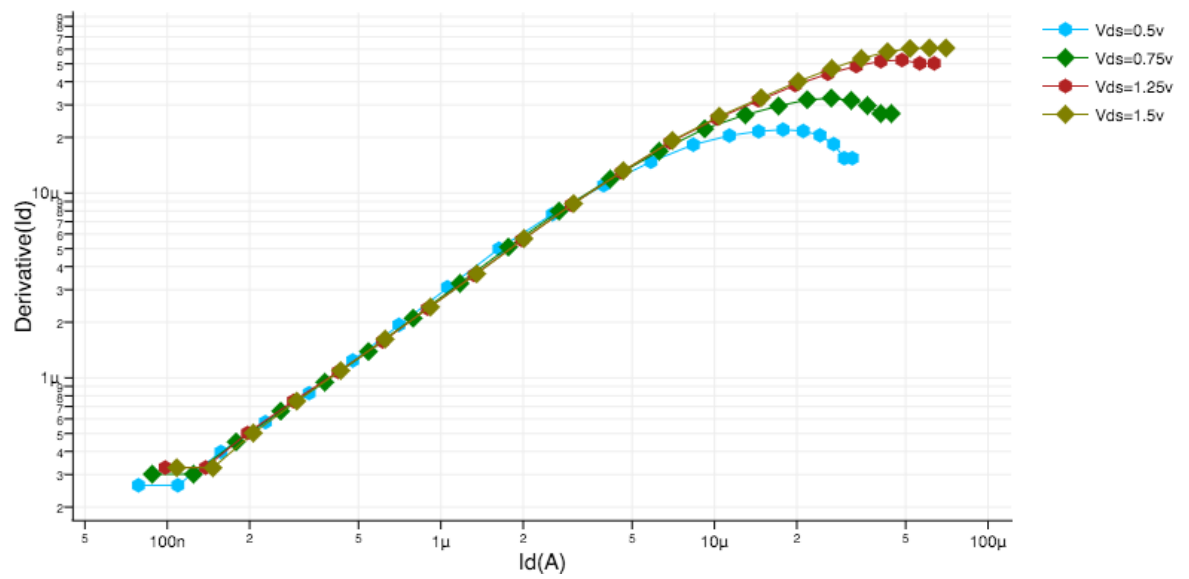By measuring two nanowire element which lie on the same wafer and are immersed

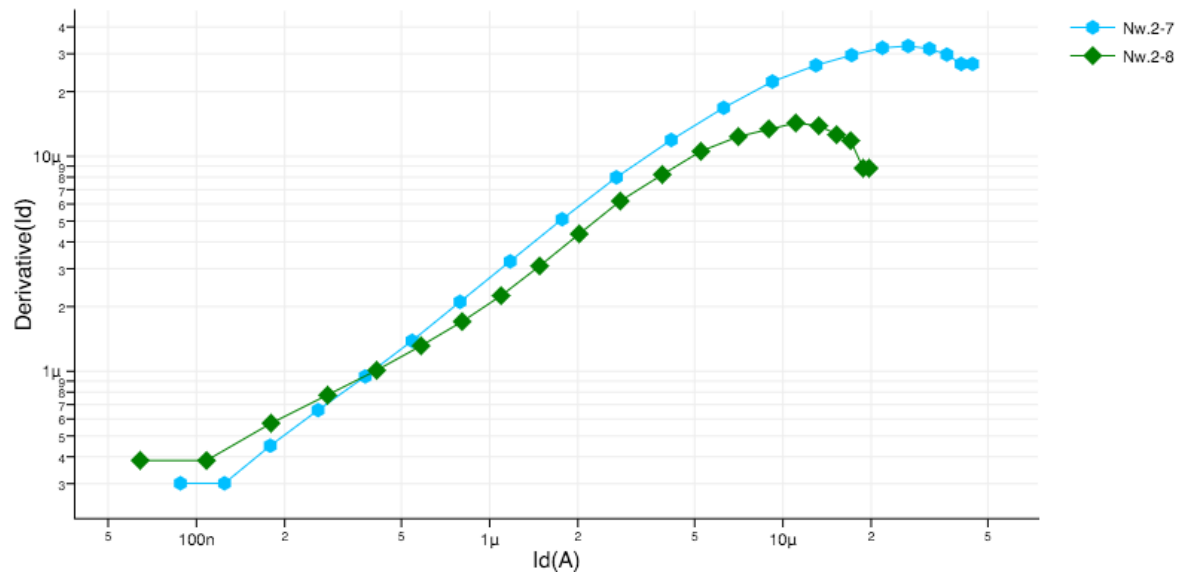Figure 3.4: Id-transconductance with Vds variance

Figure 3.5: Distinct element with a line idicate they have same transconductance

with the same testing PBS solution

Chapter 4

Discrete Circuitry Design

Chapter 5

Integrated Circuitry Design

5.1 Signal Acquisition Method

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusions

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Acknowledgement