

# Investigation of Gate Defects in Ultrathin MOS Structures Using DTRS Technique\*

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**Abstracts:** A detailed description of relaxation spectroscopy technique under direct tunneling stress is given. A double peak phenomena by applied relaxation spectroscopy on ultra-thin ( $< 3\text{nm}$ ) gate oxide is found. It suggests that two kinds of traps exist in the degradation of gate oxide. It is also observed that both the trap density and the generation/capture cross-section of oxide trap and interface trap are smaller in ultra-thin gate oxide ( $< 3\text{nm}$ ) under DT stress than those in the thicker oxide ( $> 4\text{nm}$ ) under FN stress, and the centroid of oxide trap is closer to anode interface than in the center of oxide.

**Key words:** tunneling; metal-oxide-semiconductor device; proportional difference operator

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## 1 Introduction

With the thickness of the gate oxide shrinking along device geometry, the reliability of gate oxide becomes an important issue. Especially for ultra-thin gate oxide with thickness less than  $3\text{nm}$ , direct tunneling rather than Fowler-Nordheim tunneling of carriers through the gate oxide makes a significant contribution to the gate current<sup>[1~4]</sup>. This has big impact on power consumption and current drive for logic circuits and causes problems in data retention for memory cells. It is well known that high electrical field stresses lead to degradation of the device because trap charges can be generated at the Si-SiO<sub>2</sub> interface and inside the oxide during stress condition. However, no much is known about the

failure induced by direct tunneling for ultra-thin gateoxide. Then, extracting and analyzing of defect information become special interest for understanding degradation induced by direct tunneling.

In order to separate and to determine oxide and interface traps, relaxation spectroscopy technique has been proposed and developed by Xu and Tan<sup>[5~10]</sup> for Fowler-Nordheim injection conditions for small dimension MOS device reliability analysis. Also, part of relaxation spectroscopy technique for direct tunneling injection conditions has been theoretically proposed<sup>[11]</sup>. However, detailed experimental information and further theoretical descriptions are needed.

In this article, direct tunneling relaxation spectroscopy is further described and applied in  $1.9\text{nm}$  ultra-thin gate oxide. From our experiments, it is

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found that relaxation spectroscopy technique is still an effective, fast, and simple method to extract trap information for ultra-thin gate oxide with direct tunneling injection conditions. It is also observed that double peaks phenomena apparently exists, the trap density and the generation/capture cross-section of oxide trap and interface trap are smaller in ultra-thin gate oxide ( $< 3\text{nm}$ ) under DT stress than those in the thicker oxide ( $> 4\text{nm}$ ) under FN stress, and the centroid of oxide trap will be closer to anode interface than in the center of oxide.

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 Electron-fluence-dependence current equation for constant voltage stress

As the thickness of oxide decrease into ultra-thin stage, oxide voltage drops to a height below the oxide potential barrier height. That means that direct tunneling current must be considered rather than Fowler-Nordheim tunneling current. So, instead of classical FN formula, the tunneling current density under the condition of strong degenerate accumulation layer in the silicon substrate should be described as<sup>[2]</sup>

$$J_{\text{DT}} = \frac{A}{\left[1 - \left(\frac{\phi - qV_{\text{ox}}}{\phi}\right)^{1/2}\right]^2} E_{\text{ox}}^2 \times \exp\left[-\frac{B}{E_{\text{ox}}} \times \frac{\phi^{3/2} - (\phi - qV_{\text{ox}})^{3/2}}{\phi^{3/2}}\right] \quad (1)$$

where  $A$  and  $B$  are constants depending on the electron effective mass and barrier height  $\phi$  at the cathode,  $V_{\text{ox}}$  represents the voltage drop over barrier layer,  $E_{\text{ox}} = V_{\text{ox}}/T_{\text{ox}}$ , and  $T_{\text{ox}}$  represents the oxide thickness. Equation (1) can be rewritten as

$$J_{\text{DT}} = \frac{A}{\alpha(E_{\text{ox}})} E_{\text{ox}}^2 \exp\left[-\frac{B}{E_{\text{ox}}} \beta(E_{\text{ox}})\right] \quad (2)$$

where  $\phi = 3.15\text{eV}$

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha(E_{\text{ox}}) &= \left[1 - \left(\frac{\phi - qT_{\text{ox}}E_{\text{ox}}}{\phi}\right)^{1/2}\right]^2 \\ &= [1 - (1 - \gamma E_{\text{ox}})^{1/2}]^2 \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \beta(E_{\text{ox}}) &= \frac{\phi^{3/2} - (\phi - qT_{\text{ox}}E_{\text{ox}})^{3/2}}{\phi^{3/2}} \\ &= 1 - (1 - \gamma E_{\text{ox}})^{3/2} \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

$$\gamma = qT_{\text{ox}}/\phi \quad (5)$$

As we know, high electric field stress generates trap charge inside the oxide. And the newly generated trap charge modifies oxide field. So, the field  $E_{\text{ox}}$  can be written as

$$E_{\text{ox}} = E_0(1 + \Delta E/E_0) \quad (6)$$

where  $E_0$  represents the initial electric field corresponding to the initial tunneling current density  $J_{\text{DT}0}$ , and  $\Delta E$  represents the change amount of electric field during the injection.

Usually,  $\Delta E/E_0 < 1$ , it can be verified from experiments. As shown in Fig. 1, the change of oxide field is not above 1% before oxide breakdown in

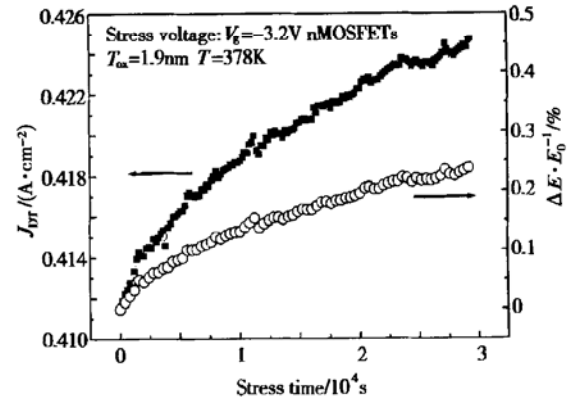


Fig. 1 Gate current density tunneling through ultra thin oxide dielectric of MOSFETs during constant voltage stress experiment and the corresponding electric field change

the experiments. So, Eq. (1) can be approximately rewritten as

$$\ln\left[\frac{J_{\text{DT}}}{J_{\text{DT}0}}\right] = H_{\text{DT}} \frac{\Delta E}{E_0} \quad (7)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} H_{\text{DT}} &= \left. \frac{d\{\ln[J_{\text{DT}}(E_{\text{ox}})]\}}{d(\Delta E/E_0)} \right|_{\substack{\Delta E \\ E_0} = 0} \\ &= 2 - \frac{\gamma E_0}{[1 - (1 - \gamma E_0)^{1/2}](1 - \gamma E_0)^{1/2}} \\ &\quad + \frac{B}{E_0} \left[1 - \frac{3}{2} \gamma E_0 (1 - \gamma E_0)^{1/2} - (1 - \gamma E_0)^{3/2}\right] \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

In our experiments, the value of parameter  $B$  and  $H_{DT}$  can be obtained as 283MV/cm and 5.69 respectively. Using the first-order rate equation and Gauss's law, the electric field change  $\Delta E$  caused by the trapped and/or generated charges  $N_{ot}$  can be described by

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta E &= -\frac{qX}{\epsilon_{ox}T_{ox}}N_{ot} \\ &= -\frac{qX}{\epsilon_{ox}T_{ox}}N_{ots}[1 - \exp(-\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle F)]\end{aligned}\quad (9)$$

where  $\epsilon_{ox}$  is the dielectric constant of the  $\text{SiO}_2$ ,  $N_{ots}$ ,  $\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle$ , and  $X$  are the saturation density, the average generation/capture cross section of the oxide trap and the centroid measured from the anode, respectively.  $T_{ox}$  represents oxide thickness.  $F = \int \frac{J}{q} dt$ , is the electron fluence, where  $J$  represents the current density of direct tunneling. The effective oxide trap density  $N_{ot,eff}$  can be obtained from Eqs. (7) and (9), as

$$\begin{aligned}N_{ot,eff}(F) &= \frac{X}{T_{ox}}N_{ot}(F) \\ &= \frac{X}{T_{ox}}N_{ots}[1 - \exp(-\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle F)] \\ &= N_{ots,eff}[1 - \exp(-\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle F)] \\ &= -\frac{\epsilon_{ox}E_0}{qH_{DT}}\ln\left[\frac{J_{DT}(F)}{J_{DT0}}\right]\end{aligned}\quad (10)$$

where  $N_{ots,eff} = \frac{X}{T_{ox}}N_{ots}$ , is the effective saturation density of oxide trap.

According to the method of proportional difference operator<sup>[5]</sup>, the difference function of direct tunneling current can be written as

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta_p \ln\left(\frac{J_{DT}(F)}{J_{DT0}}\right) &= \ln\left(\frac{J_{DT}(K_p F)}{J_{DT0}}\right) - \ln\left(\frac{J_{DT}(F)}{J_{DT0}}\right) \\ &= -\frac{qH_{DT}}{\epsilon_{ox}E_0} \times \frac{X}{T_{ox}}N_{ots}[\exp(-\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle F) \\ &\quad - \exp(-\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle K_p F)]\end{aligned}\quad (11)$$

For peak position of current spectroscopy  $F = F_{op}$ , according to the extreme condition.

$$\frac{\partial \Delta_p \ln\left(\frac{J_{DT}(F)}{J_{DT0}}\right)}{\partial F} = 0 \quad (12)$$

then, the following equation can be obtained

$$\langle\phi_{ot}\rangle = \frac{\ln(k_p)}{k_p - 1} \times \frac{1}{F_{op}} \quad (13)$$

$$\frac{X}{T_{ox}}N_{ots} = -\frac{\epsilon_{ox}E_0}{qH_{DT}}\Delta_p \ln\left(\frac{J_{DT}(F_{op})}{J_{DT0}}\right)[k_p^{-\frac{1}{k_p}}(k_p - 1)]^{-1} \quad (14)$$

where  $F_{op}$  and  $\sigma_{ot}$  represent the peak fluence and capture cross-section for oxide trap density, respectively.  $K_p = 1 + \xi$ ,  $\xi$  is a small positive number.

## 2.2 Electron-fluence-dependence subthreshold gate voltage and swing

In many applications, threshold voltage is treated as an important characteristics parameter for processing and circuit. Usually, it is obtained from transfer characteristic curve. Just as we know, both charges of oxide trap and interface trap play important roles on the determination of threshold voltage. The oxide trap induces the shift of transfer characteristics curve. The interface trap induces the distortion of transfer characteristics curve. So, separation of traps will be important to understand the different components that contribute to the shift of threshold voltage. Here, our aim can be realized by analyzing sub-threshold characteristics with relaxation spectroscopy technique.

The shift of sub-threshold gate voltage,  $\Delta V_{gw}$ , can be consisted of oxide trap and interface trap. It can be written as<sup>[9]</sup>

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta V_{gw} &= V_{gw}(F) - V_{gw}(0) = \Delta V_{wit} + \Delta V_{wot} \\ &= -\left(\frac{T_{ox} - X}{T_{ox}}\Delta Q_{ot}(F) + \Delta Q_{it}(F)\right)/C_{ox}\end{aligned}\quad (15)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta V_{wit}(F) &= -\frac{\Delta Q_{it}(F)}{C_{ox}}, \\ \Delta V_{wot}(F) &= -\frac{T_{ox} - X}{T_{ox}}\Delta Q_{ot}(F)/C_{ox}\end{aligned}\quad (16)$$

$\Delta V_{wit}$ ,  $\Delta V_{wot}$  represent the subthreshold gate voltage shift due to the interface and oxide trap generations under direct tunneling injection conditions, respectively.  $C_{ox}$  represents oxide capacitance. To separate both traps, subthreshold swing,  $S$ , usually can be adopted to characteristics of interface trap<sup>[12]</sup>.

$$S = \ln 10 \frac{dV_{gw}}{d\ln I_d} = S_0 \frac{1 + (C_d + C_{it})/C_{ox}}{1 + C_d/C_{ox}} \quad (17)$$

where  $S_0$  represents the subthreshold swing with-

out interface traps.  $C_d$  represents the capacitance of depletion layer,  $C_{it}$  represents the capacitance of interface traps,  $C_{it} = qN_{it}$ ,  $N_{it}$  represents the density of interface trap.

Also by using the first-order rate equation, the shift of subthreshold swing caused by interface trap charges can be written as

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta S(F) &= S(F) - S(0) = \frac{qS_0}{C_{ox} + C_d} N_{it}(F) \\ &= \frac{qS_0}{C_{ox} + C_d} N_{its} [1 - \exp(-\langle \sigma_{it} \rangle F)] \quad (18)\end{aligned}$$

With the uniform distribution approximation of  $N_{it}$ <sup>[13]</sup>, we have

$$\Delta Q_{it}(F) = \frac{C_{ox} + C_d}{S_0} \left( \frac{E_g}{2q} - \psi_B + \mathcal{Q}_S \right) \Delta S(F) \quad (19)$$

where  $E_g$  represents the energy of silicon bandgap,  $\psi_B$  represents the potential of bulk Fermi.

Combining Eqs. (15) ~ (19), the effective density of oxide can be written as

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{T_{ox} - X}{T_{ox}} N_{ot}(F) &= \frac{T_{ox} - X}{T_{ox}} N_{ots} \\ (1 - \exp(-\langle \sigma_{ot} \rangle F)) &= -\frac{C_{ox}}{q} \Delta V_{gw}(F) \\ &- \frac{C_{ox} + C_d}{qS_0} \left( \frac{E_g}{2q} - \psi_B + \mathcal{Q}_S \right) \Delta S(F) \quad (20)\end{aligned}$$

Similarly to Eq. (11), according to the difference of sampling spectroscopy theorem<sup>[9]</sup>, we can get the following equations:

$$\langle \sigma_{it} \rangle = \frac{\ln k_p}{k_p - 1} F_{ip}^{-1} \quad (21)$$

$$N_{its} = \frac{C_{ox} + C_d}{qS_0} \Delta_p S(F_{ip}) \left[ \frac{k_p}{k_p - 1} (k_p - 1) \right]^{-1} \quad (22)$$

$$\langle \sigma_{ot} \rangle = \frac{\ln(k_p)}{k_p - 1} \times \frac{1}{F_m} \quad (23)$$

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{T_{ox} - X}{T_{ox}} N_{ots} &= \left( -\frac{C_{ox}}{q} \Delta_p V_{gw}(F_m) - \frac{C_{ox} + C_d}{qS_0} \right. \\ &\times \left. \left( \frac{E_g}{2q} - \psi_B + \mathcal{Q}_S \right) \Delta_p S(F_m) \right) \left[ \frac{k_p}{k_p - 1} (k_p - 1) \right]^{-1} \quad (24)\end{aligned}$$

where  $F_{ip}$  and  $F_m$  represent the peak fluence for interface and oxide traps, respectively.  $\langle \sigma_{it} \rangle$  and  $\langle \sigma_{ot} \rangle$  represent the average generate/capture cross-section of oxide and interface trap, respectively. And

$N_{its}$ ,  $N_{ots}$  represent the saturate interface and oxide trap density, respectively.

### 2.3 Extracting of oxide trap information

By combining Eqs. (14) and (24), the saturate density and centroid of oxide trap can be obtained as

$$N_{ots} = [D_{ot}(F_m) + D_j(F_{op})] \left[ \frac{k_p}{k_p - 1} (k_p - 1) \right]^{-1} \quad (25)$$

$$X = T_{ox} / \left( 1 + \frac{D_v(F_m)}{D_j(F_{op})} \right) \quad (26)$$

$$\text{where } D_j(F_{op}) = -\frac{\epsilon_{ox} E_0}{qH_{DT}} \Delta_p \ln \left( \frac{J_{DT}(F_{op})}{J_{DT0}} \right) \quad (27)$$

$$\begin{aligned}D_{ot}(F_m) &= -\frac{C_{ox}}{q} \Delta_p V_{gw}(F_m) - \frac{C_{ox} + C_d}{qS_0} \\ &\times \left( \frac{E_g}{2q} - \psi_B + \mathcal{Q}_S \right) \Delta_p S(F_m) = \Delta_p V_{ot}(F_m) \quad (28)\end{aligned}$$

## 3 Experiments and results

### 3.1 Sample

Experiments are performed by using HP4156B semiconductor parameter analyzer. The samples are n-channel MOSFETs with 10  $\mu\text{m}$  for both of channel width and channel length. The substrate is p-type Si with a resistivity of 0.1 ( $\Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ ) approximately. The thickness of gate oxide is approximately 1.9 nm. Stress voltage ( $V_g$ ) is -3.2 V, while drain source and substrate are grounded. Flat-band voltage is approximately -0.95 V. Experimental temperature is 105  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ , controlled by temperature-controller. The direct tunneling stressing is interrupted after preset time intervals and transfer characteristics are measured at a drain voltage of 0.1 V with source and substrate grounded. The sweep range of gate voltage is just enough to reveal the subthreshold characteristics, but not large enough to disturb the charge state of the gate oxide.

### 3.2 Experiments and results

From Fig. 1, it can be seen that stress current

increases with stress time. It means that oxide trap charge changes oxide field as analyzing in 2.1. That means interface trap and oxide trap are generated during stressing. In order to extract and to separate oxide trap from interface trap, the shift of subthreshold gate voltage and the shift of subthreshold swing have been obtained from transfer characteristics shown in Fig. 2.

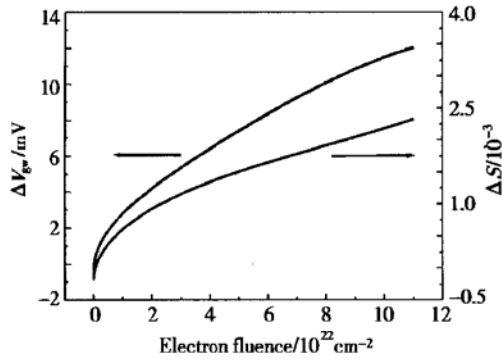


Fig. 2 Shift curves extracting from transfer characteristics

In order to extract oxide trap parameter, according to 2.1, proportional difference operator (PDO) curve of the shift of gate tunneling current,  $\Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})$ , has been obtained from stress characteristics as shown in Fig. 3(a). From Fig. 3(a), we can see that the proportional difference curve has obvious step, which means double peaks exist, and the phenomena of multi-trap interference<sup>[14]</sup> occurs. We think that double peaks mean two traps, and the change of gate tunneling current should be caused by the sum of two parts.

In order to verify our ideas, iterative method is adopted in separating PDO curve for single trap. As shown in Fig. 3(b), it is found that total PDO curve,  $\Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})$ , which comes from proportional difference of the gate current shift, can be the sum of two proportional curve,  $\Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})_1$  and  $\Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})_2$ . Then, we have the following relationship:

$$\Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0}) = \Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})_1 + \Delta_p \ln(J_{DT}(F)/J_{DT0})_2 \quad (29)$$

This means that our idea is reasonable, which

proves that two traps play a role on the gate current during stress. So, with the help of the relaxation spectroscopy technique, the effect of different traps on oxide degradation can be studied separately.

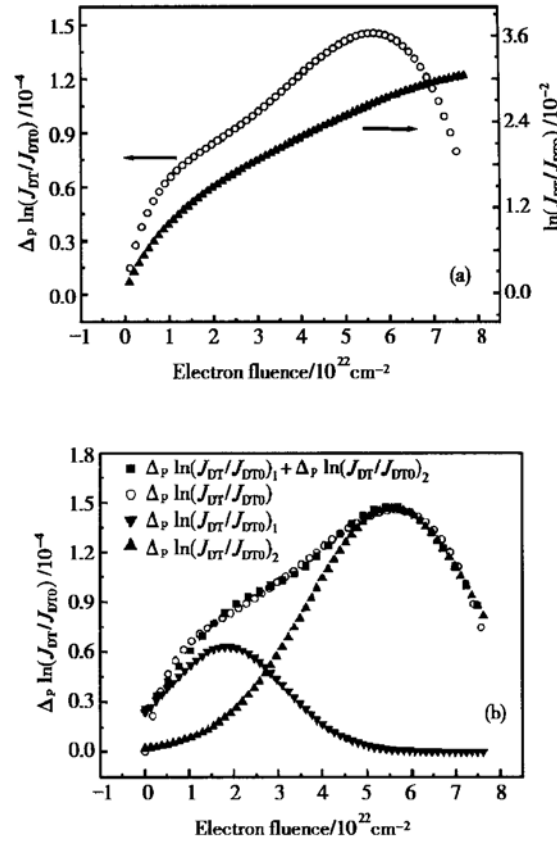


Fig. 3 (a) Typical proportional difference results for the shift of gate tunneling current; (b) Typical proportional difference for the shift of gate tunneling current. Open symbols show experiment results; filled symbols show calculated results from iterative method

Similar to analysis in Fig. 3(a) and (b), according to 2.2, the proportional difference operator curve of subthreshold gate voltage shift induced only by oxide trap and the proportional difference operator curve of subthreshold swing shift induced only by interface trap are also done as shown in Figs. 4~6. Here, Fig. 4 shows an example to explain the advantage of relaxation spectroscopy technique. By using the technique, double trap phenomena can be found easier in protional operator

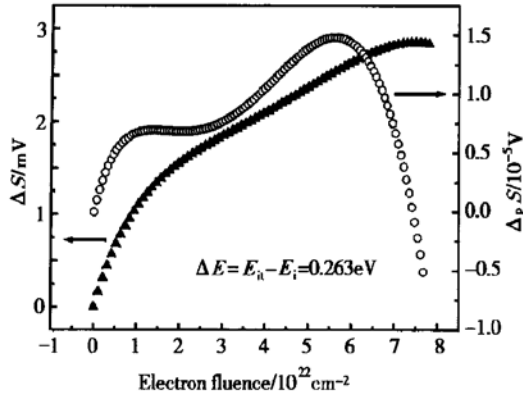


Fig. 4 Typical proportional difference for voltage shift induced by interface trap

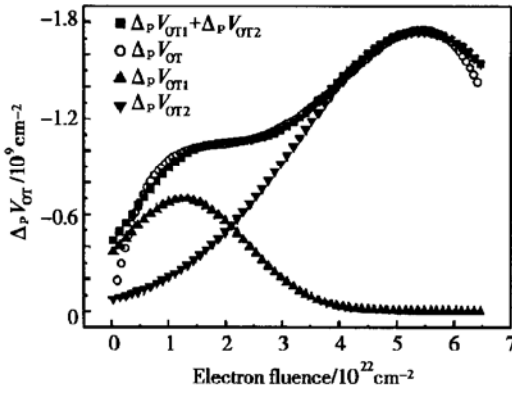


Fig. 5 Typical proportional difference for voltage shift induced by oxide trap Open symbols show experiment results; filled symbols show calculated results from iterative method.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \sigma_{it1} &= 8.98 \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^{-2} & N_{its1} &= 2.64 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ eV}^{-1} & \text{at } E_{it} - E_i &= 0.263 \text{ eV} \\
 \sigma_{it2} &= 1.78 \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^{-2} & N_{its2} &= 6.12 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ eV}^{-1} & \text{at } E_{it} - E_i &= 0.263 \text{ eV} \\
 \sigma_{ot1} &= 6.48 \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^{-2} & N_{ots1} &= -3.33 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2} \\
 X_1 &= 3.94 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm} & X_1/T_{ox} &= 0.21 \\
 \sigma_{ot2} &= 1.73 \times 10^{-23} \text{ cm}^{-2} & N_{ots2} &= -6.57 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2} \\
 X_2 &= 5.13 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm} & X_2/T_{ox} &= 0.27
 \end{aligned}$$

It can be seen that both  $N_{ots}$  and  $N_{its}$  are smaller in ultra-thin gate oxide than those in thicker oxide ( $> 4\text{nm}$ ), in which trap density for interface and oxide trap will be above  $1 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ . Also it can be found that oxide trap located closer to Si/SiO<sub>2</sub> interface is different from that in thicker oxide, where centroid  $X$  approximately lies on the

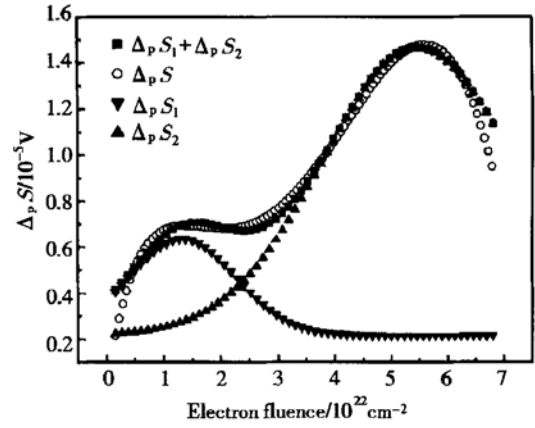


Fig. 6 Typical proportional difference for the shift of subthreshold swing Open symbols show experiment results; filled symbols show calculated results from iterative method.

curve than in fresh curve. So, relaxation spectroscopy technique has high sensitive.

From Fig. 3, Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, we can see that double trap phenomena at the oxide interface and inside the oxide induced by direct tunneling stress current still exist in ultra-thin gate oxide similarly to thicker oxide in FN stress<sup>[9]</sup>.

Based on our relaxation spectroscopy theory in 2.1~2.3, the following trap parameters can be obtained with an example of  $k_p = 1.01$ :

center of oxide, for example,  $X \approx 2\text{nm}$  for  $4\text{nm}$  gate oxide under FN stress. So, the phenomena of channel hot carrier noise becomes more obvious because of the fluctuation of channel carrier numbers induced by charge/discharge with near-interface oxide trap.

## 4 Conclusions

Detailed description of relaxation spectroscopy technique under direct tunneling stress has been demonstrated and applied in ultra-thin gate oxide. By combining proportional difference of gate current shift, sub-threshold swing shift, and sub-threshold gate voltage shift, we got fast, simple and effective way to extract parameters of interface trap and oxide trap, such as the generation/capture cross-section, centroid, and density when a large direct tunneling current was injected through the gate oxide. Also by application in ultra-thin (1.9nm) gate oxide under DT stress, it is observed that double-trap behavior exists apparently. Experiments show that both the trap density and the generation/capture cross-section of oxide trap and interface trap are smaller in ultra-thin gate oxide (< 3nm) under DT stress than those in the thicker oxide (> 4nm) under FN stress, and the centroid of oxide trap is closer to anode interface than in the center of oxide.

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## 利用直接隧穿弛豫谱技术对超薄栅 MOS 结构中栅缺陷的研究\*

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**摘要:** 给出了超薄栅 MOS 结构中直接隧穿弛豫谱(DTRS)技术的细节描述, 同时在超薄栅氧化层( $< 3\text{nm}$ )中给出了该技术的具体应用. 通过该技术, 超薄栅氧化层中明显的双峰现象被发现, 这意味着在栅氧化层退化过程中存在着两种陷阱. 更进一步的研究发现, 直接隧穿应力下超薄栅氧化层( $< 3\text{nm}$ )中的界面/氧化层陷阱的密度以及俘获截面小于 FN 应力下厚氧化层( $> 4\text{nm}$ )中界面/氧化层陷阱的密度和俘获截面, 同时发现超薄氧化层中氧化层陷阱的矩心更靠近阳极界面.

**关键词:** 隧穿; MOS 器件; 比例差分算符

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