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# Demonstration of intermodal four-wave mixing by femtosecond pulses centered at 1550 nm in an air-silica photonic crystal fiber

Jinhui Yuan, *Member, IEEE, Member, OSA*, Zhe Kang, Feng Li, Xianting Zhang, Xinzhu Sang, Guiyao Zhou, Qiang Wu, Binbin Yan, Kuiru Wang, Chongxiu Yu, Hwa Yaw Tam, *Senior Member, IEEE, Fellow, OSA*, and P. K. A. Wai, *Fellow, IEEE, Fellow, OSA*

**Abstract**—In this paper, we demonstrated experimentally the intermodal four-wave mixing effect by launching femtosecond pulses centered at 1550 nm into deeply normal dispersion region in the fundamental guided-mode of an air-silica photonic crystal fiber with two zero dispersion wavelengths. When intermodal phase-matching condition is satisfied, the energy of the pump waves at 1550 nm in the fundamental guided-mode is converted to the anti-Stokes waves around 1258 nm and Stokes waves around 2018 nm both in the second-order guided-mode. When femtosecond pulses at input average power  $P_{av}$  of 90 mW are propagated inside 22 cm long photonic crystal fiber, the conversion efficiency  $\eta_{as}$  and  $\eta_s$  of the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves generated are 8.5 and 6.8%, respectively. We also observed that the influences of the fiber bending and walk-off effect between the fundamental and second-order guided-modes on intermodal four-wave mixing-based frequency conversion process are very small.

**Index Terms**—Photonic crystal fiber, intermodal four-wave mixing, anti-Stokes waves, Stokes waves

## I. INTRODUCTION

FOUR-wave mixing (FWM) facilitates energy coupling between the involved optical waves propagated at different

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Jinhui Yuan, Xinzhu Sang, Binbin Yan, Kuiru Wang, and Chongxiu Yu are with the State Key Laboratory of Information Photonics and Optical Communications (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications), Beijing, P. R. China (The corresponding authors: Xinzhu Sang, and Jinhui Yuan, e-mails: [xzsang@bupt.edu.cn](mailto:xzsang@bupt.edu.cn); yuanjinhui81@163.com).

Jinhui Yuan, Zhe Kang, Feng Li, Xianting Zhang, Hwa Yaw Tam, and P. K. A. Wai are with the Photonics Research Centre, Department of Electronic and Information Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong, P. R. China.

Guiyao Zhou is with the Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Nanophotonic Functional Materials and Devices, South China Normal University, 510006 Guangzhou, P. R. China.

Qiang Wu is with the Department of Physics and Electrical Engineering, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST, United Kingdom.

frequencies and modes, in which two pump photons are converted to one up-shifted signal (anti-Stokes) photon and to one down-shifted idler (Stokes) photon. Most previous studies on FWM in optical fibers and photonic crystal fibers (PCFs) [1]-[4], including non-degenerate and degenerate cases, are intramodal, i.e. the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves are generated within the same guided-mode as the pump wave [5]-[10]. In intramodal FWM processes, the phase-matching condition requires the wavelengths of the pump pulses to be located near the zero dispersion wavelengths (ZDWs) of the guided-modes of optical fibers or PCFs, so it is difficult to achieve a reasonable balance between the fiber design and the choice of the pump lasers. In addition, when the pump pulses are injected close to the ZDWs, supercontinuum (SC) generation [11]-[15] would greatly limit the energy conversion process and severely contaminate the output optical spectra of generated anti-Stokes and Stokes waves. In contrast, the intermodal FWM processes can occur between different guided-modes, because the phase-matching condition does not depend on the ZDWs of optical fibers or PCFs. Thus, for intermodal FWM processes, even if the pump pulses in the fundamental guided-mode are launched at the wavelengths far away from the ZDWs of optical fibers or PCFs, the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves can still be generated through the intermodal phase-matching condition between the fundamental and higher-order guided-modes.

Since it was firstly observed in an optical fiber by Stolen et al. in 1974 [16], the intermodal FWM effect, which is considered as a frequency conversion process at the initial stage of the intricate nonlinear dynamics during SC generation, has been studied theoretically and experimentally in optical fibers [17]-[19] and PCFs [20]-[25] when the pump short pulses are operated at wavelengths of 532, 800, and 1064 nm. Compared with those wavelengths, the pump wavelength at 1550 nm is located in the lowest loss transmission window of the silica optical fibers, where the laser and optical communication techniques are mature. Thus, by the intermodal FWM effect, the energy conversion of the laser pulses at 1550 nm into other near-infrared wavelengths, which are not covered by the available mode-locked lasers, could provide the desired light sources for all-wave-bands optical communication and near-infrared photonics and spectroscopy. Recently, we have preliminarily reported the intermodal FWM-based frequency conversion of femtosecond pulses at 1550 nm [26].

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In this paper, based on the previous work [26], the intermodal FWM effect is experimentally demonstrated in detail when femtosecond pulses centered at 1550 nm are launched into deeply normal dispersion region of the fundamental guided-mode of a tailor-made air-silica PCF with two ZDWs. The intermodal phase-matching condition is achieved between two pump photons at 1550 nm in the fundamental guided-mode, one anti-Stokes photon around 1258 nm and one Stokes photon around 2018 nm both in the second-order guided-mode. The related nonlinear optical process is analyzed. In addition, the influences of the PCF bending and intermodal walk-off effect are also considered.

## II. PCF PROPERTIES AND EXPERIMENT

The air-silica PCF is designed and fabricated from the silica material, which is highly purified by the combined method of rectification and adsorption [27]. Inset 1 of Fig. 1 shows the cross-sectional structure of the PCF. The air holes in the cladding region are arranged in a hexagonal lattice. The core diameter is 2.1  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the relative air hole diameter is 0.86. Fig. 1 shows the group-velocity dispersion curves calculated for the fundamental (1st) and second-order (2nd) guided-modes of the PCF. As seen from Fig. 1, both the dispersion curves are convex within the anomalous dispersion regions. Moreover, for the 1st and 2nd guided-modes of the PCF, the two ZDWs are respectively located at wavelengths of 761 and 1328 nm, and 727 and 1420 nm.

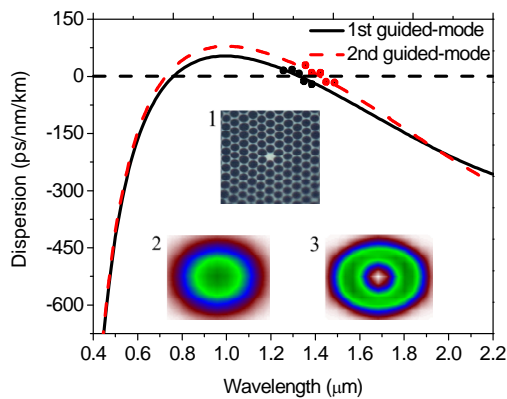


Fig. 1. The calculated group-velocity dispersion curves of the fundamental (1st) (the black-solid curve) and second-order (2nd) (the red-dashed curve) guided-modes of the PCF. The black and red solid dots respectively show the dispersion values of the 1st and 2nd guided-modes measured with the pulse time-delay method. Inset 1 shows the cross-sectional structure of the PCF used. The spatial guided-mode shapes of the 1st and 2nd guided-modes calculated at 1550 and 1258 nm are shown in the insets 2 and 3, respectively.

Fig. 1 shows the dispersion values of the 1st (black solid dots) and 2nd (red solid dots) guided-modes measured with the pulse time-delay method. From Fig. 1, the measured dispersion values are consistent with the results from calculation. For the 1st guided-mode, the nonlinear coefficient  $\gamma$  calculated at wavelength of 1550 nm is up to  $0.052 \text{ W}^{-1}\text{m}^{-1}$ . Insets 2 and 3 of Fig. 1 show the corresponding spatial 1st and 2nd guided-mode shapes, which are calculated at wavelengths of 1550 and 1258 nm, respectively. When femtosecond pulses centered at 1550 nm are used as the pump in the experiment, they work in the

normal dispersion region far away from the second ZDWs of the considered two guided-modes, and the ZDWs-independent intermodal FWM process between the two guided-modes considered could occur.

The experimental set-up is shown in Fig. 2. The PCF used is pumped with a fiber femtosecond laser at center wavelength of 1550 nm with  $<200$  fs pulse duration,  $>10$  kW peak power, and 50 MHz repetition rate. We used a grating-based compressor in order to introduce the initial positive-chirp, which can broaden the pump pulses to  $\sim 370$  fs. As the pump pulses are broadened, the peak power reduces rapidly. Thus, the contribution of nonlinearity on the intermodal phase-matching condition could be neglected. After the pump pulses are broadened, they are coupled into the PCF under test by the combination of an optical collimator and a  $40\times$  objective with the numerical aperture of 0.65. The coupling efficiency can be up to 63%. In the beginning, the pump beam is launched close to the central axis of the PCF core by adjusting the distance between the microscope objective and the input tip of the fiber (the offset pumping technique [28], [29]). At this time, the 1st guided-mode can be selectively excited. By the cut-back method, the measured propagation loss of the PCF is  $\sim 0.74$  dB/m at 1550 nm. The output optical spectra from the PCF which is collected by another  $40\times$  microscope objective, is coupled into a span of 1 m long large-mode-area fiber with a propagation loss lower than  $0.5$  dB/km at 1550 nm, and then fed to an optical spectrum analyzer (OSA, Avaspec-NIR-256). Such a short fiber length has negligible effect on the output powers of all optical waves observed.

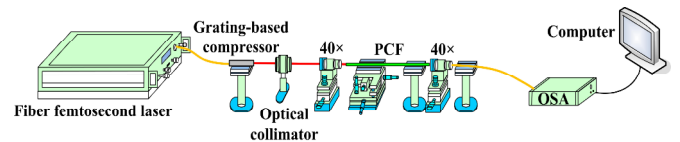


Fig. 2. The experimental set-up.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to achieve intermodal FWM, the intermodal phase-matching condition between the two pump photons in the 1st guided-mode, an anti-Stokes photon in the 2nd guided-mode, and a Stokes photon also in the 2nd guided-mode must be satisfied [17], [20], [21], [24], [25]. Thus, the intermodal phase-mismatching parameter  $\delta\beta$  should equal to zero, i.e.,  $\delta\beta = 2\beta_{01}(\omega_p) - \beta_{02}(\omega_{as}) - \beta_{02}(\omega_s) = 0$ , where  $\beta_{01}(\omega_p)$ ,  $\beta_{02}(\omega_{as})$ , and  $\beta_{02}(\omega_s)$  are the propagation constants at the optical frequency  $\omega_p$ ,  $\omega_{as} = \omega_p + \Omega$ , and  $\omega_s = \omega_p - \Omega$  of the considered pump wave, anti-Stokes wave, and Stokes wave, respectively, and  $\Omega$  corresponds to the Stokes frequency shift. The subscripts 01 and 02 represent the 1st and 2nd guided-modes considered, respectively. In the calculation,  $\delta\beta$  can be obtained from the propagation constants of the three optical waves involved, and the corresponding propagation constants can be calculated from the effective refractive indices of the 1st and 2nd guided-modes, which can be derived from group-velocity dispersions of the two guided-modes shown in Fig. 1. In addition, we note that the nonlinear contribution to the phase-matching condition in intermodal FWM can be neglected if the pump peak power is

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low [18], [24], [25]. In this work, we broaden the initial pump pulses from  $<200$  fs to  $\sim 370$  fs by introducing a positive chirp. Thus, it is not necessary to include the contribution of nonlinearity to  $\delta\beta$ .

When femtosecond pulses at center wavelength of 1550 nm and input average power  $P_{av}=30$  mW are launched into the deeply normal dispersion region above the second ZDW of the 1st guided-mode of the PCF used, the calculated  $\delta\beta$  reaches zero at the near-infrared and mid-infrared wavelengths of 1258.5 and 2017.5 nm, respectively, as shown in Fig. 3(a), corresponding to  $\Omega$  of  $\sim 6690$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . Fig. 3(b) shows the output optical spectra from three spans of PCFs with lengths 42, 32, and 22 cm, respectively, which are recorded by the OSA. From Fig. 3(b), the initial pump spectra are broadened by the normal dispersion and self-phase modulation (SPM) effect, and part of the pump powers is converted by the intermodal FWM process to the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves centered at wavelengths of 1258 and 2018 nm during propagation along the longitudinal direction of the PCF. The experimental results are consistent with the calculation results given in Fig. 3(a). Moreover, we observed that as the lengths of the PCF are respectively reduced from 42, to 32, and to 22 cm by the cut-back method, the output powers of the generated anti-Stokes and weaker Stokes waves are gradually enhanced. The increases of the output powers of the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves as the PCF lengths are reduced are mainly due to the wavelength-dependent propagation loss which decreases when the fiber length decreases. Therefore, the fiber length should be appropriately chosen in order to maximize the output powers of the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves. Although shorter fiber length reduces the propagation losses and might further improve the output powers of the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves, the fiber length cannot be too short because of measurement limitation in the experiment. The 22 cm length of the PCF is the shortest length used in the experiments. Insets 1 and 2 of Fig. 3(b) show the evidently different far-field guided-mode shapes at the wavelengths of the residual pump and anti-Stokes wave, which are observed from a span of 22 cm long PCF using a black-and-white CCD camera. Thus, the residual pump and anti-Stokes wave are propagated in the 1st and 2nd guided-modes of the PCF, respectively, agreeing well with the calculation results shown in the insets 2 and 3 of Fig. 1.

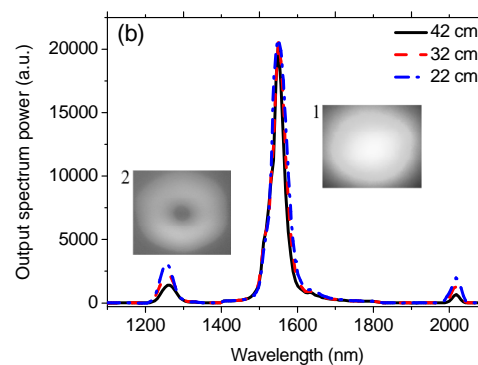
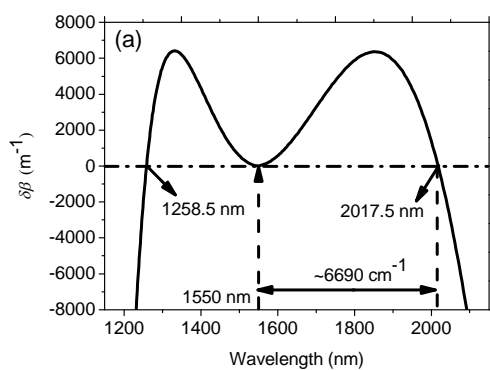
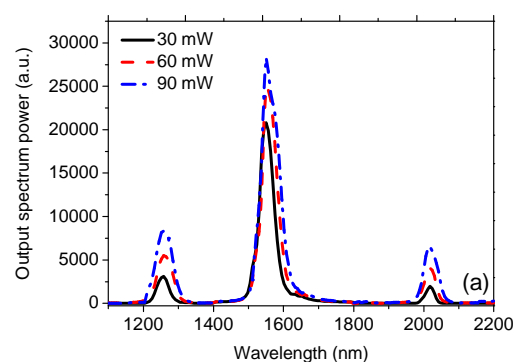


Fig. 3. (a) The phase-mismatching parameter  $\delta\beta$  calculated for femtosecond pulses at center wavelength of 1550 nm and input average power  $P_{av}=30$  mW,  $\delta\beta=0$  at wavelengths of 1258.5 and 2017.5 nm, corresponding to the Stokes frequency shift of  $\sim 6690$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . (b) The output spectra measured for PCF lengths of 42 cm (the black-solid curve), 32 cm (the red-dashed curve), and 22 cm (the blue-dashed-dot curve), respectively, under the same pump condition. The output far-field shapes of the residual pump and anti-Stokes wave for the PCF length of 22 cm, which are recorded by a black-and-white CCD camera, are shown in the insets 1 and 2, respectively.

Fig. 4(a) shows the observed output spectra when femtosecond pulses at 1550 nm and  $P_{av}=30, 60,$  and  $90$  mW are propagated inside a span of 22 cm long PCF. As  $P_{av}$  increases from 30, to 60, and to 90 mW, respectively, we note that the output powers of the generated anti-Stokes and Stokes waves are constantly increased, but the anti-Stokes and Stokes wavelengths  $\lambda_{as}$  and  $\lambda_s$  at 1258 and 2018 nm are extremely insensitive to the variation of  $P_{av}$ . The insensitive property of  $\lambda_{as}$  and  $\lambda_s$  to the variation of  $P_{av}$  is also seen from Fig. 4(b), and attributed to the negligible nonlinearity contribution on  $\delta\beta$ . Such a property is beneficial in obtaining the stable-wavelength signals by a pump laser source that suffers from the fluctuation of the output power. Moreover, the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves, which are generated in the anomalous and normal dispersion regions of the second-order guided-mode, undergo the spectral broadening because of soliton dynamic and the combined influence of the dispersive and SPM effects.



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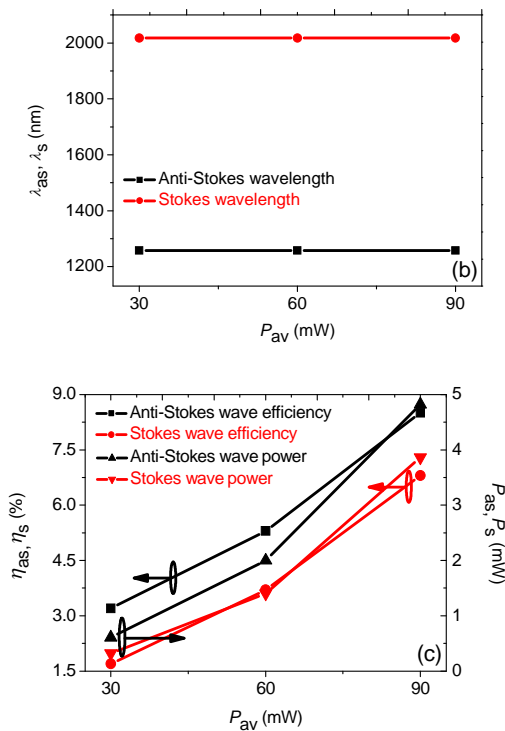


Fig. 4. (a) The output spectra measured when femtosecond pulses at center wavelength of 1550 nm and input average power  $P_{av}=30$  mW (the black-solid curve), 60 mW (the red-dashed curve), and 90 mW (the blue-dashed-dot curve), respectively, are propagated into a span of 22 cm long PCF. (b) The dependences of the generated anti-Stokes and Stokes wavelengths  $\lambda_{as}$  (black solid squares) and  $\lambda_s$  (red solid circles) on  $P_{av}$ . (c) The dependences of the generated anti-Stokes and Stokes wave conversion efficiency  $\eta_{as}$  (black solid squares),  $\eta_s$  (red solid circles), and power  $P_{as}$  (black solid up-triangles),  $P_s$  (red solid down-triangles), on  $P_{av}$ .

At the output end of the PCF, the output powers of the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves generated can be measured with the combination of optical filters at different wavelengths and an optical powermeter. Fig. 4(c) shows the dependences of the anti-Stokes and Stokes wave power  $P_{as}$  and  $P_s$  and the corresponding conversion efficiency  $\eta_{as}$  and  $\eta_s$ , which are defined as the power ratio of spectrally-isolated anti-Stokes and Stokes waves and the incident pump, on  $P_{av}$ . Taking the pump coupling efficiency of 63% into account,  $P_{as}$  is measured to be 0.61, 2, and 4.82 mW, and  $P_s$  to be 0.32, 1.4, and 3.86 mW for  $P_{av}=30, 60,$  and 90 mW, respectively. The corresponding  $\eta_{as}$  are increased from 3.2, to 5.3, and to 8.5%, and  $\eta_s$  are from 1.7, to 3.7, and to 6.8%, respectively. Thus, the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves are efficiently generated through the intermodal FWM process. The theoretical calculation result of  $\eta_{as}$  is 11.3% for the PCF length of 22 cm and  $P_{av}=90$  mW when the pump depletion, a constant nonlinearity coefficient, and no loss are considered [5], [6], [30]. The difference from the experimental result (8.5%) could be resulted from the intrinsic absorption loss of the silica material, coupling loss of the second-order guided-mode to other higher-order guided-modes, and leaky and scattering losses, which could be mainly induced by the large PCF core-cladding index contrast and the PCF geometric structure fluctuation along the propagation direction. Certainly, when we consider a very short piece of preform for only 22 cm long PCF during the fabrication, the influence of the PCF non-uniformity

could be neglected. In future work, by optimizing the parameters of the PCF geometric structure and the pump pulses, it is believed that the conversion efficiency of the intermodal FWM-based nonlinear process can be significantly enhanced.

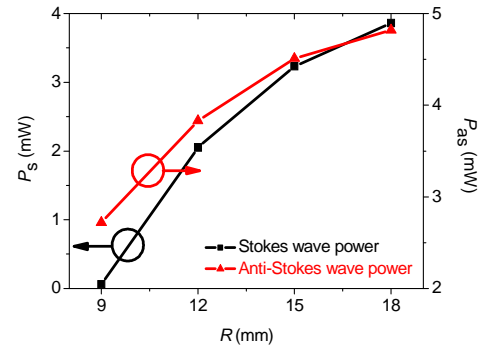


Fig. 5. The measured dependences of the generated Stokes and anti-Stokes wave power  $P_s$  (black solid squares) and  $P_{as}$  (red solid triangles) on the PCF bending radius  $R$  at the entrance end changed from 18, to 15, to 12, and to 9 mm for femtosecond pulses at 1550 nm with average input power  $P_{av}=90$  mW propagation in a span of 22 cm long PCF.

Because the PCF used in the experiment has a large relative hole diameter in the cladding region, the leaky loss of the spontaneously established Stokes waves, which propagate in the second-order guided-mode and play a crucial role in the unseeded FWM, is greatly reduced if the PCF is bent. Thus, the energy conversion process based on the intermodal FWM effect is expected to be insensitive to the PCF bending at the entrance end. Fig. 5 shows that for femtosecond pulses at 1550 nm with  $P_{av}=90$  mW,  $P_s$  is reduced from 3.86, to 3.23, to 2.05, and to 0.06 mW, and  $P_{as}$  is reduced from 4.82, to 4.51, to 3.83, and to 2.72 mW, respectively, when the bending radius of the PCF  $R$  is changed from 18, to 15, to 12, and to 9 mm, respectively. The variation rates of  $P_s$  and  $P_{as}$  with  $R$  are 0.422 and 0.233 mW/mm, respectively. Compared to the results reported in Ref [25], where the corresponding variation rates for the Stokes wave around 1445 nm and the anti-Stokes wave around 553 nm are 0.247 and 0.13 mW/mm, respectively, the influence of the PCF bending in this work can be completely acceptable especially when considering the Stokes and anti-Stokes waves located around the longer wavelengths of 2018 and 1258 nm.

Next, we considered the intermodal walk-off effects between the 1st and 2nd guided-modes of the PCF used [23]-[25]. The intermodal walk-off factor  $D_{12}$  can be written as  $D_{12} = 1/v_g^{(1)}(\lambda) - 1/v_g^{(2)}(\lambda)$ , where  $v_g^{(1)}(\lambda)$  and  $v_g^{(2)}(\lambda)$  correspond to the group-velocities of the 1st and 2nd guided-modes, respectively. The calculated  $D_{12}$  is shown in Fig. 6. It can be seen from Fig. 6 that  $D_{12}$  at the pump wavelength of 1550 nm is  $\sim 5.08 \times 10^{-2}$  ps/mm. Moreover, the initial positive-chirp, which is introduced to the incident pump pulses by the grating-based compressor, broadens evidently the pump pulses from  $<200$  fs to  $\sim 370$  fs. Therefore, the intermodal walk-off effects are effectively suppressed, and noticeable intermodal FWM-based frequency conversion process can be achieved in a longer walk-off length in which all involved optical waves are well co-propagated.

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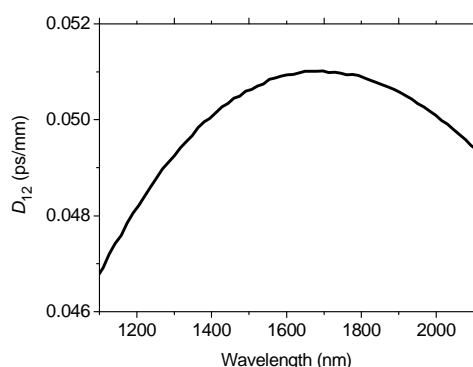


Fig. 6. The calculated intermodal walk-off factor  $D_{12}$  between the 1st and 2nd guided-modes of the PCF.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, we demonstrated experimentally intermodal FWM effect by launching femtosecond pulses at 1550 nm into deeply normal dispersion region of the 1st guided-mode of an air-silica PCF with two ZDWs. By the intermodal phase-matching condition, the anti-Stokes and Stokes waves both in the second-order guided-mode are efficiently generated. In addition, the influences of the PCF bending and intermodal walk-off on intermodal FWM are confirmed to be very small. The results will provide an effective way to achieve effective PCF-based frequency conversion from the pump wavelength at 1550 nm to wavelengths that cannot be achieved by existing mode-locked lasers.

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**Jinhui Yuan** received the B.S. and M.S. degrees from Yanshan University, Qinhuangdao, China, in 2005 and 2008, respectively. In 2011, he received the Ph.D. degree from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT), Beijing, China.

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Now he is with the BUPT as an associate professor. He is also a Hong Kong Scholar at the Photonics Research Centre, Department of Electronic and Information Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His current research interests include photonic crystal fibers, silicon waveguide, and optical fiber devices. He is the Members of IEEE and OSA. He has published over 100 papers in the academic journals and conferences.

**Zhe Kang** received the B.S. degree from Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China, in 2006, the M.S. degree from Dalian Polytechnic University, Dalian, China, in 2012, and the Ph.D. degree from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China, in 2015.

Currently he serves as the postdoctoral fellow in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests include ultrafast nonlinear optics and nonlinear silicon photonics based all-optical signal processing.

**Feng Li** received the B.S. and Ph.D. degrees from University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, China, in 2001 and 2006, respectively.

After that, he joined the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as a postdoctoral fellow. Currently he is a research fellow the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests include fiber lasers, especially multiwavelength lasers and mode locked lasers, nonlinear fiber optics, supercontinuum generation, and nonlinear dynamics in optical devices and optical systems.

**Xianting Zhang** received the B.S. and M.S. degrees from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China, in 2013 and 2016, respectively. Currently he is pursuing his Ph.D. degree at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

His research interests include fiber lasers, optical signal processing, and nonlinear fiber optics.

**Xinzhu Sang** received the B.S. degree from Tianjin University, Tianjin, China and the M.S. degree from Beijing Institute of Machinery, Beijing, China, in 1999 and 2002, respectively, and the Ph.D. degree from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT), Beijing, China, in 2005. Now he is with the BUPT as a professor.

From December 2003 to March 2005, he was with Optoelectronics Research Centre, Department of Electronic Engineering, City University of Hong Kong as a research assistant. From July 2007 to July 2008, he worked in University of California at Irvine as a postdoctoral research scholar. His current research interests include novel photonic devices, optical communication and optical interconnect. Prof. Sang is a senior Member of Chinese Institute of Communication, a committee of Holography and Optical information Processing, Chinese Optical Society, and a member of OSA.

**Guiyao Zhou** received the B.S. degree from Jilin University, Jilin, China, in 1996, and received the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Yanshan University, Qinhuangdao, China, in 2003 and 2007, respectively.

He as a professor is currently working in South China Normal University. His current research interests include the photonic crystal fibers and optoelectronic devices.

**Qiang Wu** received the B.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Beijing Normal University and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China, in 1996 and 2004, respectively.

From 2004 to 2006, he worked as a senior research associate in City University of Hong Kong. From 2006 to 2008, he took up a research associate post in Heriot-Watt University, United Kingdom. From 2008 to 2014, he worked as a Stokes lecturer at Photonics Research Centre, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland. Currently he is an associate professor at Northumbria University, United Kingdom. His research interests include photonics devices and fiber optic sensing.

**Binbin Yan** received the B.S. and M.S. degrees from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT), Beijing, China, in 2003 and 2005, respectively. In 2009, she received the Ph.D. degree from BUPT.

Now she is with the BUPT as a lecturer. Her research interests include photonic devices and fiber optic sensing.

**Kuiru Wang** received the B.S. M.S. degrees from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT), Beijing, China, in 1984 and 1990, respectively. In 2009, she received the Ph.D. degree from BUPT.

Now she is with the BUPT as a professor. Her current research interests include optical fiber communication and photonic devices.

**Chongxiu Yu** graduated from the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT), Beijing, China, in 1969. Now he is with the BUPT as a professor. She is engaged in university education and research work and has been the Principal Investigator of many projects supported by China 863 plan, the National Natural Science Foundation and the National Ministry of Science Technology, and so on. Up to now she has published more than 300 papers. Her Research interests are the optical fiber communication, photonic switching, and optoelectronics technology and its applications.

Prof. Yu is the Members of Chinese Institute of Communication, Committee of Fiber Optics and Integral Optics, and Chinese Optical Society.

**Hwa Yaw Tam** (SM'09) received the B.S. degree and Ph.D. degrees from The University of Manchester, Manchester, U.K., in 1985 and 1990, respectively.

From 1989 to 1993, he was with Hirst Research Center, GEC-Marconi Ltd. in the U.K., first as a Research Scientist, then as a Senior Research Scientist working on WDM systems and fiber amplifiers. He also worked briefly for Marconi-Italiana of Italy as a consultant before joining the Department of Electrical Engineering of the Hong Kong Polytechnic in January 1993. Currently, he is a Chair Professor of Photonics with the Department of Electrical Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where he is also the

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4 Director of the Photonics Research Centre, Faculty of  
5 Engineering. His current research interests are silica and  
6 polymer fibre fabrication, FBGs and FBG-based transducers,  
7 fiber amplifiers, optical communication systems, and all-optical  
8 signal processing. He has authored or coauthored about 400  
9 papers and holds eight patents in the areas of fiber optics.

10 Prof. Hwa Yaw Tam is the Fellow of the Optical Society of  
11 America (OSA), and the Senior Member of the Institute of  
12 Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).  
13

14 **P. K. A. Wai** (SM'96) received the B.S. (Hons.) degree from  
15 the University of Hong Kong in 1981, and the M.S. and Ph.D.  
16 degrees from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1985  
17 and 1988, respectively.

18 In 1988, he joined Science Applications International  
19 Corporation, McLean, VA, where he was a Research Scientist  
20 involved with the Tethered Satellite System project. In 1990, he  
21 became a Research Associate with the Department of Physics,  
22 University of Maryland, College Park, and the Department of  
23 Electrical Engineering, University of Maryland, Baltimore  
24 County. In 1996, he joined the Department of Electronic and  
25 Information Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic  
26 University. He became Chair Professor of Optical  
27 Communications in 2005. Currently he is the Vice President  
28 (Research Development). His research interests include soliton,  
29 fiber lasers, modeling and simulations of optical devices,  
30 long-haul optical fiber communications, all-optical packet  
31 switching, and network theories. He is an active contributor to  
32 the field of photonics and optical communications, having  
33 authored or coauthored over 300 international refereed  
34 publications. Currently he is an associate editor of Journal of  
35 Lightwave Technology.

36 Prof. P. K. A. Wai is the Fellows of the Institute of Electrical  
37 and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and Optical Society of  
38 America (OSA).  
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