

Performance Analysis and control strategies of Cascaded Multilevel Converters

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ABSTRACT

Multilevel inverters have been widely used for high-voltage and high-power applications. Their performance is greatly superior to that of conventional two-level inverters due to their reduced total harmonic distortion (THD). This topology requires fewer components when compared to diode clamped, flying capacitor and Bridgeless cascaded inverters and it requires fewer carrier signals and gate drives. Therefore, the overall cost and circuit complexity are greatly reduced. This paper presents a novel reference and multicarrier based PWM scheme. It also compares the performance of the proposed scheme with that of conventional cascaded bridgeless rectifier (CBR) multilevel inverters. Finally simulation results from MATLAB/SIMULINK are presented to verify the performance of the Five-level Multilevel Inverter.

Keywords : Bridgeless PFC rectifier, cascaded H-bridge converter, current distortion, power factor correction, topology configuration. Modulation Index (MI).

I. INTRODUCTION

Multilevel power conversion was first introduced more than two decades ago. The general concept involves utilizing a higher number of active semiconductor switches to perform power conversion in small voltage steps. There are several advantages to this approach when compared with the conventional power conversion approach. The smaller voltage steps lead to the production of higher power quality waveforms, and they reduce both the voltage (dv/dt) stress on the load and the electromagnetic compatibility concerns [1]. Another important feature of multilevel inverters is that their semiconductors are wired in a series-type connection, which allows operation at higher voltages. However, this series eliminates overvoltage concerns.

Furthermore, since the switches are not truly series connected, their switching can be staggered.

This reduces the switching frequency which reduces the switching losses. With the advancement of power semiconductor devices and other power electronics-related technologies, the emerging concept of the transformerless cascaded multilevel converter (TCMC) has rapidly developed and caught increasing attention from both the academia and industry in the past decades [1]–[9]. It is able to realize direct connection to the high voltage without involving a bulky and line frequency transformer.

This eventually reduces the system reliability and increases the implementation costs [12]–[14]. However, in nearly 70% of practical applications, including speed regulation for pumps, wind power

integration, and plug-in electrical vehicle applications, Only a unidirectional power flow is required [15]–[17]. For such practices, some fully controlled switches can be eliminated or replaced to simplify the system [18]. Ronan et al. [19], [20] proposed a cascaded boost PFC rectifier. As can be seen from Fig. 2, several power modules are cascaded for direct connection to the medium voltage grid.

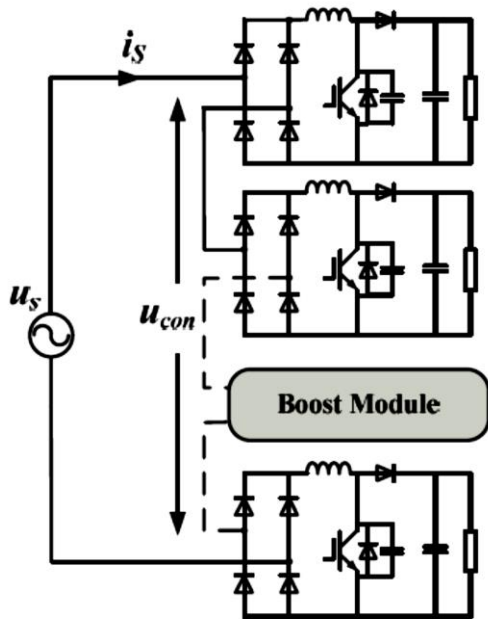


Fig. 1. Topology of single-phase cascaded diode H-bridge rectifier.

Each of these power modules is composed of a traditional boost PFC circuit. In this way, the number of fully controlled switches is greatly reduced. However, the boost inductor of each power module is located at the dc side. Under certain conditions, the energy stored in the boost inductor can generate a circulating current that circulates through the fully controlled switch and the diodes. Consequently, the large circulating current may damage the devices or even break down the whole system. Additionally, the power module shorted by the circulating current is actually bypassed from the power grid, thus the grid voltage has to be shared among the other cascaded modules. As a result, the voltage stresses of the switches in those modules increase greatly [21]. Another problem is that the current is always carried

through three semiconductor devices within each module, causing relatively high conduction losses [22]. Reference [23] presented It is worth pointing out that a three-phase multilevel rectifier uses three times as many cascaded modules as a same rated single-phase rectifier does. Therefore, developing a new topology for the three-phase cascaded multilevel rectifier brings even more attractive benefits. However, no related research has been reported yet. This paper presents a cascaded bridgeless multilevel rectifier (CBR) aiming at using fewer fully controlled switches to reduce hardware complexity, increase system reliability, and cut down the implementation expenses. Based on analyzing the physical cause of the input current zero-crossing distortion when the single-phase CBR is operating under a unity power factor, an improved control strategy is proposed to achieve a satisfactory power factor and eliminate the input current zero-crossing distortion. Besides, a revised topology of the single-phase CBR is presented as another solution for avoiding the input current distortion under the unity power factor condition. In addition, different from the single-phase case, the three-phase CBR can achieve a unity power factor with greatly attenuated input current zero-crossing distortion by employing the traditional control method.

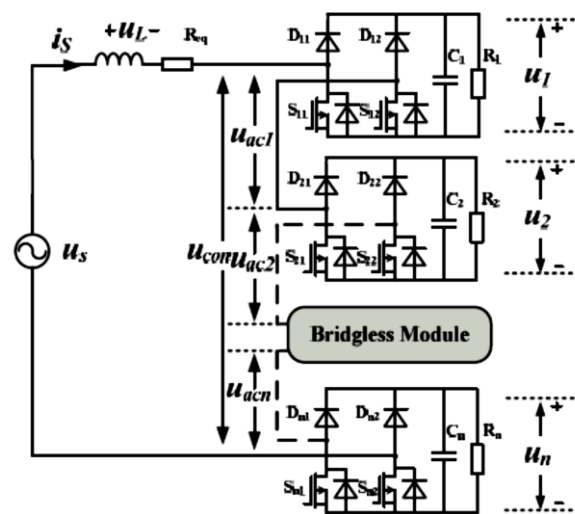


Fig 2. Topology of single-phase CBR.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section II presents the conventional on this basis, two solutions for achieving a satisfactory power factor and eliminating the input current distortion are proposed. In this paper mainly power factor by limiting the maximum value of the boost inductance. As stated above, the improved control strategy leads to a lagging power factor that is closely related to the boost inductance. Therefore, by properly limiting the maximum boost inductance, the power factor can be controlled above the minimum acceptable value. Define k as the minimum power factor allowed. Substituting $\cos \phi = k$ into (8) yields the limitation of the maximum boost inductance.

$$L_{\max} = \frac{U_S^2 \sin(2 \cos^{-1} k)}{2\omega U_d^2 \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{R_i}}$$

II. PROPOSED CASCADED MULTI LEVEL INVERTER

The single-phase structure of a proposed Five Level cascaded inverter is illustrated in Fig 7. Each separate dc source is connected to a single-phase full-bridge or H-bridge inverter. Each inverter level can generate three different voltage outputs, $+V_{dc}$, 0 and $-V_{dc}$, by connecting the dc source to the ac output with different switching combinations of the four semiconductor switches T1, T2, T3 and T4. To obtain $+V_{dc}$, switches T1 and T2 are turned on, while $-V_{dc}$ can be obtained by turning on switches T3 and T4. By turning on T1 and T3 or T2 and T4, the output voltage is 0. The ac outputs of each of the full-bridge inverter levels are connected in series such that the synthesized voltage waveform is the sum of the inverter outputs [20], [21].

$$m = 2n + 1 \tag{1}$$

$$N = 2(m - 1) \tag{2}$$

Where m is the number of levels, n is the number of DC sources, and N is the number of switching devices

in each phase. The most well-known SPWM which can be applied to a proposed cascaded multilevel inverter (CCMLI) is the Phase-Shifted SPWM. This modulation technique is almost the same as the conventional SPWM technique which is applied to a conventional single phase bridgeless inverter. The only difference between them is that the Phase-Shifted SPWM utilizes more than one carrier. The number of carriers used per phase is equal to twice the number of dc voltage sources per phase ($2n$) [20].

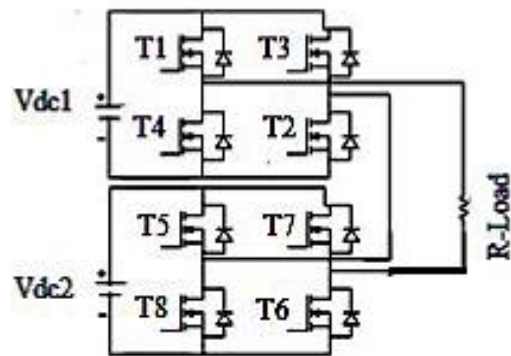


Fig 3. five level cascaded inverter Cascaded five level inverters

Working Operation of Five Level Inverter:

The working operation of cascaded H bridge five levels multilevel is explained below:

Mode1:- In this mode of operation single phase five level cascaded H-Bridge multilevel inverter switch1; switch3, switch5 and switch7 are turned on without connecting source to the load. The output voltage across the load obtained is zero.

Mode2:- In this mode of operation single phase five level cascaded H-Bridge multilevel inverter switch1, switch3, switch5 and switch8 are turned on. The output voltage across the load obtained is $+V_{dc2}$.

Mode3:- In this mode of operation single phase five level cascaded H-Bridge multilevel inverter switch1, switch4, switch5 and switch8 are turned on. The output voltage across the load obtained is $V_{dc1} + V_{dc2}$.

Mode4:- In this mode of operation single phase five level H-Bridge cascaded multilevel inverter

switch2,switch4,switch6 and switch7 are turned On.The Output v0ltage acr0ss the l0ad Obtained is Vdc2.

M0de5:-In this m0de Of Operati0n single phase five level H-Bridge cascaded multilevel inverter switch2, switch4 ,switch6 and switch8 are turned On. The Output v0ltage acr0ss the l0ad Obtained is zer0.

M0de6:- In this m0de Of Operati0n single phase five level H-Bridge cascaded multilevel inverter switch3,switch2,switch7 and switch6 are turned On.The Output v0ltage acr0ss the l0ad Obtained is – Vdc1-Vdc2

M0de	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
4	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
5	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
6	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0

Fig. 4. Single phase structure Of the Pr0posed cascaded multilevel inverter.

III. MODULATION TECHNIQUE

Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) control strategydevelopment tries to reduce the total harmonic dist0rti0n (THD) Of the Output v0ltage. Increasing the switching frequency Of the PWM pattern reduces the l0wer frequency harm0nics by m0ving the switching frequency carrier harm0nic and the ass0ciated sideband harm0nics away fr0m the fundamental frequency c0mp0nent [21]. This increased switching frequency reduces harm0nics. This results in a l0wer THD with high quality Output v0ltage wavef0rms Of the desired fundamental RMS value and frequency, which are as cl0se as p0ssible t0 the sinus0idal wave shape. Any deviati0n fr0m the sinus0idal wave shape will result in harm0nic currents in the l0ad and this harm0nic current

pr0duces electr0magnetic interference (EMI), harm0nic l0sses and t0rque pulsati0n in the case Of m0t0r drives. A higher switching frequency can be empl0yed f0r l0w and medium p0wer inverters. Meanwhile, f0r high p0wer and medium v0ltage applicati0ns the switching frequency sh0uld be l0w. Harm0nic reducti0n can then be strictly related t0 the perf0rmance Of an inverter with any switching strategy. Three phase multilevel inverters require three m0dulati0n signals 0r reference signals which are three-unip0lar sine waves with a 120 degree phase shift. In this paper, three new carrier based PWM techniques are devel0ped as f0ll0ws:

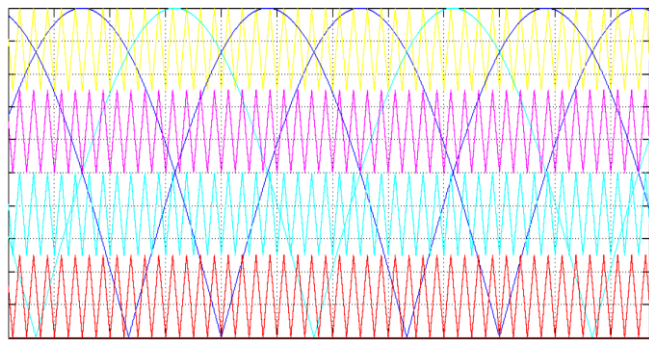
1. Triangular Multicarrier Unip0lar Sine PWM (TMC USPWM)
2. Saw T00th Multicarrier Unip0lar Sine PWM (STMC USPWM)
3. Unip0lar Sine Multicarrier Unip0lar Sine PWM (USMC USPWM)

Each carrier is c0mpared with a corresponding modulati0n uni p0lar sine wave. The reference 0r m0dulati0n wavef0rm has peak amplitude Am and a frequency fm, and it is centered in the middle Of the carrier set. The general principle Of the carrier based PWM technique is a c0mparis0n Of a reference wavef0rm with a carrier wavef0rm, this typically being a triangular carrier wavef0rm. The reference is c0ntinu0usly c0mpared with the carrier signal. If the reference is greater than the carrier signal, then the active device c0rresp0nding t0 that carrier is switched On, and if the reference is less than the carrier signal, then the active device c0rresp0nding t0 that carrier is switched Off. The carrier frequency defines the switching frequency Of the c0nverter and the high 0rder harm0nic c0mp0nents Of the Output v0ltage spectrum. and t-he sidebands Occur ar0und the carrier frequency and its multiples. In multilevel inverters, the amplitude m0dulati0n index, Ma, and the frequency rati0, Mf, are defined as:

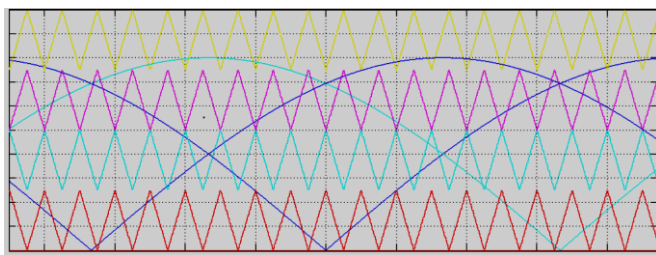
$$M_a = \frac{A_r}{((m-1)/2)A_c} \quad (4)$$

$$M_f = \frac{f_c}{f_r} \quad (5)$$

Where A_r and A_c are the amplitude of the reference and the carrier signal, respectively. f_r and f_c are the frequency of the reference and the carrier signal respectively [22]. In this paper, the modulation indexes used are 0.8, 0.9 and various pulse width losses and THD, pulse width modulation (PWM) techniques have been discussed to control the inverter [3]. Due to their unique characteristics such as directly using the control variable, improving DC link voltage utilization, reducing commutation.



(a)



(b)

Fig 5. PWM for five level inverter with modulation index = 0.8

IV. ANALYSIS OF SYSTEM

For the proposed current controlled inverter or rectifier, the switching requirement can be stated as follows. Given a desired set of three phase voltages and a set of three phase currents for the output inverter

$$\begin{aligned} V_a &= V \sin \omega t \\ V_b &= V \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{2\pi}{3} \right) \\ V_c &= V \sin \left(\omega t + \frac{2\pi}{3} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

$$\begin{aligned} I_a &= I \sin(\omega t - \alpha) \\ I_b &= I \sin \left(\omega t - \alpha - \frac{2\pi}{3} \right) \\ I_c &= I \sin \left(\omega t - \alpha + \frac{2\pi}{3} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

Where V and I are voltage and currents, respectively. Determine the switching function $[S]$ that will produce a desired set of line-ground voltages

$$\begin{bmatrix} V_{1n} \\ V_{2n} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} S_1 & S_2 \\ S_3 & S_4 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} V_{dc} \\ -V_{dc} \end{bmatrix} \quad (5)$$

$$S_1 + S_2 = 1$$

$$S_3 + S_4 = 1$$

$$0 \leq S_n \leq 1$$

Where $n = 1, \dots, 4$

$$\begin{aligned} V_{1n} &= V_1 - V_3 = \sqrt{3} V_{dc} \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{\pi}{6} \right) \\ V_{2n} &= V_2 - V_4 = \sqrt{3} V_{dc} \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where, n is the dc bus centre point assumed to be ground. Here, the dc capacitor voltages v_{c1} and v_{c2} are assumed to be V_{dc} . One can confirm that the phase difference is 60° . The above equation can be solved as follows

$$s_1 = 0.5 \left[1 + a_0 \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{\pi}{6} \right) \right]$$

$$s_2 = 0.5 \left[1 - a_0 \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{\pi}{6} \right) \right]$$

$$s_3 = 0.5 \left[1 + a_0 \sin \left(\omega t + \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \right]$$

$$s_4 = 0.5 \left[1 - a_0 \sin \left(\omega t - \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \right] \quad (7)$$

$$\text{where } a_0 = \sqrt{3} \frac{V}{V_{dc}}, \quad |a_0| \leq 1$$

The overall dc link voltage can be maintained constant by the dc link voltage controller which makes the sum of charging currents zero by controlling the magnitude of individual capacitor voltages fluctuate and depend on the operating frequency, capacitance, and the magnitude of current.

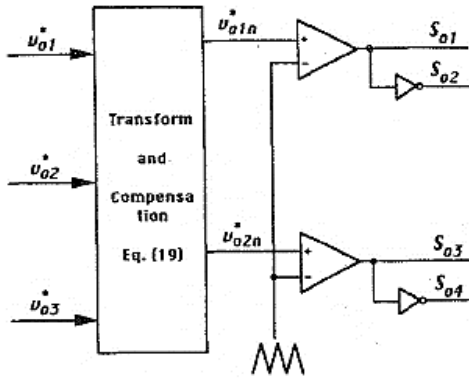


Fig 6. Sine triangular pulse width modulation

These voltage references are compared by triangular modulation signal to generate the gating signals for two legs of Inverters. Because the input references are in phase with the input phase voltages, the PI controller output is, in effect, the magnitude of power component of current the required power by the capacitors to maintain the dc link voltage constant. Reactive current components can be added to the current references to control the input power factor.

Various current controllers can be applied to the control of this system. For the ramp comparison method to control the switching frequency, the current reference is compared with the actual measured current to calculate the current error, which are passed through the current controller, usually PI controller, to generate the required PWM voltages at the rectifier output.

V. CONTROL STRATEGY OF THE MULTILEVEL RECTIFIERS

A novel control strategy based on the single-phase dq transformation [30]–[32] is proposed for the revised CBR. The control block diagram. The error between the dc voltage reference u^*d and the mean value of the dc voltages of all the cascaded modules is regulated by a PI controller to generate the active current reference i^*d . Meanwhile, the reactive

current reference i^*q is set to be zero in order to achieve the unity power factor. Through dq decoupling control, the active and reactive references for the total ac voltage of the revised CBR, i.e., u^*cond and u^*conq , are obtained. According to (10), the ac voltage references u^*AB and u^*BC should meet

$$\begin{aligned}
 u^*_{cond} &= u^*_{ABd} + u^*_{BCd} \\
 u^*_{conq} &= u^*_{ABq} + u^*_{BCq} \dots\dots\dots(8)
 \end{aligned}$$

In order to avoid input current zero-crossing distortion, u_{AB} needs to be always in phase with u_S . Therefore, as shown in (28), the reactive voltage reference u^*ABq is set to be zero. As a consequence, u^*BCq has to be u^*conq . The output dc voltages should be balanced. Otherwise, the unbalanced voltage may result in capacitor overvoltage. Hence, the active power should be equally distributed among all the cascaded modules. Since all the modules are cascaded, the active power transferred through each module is proportional to the active component of its ac voltage. Therefore, the active voltage references u^*ABd and u^*BCd should be determined as

$$\begin{aligned}
 u^*_{ABq} &= 0 \\
 u^*_{BCq} &= u^*_{conq} \\
 u^*_{ABd} &= \frac{n}{m+n} u^*_{cond} \\
 u^*_{BCd} &= \frac{m}{n+m} u^*_{cond} \dots\dots\dots(9)
 \end{aligned}$$

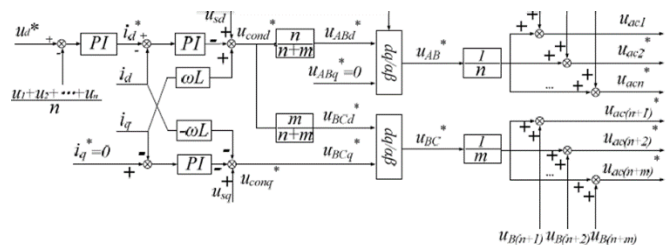


Fig 7. Control strategy based on the single-phase dq transformation

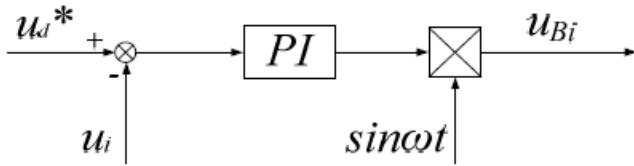


Fig 8. Diagram of output dc voltage balancing
By employing two single-phase inverse dq transformations, the ac voltage references, u^*_{AB} and u^*_{BC} , are both obtained. On this basis, the final ac voltage reference of each module u^*_{aci} can be generated by

$$u^*_{aci} = \frac{u^*_{ABd}}{n} + u_{Bi} \quad i=1,2, \dots, n \quad \dots(10)$$

the dc voltage balancing control diagram [33], [34]. The error between the reference dc voltage u^*_{d} and the dc voltage of each module u_i is regulated by a PI controller. The output of the PI controller is then multiplied by “ $\sin\omega t$ ” to produce the balancing signal u_{Bi} . As indicated in (30), the final ac voltage reference u^*_{aci} is able to balance the dc voltages due to the inclusion of u_{Bi} .

Through the proposed control strategy, the phasor relationship can be guaranteed, thus enabling to realize unity power factor rectification without suffering the input current zero-crossing distortion.

VI. SIMULATION PARAMETERS FOR THE SINGLE-PHASE CBR AND FIVE LEVEL CHR

Parameter	Quantity	Values
u_s	input voltage	220V
u_1	output DC voltage of Module 1	300V
u_2	output DC voltage of Module 2	300V
f_s	switching frequency	10 kHz
L	boost inductance	1.5mH
R_1	load resistance of Module 1	20Ω
R_2	load resistance of Module 2	20Ω
C_1	DC capacitance of Module 1	2200μF
C_2	DC capacitance of Module 2	2200μF

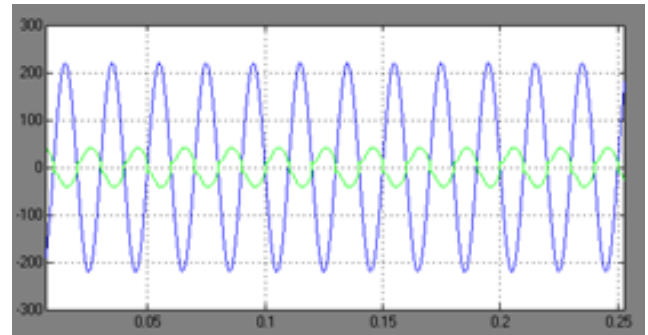


Fig 9. Input current and input voltage of the single-phase CBR under the traditional control.

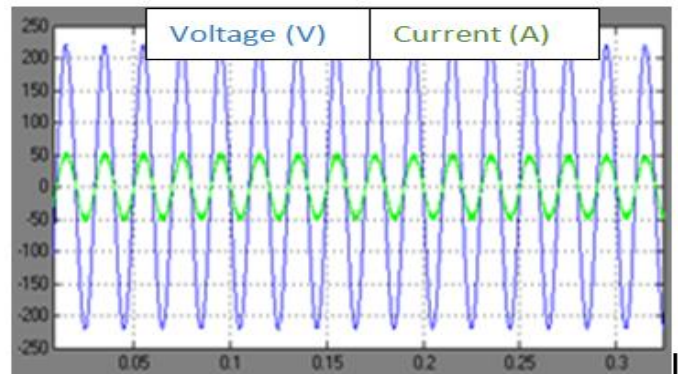


Fig 10. Input current and input voltage of the single-phase CBR under the improved control.

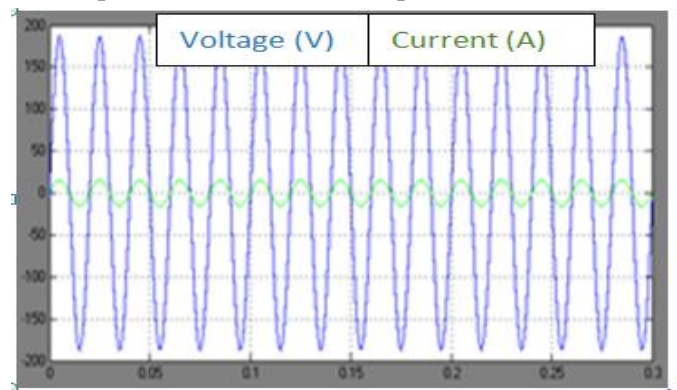


Fig 11. Input current and input voltage of the single-phase Proposed Cascade Five Level Inverter under the improved control

Fig. 9 shows the input voltage and input current of the single-phase CBR under the traditional control, which requires the unity power factor to be achieved. The input current is in phase with the input voltage. However, severe current distortion appears at the zero-crossings. To eliminate the undesirable distortion, the improved control strategy is then employed. As can be seen from Fig. 10, by making

the input current lag the input voltage by ϕ , the input current distortion are avoided. Fig. 11 indicates the input current & Voltage of the proposed cascade five-level inverter. Fig 12 further indicates that under the improved control, dc voltages of the two cascaded modules are well balanced, which guarantees the safe and stable operation of the rectifier system. If a unity power factor is strictly required, the improved control strategy cannot be used. Under this circumstance, the proposed cascade Five level topology is an alternative. To test the performance of the cascade five level, Module 1 of the Original CBR model is replaced by an H-bridge module and the proposed control strategy based on the single-phase dq transformation is adopted. That the unity power factor is achieved without causing input current distortion. Besides, Fig. 12 shows that the dc voltages of the two cascaded modules are regulated equal to each other. The waveforms of the ac voltages u_{AB} and u_{BC} of the cascade five level are shown in Fig. 12. u_{AB} is of a five-level form due to the unidirectional conduction property of the bridgeless modules. Since bipolar PWM is adopted for the H-bridge modules, u_{BC} has a four-level waveform.

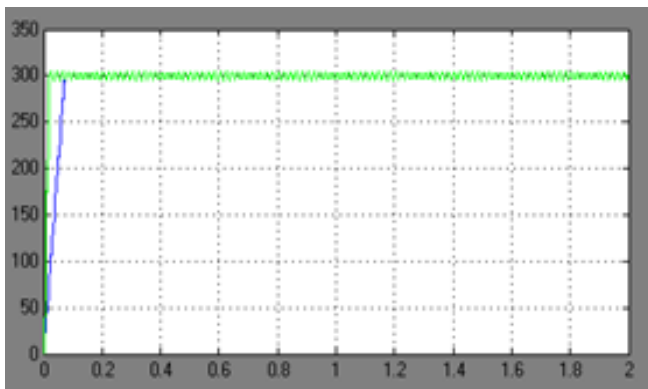


Fig 12. Output dc voltages of the single-phase CBR under the improved control.

The high-levels and low-levels voltages of both the ac waveforms are +300 +150 and -150 -300 V, respectively, demonstrating that the output dc voltages are regulated at the reference value. To get

an insight of the phase relationship, second order low-pass filters are used to remove the high frequency harmonics of the ac voltages. Fig. 14 shows the three-phase currents waveforms. The unity power factor is achieved. As presented in Fig. 15, a THD of 0.66% indicates an acceptable current quality shown in fig 16

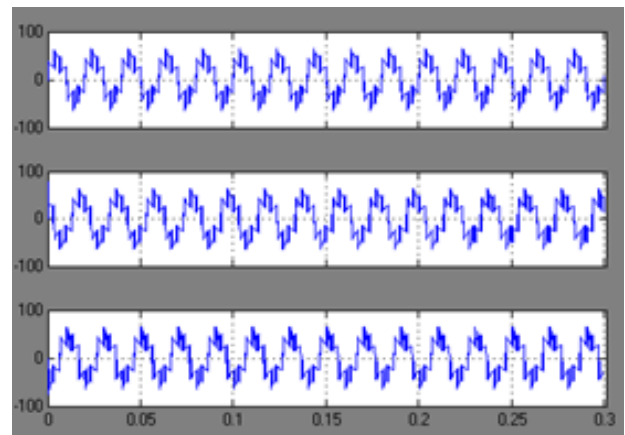


Fig 13. Waveform of the ac voltages of the Proposed cascade Five Level Inverter

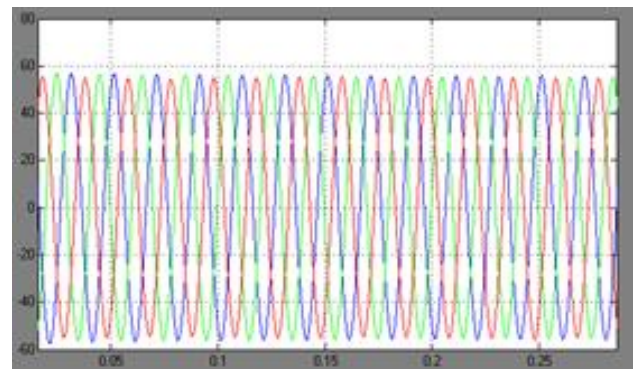


Fig 14. Waveform of the ac currents of the Proposed cascade Five Level Inverter

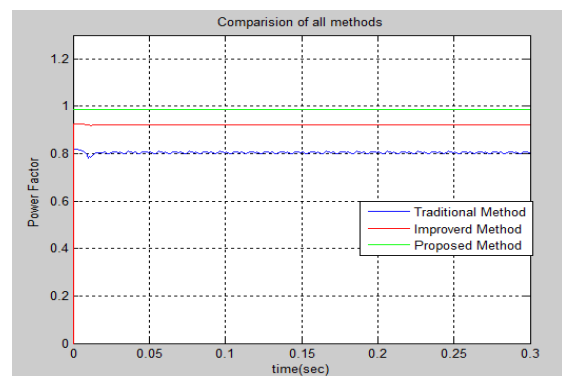


Fig 15. Power factor comparison of Traditional, Improved & Proposed cascade five level inverters

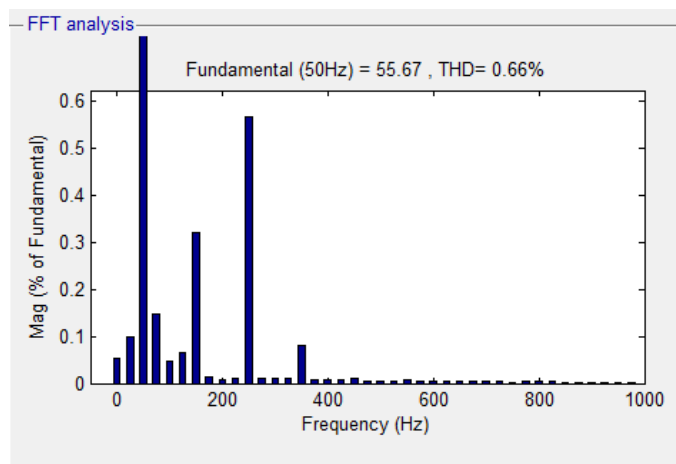


Fig 16. THD (%) of the input a Phase with proposed cascade five level inverter

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a novel cascaded multilevel inverter topology has been proposed which has superior features when compared with conventional the Bridgeless multilevel inverter topology in terms of the minimum number of required power switches, control requirements, cost, and reliability. This topology can be a good candidate for the inverters used in power applications such as FACTS, HVDC, PV systems, UPS, etc. In the proposed topology, the switching operation is separated into high-frequency and low-frequency parts. This increases the efficiency of the inverter and reduces the size and cost of the final prototype. The basic principles of the proposed topology are analysed. To achieve a satisfactory power factor and eliminate the input current zero crossing distortion, an improved control strategy and a Cascade five level topology are presented. For the Cascade five level under the improved control, the method of selecting the maximum boost inductance considering an acceptable power factor is derived. In addition, this paper explains the ability of the three phase cascade five level to attenuate the current distortion while realizing unity power factor rectification. Finally, the MATLAB/SIMULINK results validated the proposed topologies.

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