



AN 395

Semiconductor Stress Measurements by Raman Spectroscopy

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Discussion

Stress control in silicon and other semiconductor devices is of primary importance in order to prevent problems related with the nucleation and propagation of dislocations and the formation of cracks and voids. The sources of the strain developed in these devices during or after processing are different in nature. They might results due to thermal processes, embedded structures such as trenches or non-planar growth of field oxides. Measuring stresses by a nondestructive technique, with good spatial resolution is achieved successfully by Raman spectroscopy. Mechanical stress causes frequency shifts in Raman modes (phonons). The magnitude of the frequency shift is proportionally related to the strain developed, though the measurement of all strain tensor components is not straightforward.

This application note describes the measurement of the stress developed in a thin Si epilayer ($\sim 0.1\text{-}0.2\ \mu\text{m}$ thick) grown above a SiGe substrate with 30% Ge in it (Figure 1). The penetration depth of a 514.5 nm wavelength laser beam is $\sim 0.8\ \mu\text{m}$, so the Raman spectrum (blue) has spectral contribution from both, the epilayer and the substrate (Figure 1). The SiGe Raman spectrum has three peaks corresponding to vibrations of Ge-Ge, Si-Ge and Si-Si atoms, respectively. A weak peak appears on shoulder of the substrate Si-Si vibration ($499.9\ \text{cm}^{-1}$) due to the Si epilayer phonon ($510.9\ \text{cm}^{-1}$). The Si epilayer Raman wavenumber is red-shifted ($\sim 9.5\ \text{cm}^{-1}$) from the Si vibration of a stress free silicon sample (red spectrum). This red-shift demonstrates a tensile strain in the Si epilayer caused by the difference in lattice parameters of Ge and Si. If a biaxial stress is supposed in the silicon epilayer, each component of the tensile stress is calculated to be ~ 2.4 Giga Pascals (Gpa).

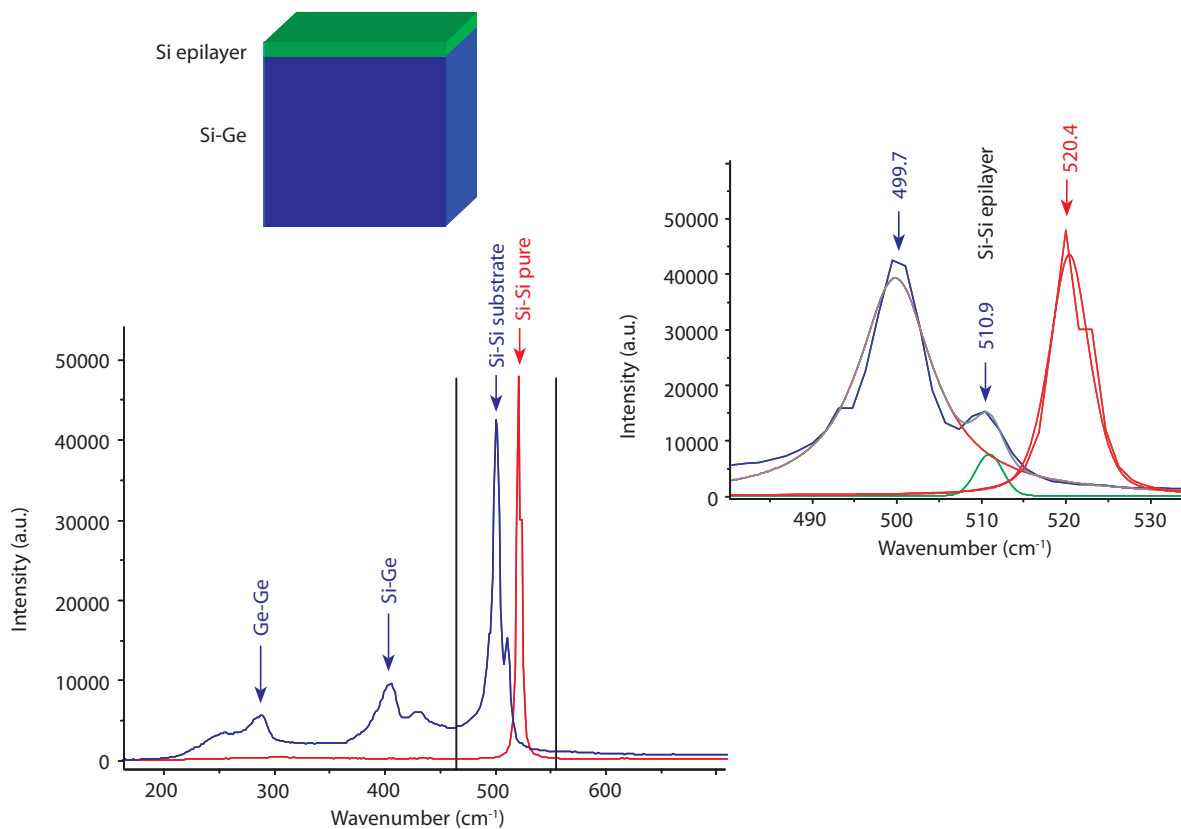


Figure 1

United States Locations

Tempe, Arizona
+1 480 239 0602 info.az@eaglabs.com
+1 602 470 2655 fax

Sunnyvale, California
810 Kifer Road
+1 408 530 3500 info.ca@eaglabs.com
+1 408 530 3501 fax

1135 E Arques Avenue
+1 408 738 3033
+1 408 738 3035 fax

785 Lucerne Drive
+1 408 737 3892
+1 408 737 3916 fax

Peabody, Massachusetts
+1 978 278 9500 info.ma@eaglabs.com
+1 978 278 9501 fax

Chanhassen, Minnesota
+1 952 828 6411 info.mn@eaglabs.com
+1 952 828 6449 fax

East Windsor, New Jersey
+1 609 371 4800 info.nj@eaglabs.com
+1 609 371 5666 fax

Syracuse, New York
+1 315 431 9900 info.ny@eaglabs.com
+1 315 431 9800 fax

Raleigh, North Carolina
+1 919 829 7041 info.nc@eaglabs.com
+1 919 829 5518 fax

Round Rock, Texas
+1 512 671 9500 info.tx@eaglabs.com
+1 512 671 9501 fax

International Locations

Shanghai, China
+ 86 21 6879 6088 info.cn@eaglabs.com
+ 86 21 6879 9086 fax

Tournefeuille, France
+ 33 5 61 73 15 29 info.fr@eaglabs.com
+ 33 5 61 73 15 67 fax

Frankfurt, Germany
+ 49 (0) 693053213 info.de@eaglabs.com
+ 49 (0) 69307941 fax

Tokyo, Japan
+ 81 3 5396 0531 info.jp@eaglabs.com
+ 81 3 5396 1930 fax

HsinChu, Taiwan
+ 886 3 5632303 info.tw@eaglabs.com
+ 886 3 5632306 fax

Uxbridge, United Kingdom
+ 44 (0) 1895 811194 info.uk@eaglabs.com
+ 44 (0) 1895 810350 fax