Harmonic Analysis of Seven and Nine Level Cascade Multilevel Inverter using Multi-Carrier PWM Technique

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ABSTRACT

The use of multilevel inverters has become popular in recent years for high-power applications. Multilevel Inverters are power converter systems composed by an array of power semiconductor sources that when properly connected and controlled can generate a multistep voltage waveform with variable and controllable frequency, phase and amplitude. This study deals with the comparison of a 7-level inverter with a 9-level inverter system; the voltage source inverters (VSI) are modelled and simulated using MATLAB Simulink and the results are presented. The test results verify the effectiveness of the proposed strategy in terms of computational efficiency as well as the capability of the inverter to produce very low distorted voltage with low-switching losses. This research aims to extend the knowledge about the performance of different clamped multilevel inverter through harmonic analysis. Simulations results validate up to the mark performance of the mentioned topologies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Power Electronic Converters, especially DC/AC PWM inverters have been extending their range of use in industry because they provide reduced energy consumption, better system efficiency, improved quality of product, good maintenance, and so on.

For a medium voltage grid, it is troublesome to connect only one power semiconductor switches directly [1]-[3]. As a result, a multilevel power converter structure has been introduced as an alternative in high power and medium voltage situations such as laminators, mills, conveyors, pumps, fans, blowers, compressors, and so on. As a cost effective solution, multilevel converter not only achieves high power ratings, but also enables the use of low power application in renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic, wind, and fuel cells which can be easily interfaced to a multilevel converter system for a high power application.

The most common initial application of multilevel converters has been in traction, both in locomotives and track-side static converters [4]. More recent applications have been for power system converters for VAR compensation and stability enhancement [5], Active Filtering [6], High-Voltage motor drive [3], High-voltage DC transmission [7], and most recently for medium voltage Induction motor variable speed drives [8].

The previous approaches inherited the benefit of well-known circuit structures and control methods. However, the newer semiconductors are more expensive, and by going higher in power, other power-quality requirements have to be fulfilled, introducing the need of power filters. The new approach uses the well-
known and cheaper semiconductors, but the more complex circuit structures came along with several challenges for implementation and control. Nevertheless, these challenges turned rapidly into new opportunities, since the more complex circuit structures enabled more control degrees of freedom that could be used to improve power conversion in several aspects, especially in relation to power quality and efficiency.

2. THE MULTILEVEL INVERTER CONCEPT

The concept of multilevel converters has been introduced since 1975 and the cascade multilevel inverter was first proposed [14]. The advantages of cascade multilevel inverters were prominent for motor drives and utility applications. The cascade inverter is also used in regenerative-type motor drive applications. Recently, some new topologies of multilevel inverters have emerged. These multilevel inverters can extend rated inverter voltage and power by increasing the number of voltage levels. They can also increase equivalent switching frequency without the increase of actual switching frequency, thus reducing ripple component of inverter output voltage and electromagnetic interference effect.

A multilevel converter can be implemented in many different ways. The simplest techniques involve the parallel or series connection of conventional converters to form the multilevel waveforms. More complex structures effectively insert converters within converters. The voltage or current rating of the multilevel converter becomes a multiple of the individual switches, and so the power rating of the converter can exceed the limit imposed by the individual switching devices.

The elementary concept of a multilevel converter to achieve higher power is to use a series of power semiconductor switches with several lower voltage dc sources to perform the power conversion by synthesizing a staircase voltage waveform. Capacitors, batteries, and renewable energy voltage sources can be used as the multiple dc voltage sources. The commutation of the power switches aggregate these multiple dc sources in order to achieve high voltage at the output; however, the rated voltage of the power semiconductor switches depends only upon the rating of the dc voltage sources to which they are connected.

3. MULTILEVEL CONVERTER CLASSIFICATION

Figure 1. Classification of Multilevel converter

4. FEATURES OF MULTILEVEL INVERTER

A multilevel converter has several advantages over a conventional two-level converter that uses high switching frequency pulse width modulation (PWM).

a) Staircase wave form quality: Multilevel converters not only can generate the output voltages with very low distortion, but also can reduce the dv/dt stresses; therefore electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) problems can be reduced.

b) Common-mode (CM) voltage: Multilevel converters produce smaller CM voltage; therefore, the stress in the bearings of a motor connected to a multilevel motor drive can be reduced. Input current: Multilevel converters can draw input current with low distortion.

c) Switching frequency: Multilevel converters can operate at both fundamental switching frequency and high switching frequency PWM. It should be noted that lower switching frequency usually means lower switching loss and higher efficiency.
5. CASCADE MULTILEVEL INVERTER

Cascade H Bridge are multilevel converters formed by the series connection of two or more single-phase H-bridge inverters, hence the name. Each H-bridge corresponds to two voltage source phase legs, where the line–line voltage is the converter output. Therefore, a single H-bridge converter is able to generate three different voltage levels. Each leg has only two possible switching states, to avoid dc-link capacitor short-circuit. Since there are two legs, four different switching states are possible, although two of them have redundant output voltage. The zero level can be generated connecting the phase outputs to the positive or the negative bars of the inverter. When two or more H-bridges are connected in series, their output voltages can be combined to form different output levels, increasing the total inverter output voltage and also its rated power.

6. MULTI CARRIER PWM TECHNIQUE

The most common and popular technique of digital pure-sine wave generation is pulse width modulation. The PWM technique involves generation of a digital waveform, for which the duty cycle is modulated such that the average voltage of the waveform corresponds to a pure sine wave. The simplest way of producing the PWM signal is through comparison of a low-power reference sine wave with a triangle wave. Multicarrier PWM methods uses high switching frequency carrier waves in comparison to the reference waves to generate a sinusoidal output wave. The Figure 2 shows multicarrier PWM waveform for cascaded multilevel inverter.

![Figure 2. Cascade Multilevel converter](image1)

![Figure 3. MATLAB Simulated Reference and Carrier waves](image2)
7. MATLAB SIMULINK BASED CASCADE MULTILEVEL INVERTER

![Simulink based seven level model](image1.png)

Figure 4. Simulink based seven level model

![Simulink based nine level model](image2.png)

Figure 5. Simulink based nine level model

8. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The circuit is simulated in matlab and harmonics are obtained using FFT analysis. The output voltages waveforms are shown.

![Output voltage waveform of seven level MLI](image3.png)

Figure 6. Output voltage waveform of seven level MLI
The simulation results for seven-level and nine level cascaded inverters and their harmonic analysis are also discussed. The THD of cascaded multi-level inverters have been calculated. The THD of seven and nine level MLI are 3.85% and 1.54% respectively.

9. CONCLUSION

Multilevel converters have matured from being an emerging technology to a well-established and attractive solution for medium-voltage high-power applications. The above mentioned topology and modulation method have found industrial application. Initially, the higher power rates together with the improved power quality have been the major market drive and trigger for research and development of multilevel converters. However, the continuous development of technology and the evolution of industrial applications will open new challenges and opportunities that could motivate further improvements to multilevel converter technology. Multilevel converters can achieve an effective increase in overall switch frequency through the cancellation of the lowest order switching frequency terms.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere gratitude is hereby extended to those who never ceased in helping until this paper is structured. The authors will be highly obliged the unwavering moral, emotional and financial support of our family members and friends.

Above all, utmost appreciation to the Almighty God for the divine intervention in this academic endeavor.

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