

Specification

BRIDGE TYPE POWER CONVERTER

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to bridge-type power converters in which one end of a series connection of two semiconductor switching elements each having a parallel diode is connected to the positive side of a d.c. bus while the other end is connected to the negative side.

Background Art

In bridge-type power converters such as power inverters, the voltage of a d.c. voltage bus is switched by switching elements to provide an a-c output so that the voltage can change sharply. In order to reduce the switching loss, current ripples, and noise, the speed characteristic of elements has been improved, and the voltage change rate has increased. This raises the following problems.

(1) The abrupt voltage change against the ground produces electromagnetic waves, which interfere with other electronic equipment.

(2) Leak current goes to cables and electric motor windings via parasitic capacity.

(3) If a cable is long, there is a distributed

constant circuit, forming a stable wave, and a voltage surge is applied to the electric motor.

(4) The high voltage change rate makes uneven a voltage distribution in the motor windings, applying a high voltage to a portion of the windings, causing insulation deterioration.

As a countermeasure, it is possible to provide a gradient to a driving signal for the gate or base of a main semiconductor element to reduce the switching speed. However, this method increases the switching loss.

As another measure an L-C resonance circuit is provided in the d.c. bus to block the d-c voltage so that the inverter bridge operates in the zero voltage period to avoid the sharp voltage change (see PCT patent application PCT/US87/02489). By this method, however, it is impossible to control continuously the time length of an output voltage.

As still another measure, a filter is provided between the inverter and the electric motor. However, if an L-C filter is used, the resistor for damping the continuing oscillation makes a loss. Also, it is necessary to determine a filter constant for individual motors.

Fig. 1 shows a three-phase voltage inverter main circuit. The bridge circuit is composed of six switching elements $Q_1 - Q_6$ and six free wheel diodes $D_1 - D_6$. The

characteristics of the switching elements Q_1 - Q_6 determine the on/off switching speed. The voltage at the output terminal is switched in very short time periods, raising the aforementioned problem.

Disclosure of the Invention

It is an object of the invention to provide a bridge-type power converter which is able to reduce the voltage change rate at switching times of the voltage applied to an electric motor which is driven by the bridge-type power converter.

A bridge-type power converter according to claim 1 includes, in each phase, a inductor connected between a connection point of said two switching elements and an output terminal; capacitors connected between the output terminal and a positive or negative side of said d.c. bus for changing an output voltage along a curve determined by a semiconductors switching elements operate, causing abrupt changes of a voltage at the connection point; diodes for changing a current path at a time when said resonance goes approximately one quarter of period to thereby stop said resonance; and constant voltage diodes such as Zener diodes for absorbing energy stored in said inductor during said resonance.

According to claim 2 there is provided a bridge-type power converter, wherein the constant voltage diodes

connected to the positive and negative sides of d.c. bus in each phase of a multiple phase bridge-type power converter developed with the circuit according to claim 1 are replaced by diodes forming a high-voltage or low-voltage priority circuit and diodes forming backward current path, respectively.

According to claim 3 there is provided a bridge-type power converter, wherein the constant voltage diodes according to claim 1 are replaced by a constant voltage circuit which comprises transistors so as to provide a reverse conduction characteristic.

According to claim 4 there is provided a bridge-type power converter, wherein the constant voltage diodes according to claim 2 are formed by transistors.

According to claim 5 there is provided a bridge-type power converter according to claim 2, which further comprises a chopper circuit for controlling voltages across capacitors which replace the constant voltages diodes and returning absorbed power to said d.c. bus.

According to claim 6 there is provided a bridge-type power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 5, which further comprises a.c. terminals connected to an a.c. power source for performing an a.c - to d.c. power conversion.

According to claim 7 there is provided a bridge-type power converter according to claim 1, which further

comprises a unit formed by additions to the switching elements and connected between the power converter and an electric motor or a power source.

When the voltage of the output terminal is changed abruptly by switching of the bridge-type power converter, the voltage of the electric motor changes along a cosine curve by resonance and when the motor voltage reaches a certain level, the diodes and the constant voltage diodes provide a clamp function so as to absorb excessive energy. This controls the change rate of the voltage applied to the electric motor and the generation of excessive oscillations.

As has been described above, the change rate of the voltage reduced according to the invention produces the following advantages:

- (1) There is less electromagnetic interference.
- (2) There is less leak current.
- (3) There are fewer standing waves and no or few voltage surges to the electric motor.

Cables can be considered as an L-C distributed circuit so that when the output voltage of an inverter changes abruptly, a progressive wave goes to the electric motor. The impedance of a motor is much greater than that of a cable so that the impedance of a point between the cable and the motor can be considered to be open. Consequently, a reflected wave is generated at the motor

terminal, forming a standing wave by combination of the progressive and reflected waves. Consequently, the motor terminal voltage goes up and can reach twice the output voltage of the inverter. When the change rate dv/dt of the inverter voltage is reduced, the above phenomenon is controlled so that there is hardly any voltage surge.

(4) The voltages of motor windings are balanced, making the life of the insulation longer.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of a three-phase voltage inverter main circuit;

Fig. 2 is a circuit diagram of a single phase of a bridge-type power converter according to an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 is a chart showing output voltages of the circuit in Fig.2 ;

Fig. 4 is a three-phase circuit diagram developed from the circuit of Fig.2;

Fig. 5 is a circuit diagram of a three-phase bridge-type power converter having a common constant voltage circuit; and

Fig. 6 is a circuit diagram of a three-phase bridge-type power converter having a power regenerative function.

Description of the preferred Embodiment

Fig. 2 shows a single phase of a bridge-type power converter according to this invention. Fig. 3 shows input and output voltage waveforms of the power converter.

This bridge-type power converter includes a capacitor C_0 , two switching elements Q_1 and Q_2 , two diodes D_1 and D_2 , a coil L_1 , two capacitors C_1 and C_2 , two diodes D_3 and D_4 , and two constant voltage diodes (Zener diodes) ZD_1 , and ZD_2 .

It is assumed that all elements and parts have ideal characteristics. Also, it is assumed that the current through a load or electric motor is constant in short time periods before and after switching and that its direction is expressed by an arrow I_0 (for symmetry of the circuit, the opposite direction is omitted).

As Fig. 3 shows, the operation mode can be divided into six time sections T_1 - T_6 .

In the time section T_1 , the transistor Q_1 is off and stable, and the current flows to the load from the N bus via the diode D_2 and the coil L_1 . The transistor Q_2 is on but the current direction is opposite so that the diode D_2 is on. At this point, the capacitor C_1 is charged to a voltage $(V_{dc} + v_D)$ where V_D is the voltage of the constant voltage diodes ZD_1 and ZD_2 and the voltage across the capacitor C_2 is 0.

When the transistors Q_2 and Q_1 are turned off and on, respectively, the time section T_2 begins. That is, when

the transistors Q_2 and Q_1 are turned off and on, respectively, the capacitor C_1 is discharged and the capacitor C_2 is charged. At this point, the load current changes from the diode D_2 to the transistor Q_1 so that the currents I_1 and I_2 flow as shown in Fig. 2, establishing two resonance circuits simultaneously. One circuit is $C_1 \rightarrow ZD_1 \rightarrow Q_1 \rightarrow U_1 \rightarrow L_1 \rightarrow U_2 \rightarrow C_1$ and the other is $C_0 \rightarrow P \rightarrow Q_1 \rightarrow U_1 \rightarrow L_1 \rightarrow U_2 \rightarrow C_2 \rightarrow ZD_2 \rightarrow N \rightarrow C_0$. These resonance currents are superimposed so as to increase the current of the transistor Q_1 and the coil L_1 . Consequently, the voltage across the capacitor C_1 decreases along a cosine curve while the voltage across the capacitor C_2 increases along a cosine curve. The potential at the output terminals U_2 increases along with the increasing voltage. When the potential of the output terminal U_2 reaches a voltage $(V_{dc}/2 + V_D)$, the voltage across the capacitor C_1 becomes zero, bringing the time section T_2 to an end.

Since the coil L_1 stores excessive energy generated by the resonance when the voltage across the capacitor C_1 is zero, a circular current $L_1 \rightarrow U_2 \rightarrow D_3 \rightarrow ZD_1 \rightarrow P \rightarrow Q_1 \rightarrow U_1$ continues to flow in the time section T_3 , and the magnitude decreases at a rate of V_D/L_1 . During this time U_2 is clamped to a potential $(V_{dc}/2 + V_D)$. When the circular current becomes zero, the time section ends and U_2 has a potential equal to the potential of P .

The state of the time section T_4 is stable when the transistor Q_1 is turned on. At this point, the voltages across the capacitors C_1 and C_2 are 0 and $(V_{dc} + V_D)$, respectively.

When the transistors Q_1 and Q_2 are turned off and on, respectively, the time section T_5 starts. The load current changes from the transistor Q_1 to the diode D_2 , establishing two resonance circuits simultaneously. One is $C_2 \rightarrow U_2 \rightarrow L_3 \rightarrow U_1 \rightarrow D_2$ (or Q_2) $\rightarrow N \rightarrow ZD_2$ and the other is $C_0 \rightarrow P \rightarrow ZD_1 \rightarrow C_1 \rightarrow U_2 \rightarrow L_1 \rightarrow U_1 \rightarrow D_2$ (or Q_2) $\rightarrow N \rightarrow C_0$. The resonance currents are superimposed in such a direction (opposite to the output current I_0) as to offset the current of the coil L_1 . Consequently, the voltage of the capacitor C_2 decreases along a cosine curve while the voltage of the capacitor C_1 increases along a cosine curve. The potential at the output terminal U_2 decreases along with the decrease. When the level of the output terminal U_2 reaches $-(V_{dc}/2 + V_D)$, the voltage across the capacitor C_2 becomes zero, bringing the time section T_5 to an end.

When the voltage of the capacitor C_2 becomes zero, the coil L_1 stores excessive energy by the resonance so that a circular current continues to flow as $L_1 \rightarrow U_1 \rightarrow D_2$ (or Q_2) $\rightarrow N \rightarrow ZD_2 \rightarrow D_4 \rightarrow U_2$ in the section T_6 , and the magnitude decreases at a rate of V_D/L_1 (the current of L_1 increases toward I_0). During this period, U_2 is

clamped to a potential $-(V_{dc}/2 + V_D)$. When the circular current becomes zero, the section ends, bringing the potential of the output terminal U_2 equal to the potential of N. When the section T_6 ends, the potential returns to the same stable state as the section T_1 .

In Fig. 2, the constant voltage diodes ZD_1 and ZD_2 absorb the resonance energy. In practice, it is possible to use a circuit in which parallel diode are connected backwardly to a shunt regulator in which transistors are used to keep the voltage constant.

Fig. 4 is a circuit diagram of a bridge-type power converter developed from the circuit of Fig. 2. The circuit of a U phase is the same as that of Fig. 2.

Two switching transistors Q_3 and Q_4 , two diodes D_3 and D_4 , a coil L_2 , two capacitors C_3 and C_4 , two diodes D_9 and D_{10} , and two constant voltage diode ZD_3 and ZD_4 form a V-phase circuit while two switching transistors Q_5 and Q_6 , two diodes D_5 and D_6 , a coil L_3 , capacitors C_5 and C_6 , two diodes D_{11} and D_{12} , and two constant voltage diode ZD_5 and ZD_6 form a W-phase circuit.

In Fig. 5, the constant voltage diodes ZD_1 , ZD_3 , ZD_5 connected to the positive side of d.c. bus P in Fig. 4 are replaced by a common voltage diode ZD_p by means of a high-voltage priority circuit consisting of diodes D_{13} , D_{17} , and D_{21} and a back current circuit consisting of D_{14} , D_{18} , and D_{22} while the constant voltage diodes ZD_2 , ZD_4 ,

an ZD_6 connected to the negative side d.c. bus N are replaced by a common voltage diode ZD_N by means of a low-voltage priority circuit consisting of D_{15} , D_{19} and D_{23} and back current circuit consisting of diodes D_{16} , D_{20} , and D_{24} .

In practice, like snubber energy processors or circuits for processing commutation energy in current inverters ZD_P and ZD_N are made as follows.

(1) Shunt Regulators: Transistors are used to keep the voltage constant.

(2) Combination of Capacitor and Chopper: The capacitor absorbs pulses and energy is returned to P/N bus by a chopper so as to keep the voltage constant.

Fig. 6 shows a circuit in which the constant voltage diodes ZD_1 and ZD_2 of the inverter-type power converter in Fig. 5 are replaced by capacitors C_P and C_N , diodes D_P and D_N , and transistors Q_P and Q_N , and coils L_P and L_N so as to return by choppers excessive energy generated by resonance to the d.c. bus. That is, the energy absorbed by the capacitors C_P and C_N is returned to the respective d.c. circuits by a chopper consisting of the transistor Q_P , the diode D_N , and the coil L_P and a chopper consisting of the transistor Q_N , the diode D_N , and the coil L_N .

As has been describe above, the bridge-type power converter is able to convert d.c. to a.c. to drive an a.c. load and a.c. to d.c. when the a.c. terminals are connected

to an a.c. power source and control the current waveform of the power source. The device according to the invention is able to reduce an impact which sharp voltage changes have on a load.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A bridge-type power converter wherein, in each phase, a series connection of two semiconductor switching elements each having a backward parallel diode, one end of which is connected to a positive side of a d.c. bus and the other to a negative side of the d.c. bus, comprising:

a inductor connected between a connection point of said two switching elements and an output terminal;

capacitors connected between said output terminal and a positive or negative side of said d.c. bus for changing an output voltage along a curve determined by a phenomenon of resonance with said inductor when said semiconductor switching elements operate, causing abrupt changes of a voltage at said connection point;

diodes for changing a current path at a time when said resonance goes approximately one quarter of period to thereby stop said resonance; and

constant voltage diodes such as Zener diodes for absorbing energy stored in said inductor during said resonance.

2. A bridge-type power converter according to claim 1, wherein said constant voltage diodes connected to said positive and negative sides of said d.c. bus in each phase of a multiple phase bridge-type power converter are replaced by diodes forming a high-voltage or low-voltage



priority circuit and diodes forming a backward current path, respectively.

3. A bridge-type power converter according to claim 1, wherein said constant voltage diodes are replaced by a constant voltage circuit which comprises transistors so as to provide a reverse conduction characteristic.

4. A bridge-type power converter according to claim 2, wherein said constant voltage diodes are formed by transistors.

5. A bridge-type power converter according to claim 2, which further comprises a chopper circuit for controlling voltages across capacitors which replace said constant voltage diodes and returning absorbed power to said d.c. bus.

6. A bridge-type power converter according to anyone of claims 1 to 5, which further comprises a.c. terminals connected to an a.c. power source for performing an a.c. - to - d.c. power conversion.

7. A bridge-type power converter according to claim 1, which further comprises a unit formed by additions to said switching elements and connected between said power



converter and an electric motor or a power source.

