

System for controlling an inductor freewheeling voltage

Technical field

The present invention relates to an electrical circuit for controlling an inductor freewheeling voltage.

Background art

A DC current needs to be controlled in the excitation winding of synchronous motors/generators. The current is increased by applying a positive voltage across it and it is controlled by a switch. In order to quickly discharge the current in this inductance, a negative voltage needs to be applied across it. Feeding the energy back into the DC bus is a common solution, but requires an active load consisting of a resistor and a switch to discharge the capacitors and prevent overvoltage. Other solutions include a resistor, which leads to a current-dependent ramp-down voltage, or a voltage clamp placed parallel to the freewheeling switch.

Document US6288508B1 discloses a braking system for an electric motor operated vehicle including a system for providing both regenerative and reverse excitation braking and shifting between the braking modes in response to operator demand. Solution provided in this document discloses a deceleration of the motor by using said motor as a generator and either charges the battery or discharges its generated current through a resistive load so as to provide regenerative braking.

Document EP2747287A1 discloses an arrangement which has a free-wheeling circuit comprising a free-wheeling diode and a limiting element e.g. breakdown diode, that is connected parallel to a switching element e.g. MOSFET. Another switching element is connected in series with the circuit. A controller has an evaluation and controlling unit for synchronous controlling of the elements. The controlling unit is connected with a galvanically separated controller and a control input, where the controlling of the elements is carried out based on determined control supply voltage.

Document EP1675245A2 discloses a circuit arrangement for the rapid reduction of an induced current which can be used in particular in conjunction with a voltage regulator for a generator in a vehicle electrical system and causes an increase in the freewheeling voltage. Thus, in the shutdown of consumers in the excitation winding induced overvoltage can be rapidly reduced and the generator are thus quickly de-energized.

Summary

The purpose of the invention is to provide a circuit for controlling an inductor freewheeling voltage which comprises fewer high-power components than solutions known from the state of the art.

The present invention discloses a system for controlling an inductor freewheeling voltage comprising a first switch, a second switch, a first diode, an inductor. The first switch is connected such that, in open state, it will connect a first terminal of the inductor with a power bus and that the first switch is controlled by a first control signal. A first terminal of the first diode is connected to a ground, and a second terminal of the first diode is connected to the first terminal of the inductor. The first diode is connected such that it allows an electric current to pass from the ground to the first terminal of the inductor. The second switch is connected such that, in open state, it will connect a second terminal of the inductor with the ground. The system is characterized in that it comprises a switch control circuit, which is configured to be controlled with a second control signal, delivered to an input terminal of the switch control circuit, such that in a first state of the second control signal the switch control circuit keeps the second switch open and in a second state of the second control signal the switch control circuit keeps the second switch such that there is a voltage drop across the second switch.

In preferred embodiment the switch control circuit comprises a second diode configured to deliver, to the switch control circuit, the second control signal.

In yet another embodiment the at least one from the first switch and the second switch is a unipolar transistor or IGBT transistor.

In another embodiment the switch control circuit comprises a first resistor and a Zener diode connected such that a first terminal of the Zener diode is connected to the second terminal of the inductor, a second terminal of the Zener diode is connected to a first terminal of the first resistor, a gate terminal of the second switch, and the input terminal. A forward direction of the Zener diode is from the gate terminal of the second switch to the second terminal of the inductor, a second terminal of the first resistor is connected to the ground.

In preferred embodiment the switch control circuit comprises a second resistor, a third resistor, a fourth resistor, a third diode, a transistor and at least one Zener diode. A first terminal of a first Zener diode is connected to the second terminal of the inductor, a second terminal of a last Zener diode is connected to a first terminal of a third diode. All Zener diodes are connected in series, in the same direction and a forward direction of the Zener diodes is from the first terminal of the third diode to the second terminal of the inductor. A second terminal of the third diode is connected to a first terminal of the second resistor, and to a base terminal of the transistor. A forward direction of the third diode is from the second terminal of the last Zener diode to the first terminal of the second resistor. A second terminal of the second resistor is

connected to the ground. A collector terminal of the transistor is connected to an auxiliary power supply configured to provide stable DC voltage. An emitter terminal of the transistor is connected to the input terminal and to a first terminal of the third resistor. A second terminal of the third resistor is connected to a first terminal of the fourth resistor, and to a gate terminal of the second switch. A second terminal of the fourth resistor is connected to the ground.

In yet another embodiment the system comprising a capacitor connected such that a first terminal of the capacitor is connected to the gate terminal of the second switch and a second terminal of the capacitor is connected to the ground.

Brief description of drawings

The present invention will be now described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a general circuit topology according to the present invention,

Fig. 2 presents the simplest implementation of the present invention,

Fig. 3 presents a circuit which with reduced standby losses.

Detailed description

A general concept of this invention is shown in Fig. 1. The novel implementation shown in its simplest form, merges the functionality of the power switch and, preferably, the constant voltage load in one component, namely switch M2. This reduces the power components count and the required heat sink area since only one power component to reduce a current is needed, that is switch M2.

During the current build-up phase both switches M1 and M2 shown in Fig. 1 are turned on – a first control signal S1 and a second control signal S2 are in a first state. A power bus + is connected through the first switch M1 with an inductor L which is further connected to a ground – by means of the second switch M2. Freewheeling is achieved by turning off the first switch M1 (by changing the state of the first control signal S1), forcing the current to flow through the freewheeling diode (first diode D1). When the current in the inductor L needs to be decreased, the gate voltage V_{G_M2} is set low due to change of the second control signal S2. This leads to a decrease of the gate voltage of the second switch M2. The second switch M2 starts to close, which leads to an increase of its drain-source voltage V_{DS_M2} . A switch control circuit SCC prevent the second switch M2 from fully closing. In a preferred embodiment a constant voltage drop is achieved across the second switch M2 which makes adjusting the current easier. The person skilled in the art will know that other transistor types may be used in this application as the first switch M1 and/or the second switch M2 and transistors shown on fig. 1-3 serves only as examples - bipolar, unipolar or IGBT transistors may be used in this application. In preferred

embodiment a capacitor C2 is connected such that a first terminal of the capacitor C2 is connected to the gate terminal of the second switch M2 and a second terminal of the capacitor C2 is connected to the ground -. This capacitor C2 provides slower changes in a voltage across the second switch S2.

It should be noted that in figures and in the description there is the power bus +, which applies a positive voltage, and the ground -, which has a 0V potential. It should be noted that in other cases, in which, for example, there is the ground – and a negative power bus some components will be connected accordingly and overall circuit connections might change. The person skilled in the art will know how to adjust disclosed invention in such cases.

The switch control circuit SCC is a circuit which may be described as a signal converter which transforms the second control signal S2 into a signal which control the second switch M2 while preventing the second switch M2 from being fully closed. Hereinafter it is assumed that the second control signal S2 is a digital signal but it should be noted that it also may be an analog signal.

In the preferred embodiment the switch control circuit SCC comprises a second diode D2 configured to deliver, to the switch control circuit SCC, the second control signal S2. The second diode D2 provides a secured input and prevent applying high voltage/current to a source of the second control signal S2.

Fig. 2 shows a simples implementation of the general concept of the present invention. In this circuit the switch control circuit SCC comprises a first resistor R1 and a Zener diode DZ connected such that a first terminal of the Zener diode DZ is connected to the second terminal of the inductor L, a second terminal of the Zener diode DZ is connected to a first terminal of the first resistor R1, a gate terminal of the second switch M2, and the input terminal. A forward direction of the Zener Diode is from the gate terminal of the second switch M2 to the second terminal of the inductor L, a second terminal of the first resistor R1 is connected to the ground -. In this implementation when the current in the inductor L needs to be decreased, the gate voltage v_{G_M2} is set low. This leads to a decrease of the gate voltage of the second switch M2, caused by the pull-down resistor R1. The second switch M2 starts to close, which leads to an increase of its drain-source voltage v_{DS_M2} . Eventually the drain source voltage reaches the breakdown voltage of the Zener diode DZ, and the diode starts to conduct, preventing the second switch M2 from fully closing, and causing a constant voltage drop across its drain-source junction.

The present invention makes it possible, with the appropriate gating circuit, to achieve the functions performed by the second switch M2 and the voltage clamp known from the prior art by using a single power component, removing the need for an additional high-power

component. Additionally a capacitance value, as well as the voltage rating, of the DC stabilizing capacitor C1 are decreased, when used.

In fig. 3 a more complex circuit is presented (only the switch control circuit SSC and the second switch M2 are presented). In this embodiment a first terminal of a first Zener diode DZ1 is connected to the second terminal of the inductor L, a second terminal of a last Zener diode DZ1 is connected to a first terminal of a third diode D3. All Zener diodes DZ1 are connected in series, in the same direction and a forward direction of the Zener diodes DZ1 is from the first terminal of the third diode D3 to the second terminal of the inductor L. A second terminal of the third diode D3 is connected to a first terminal of the second resistor R2, and to a base terminal of the transistor Q1. A forward direction of the third diode D3 is from the second terminal of the last Zener diode DZ1 to the first terminal of the second resistor R2. A second terminal of the second resistor R2 is connected to the ground -. A collector terminal of the transistor Q1 is connected to an auxiliary power supply PS which is configured to provide stable DC voltage. An emitter terminal of the transistor Q1 is connected to the input terminal and to a first terminal of the third resistor R3, A second terminal of the third resistor R3 is connected to a first terminal of the fourth resistor R4, and to a gate terminal of the second switch M2, a second terminal of the fourth resistor R4 is connected to the ground -.

This adds an additional low-voltage, low-power transistor Q1. Its purpose is to reduce the current flow in the Zener diodes, and thus minimize the overall standby losses of the circuit. A disadvantage is the need for a stable auxiliary supply for the gating circuit.

It should be noted that in this embodiment the transistor Q1 is presented and described as a bipolar transistor. It should be noted that an unipolar transistor also may be used.

List of reference signs in Drawings:

M1 - first switch

M2 - second switch

D1 - first diode

D2 - second diode

D3 - third diode

DZ, DZ1 - Zener diode

L - inductor

+ - power bus

- - ground

S1 - first control signal

S2 - second control signal

R1 - first resistor

R2 - second resistor

R3 - third resistor

R4 - fourth resistor

Q1 - transistor

C1 - stabilizing capacitor

C2 – capacitor

SCC – switch control circuit

PS - auxiliary power supply

Claims

1. A system for controlling an inductor freewheeling voltage comprising a first switch (M1), a second switch (M2), a first diode (D1), an inductor (L), wherein
the first switch (M1) is connected such that, in open state, it will connect a first terminal of the inductor (L) with a power bus (+) and that the first switch (M1) is controlled by a first control signal (S1),
a first terminal of the first diode (D1) is connected to a ground (-), and a second terminal of the first diode (D1) is connected to the first terminal of the inductor (L), wherein the first diode (D1) is connected such that it allows an electric current to pass from the ground (-) to the first terminal of the inductor (L),
the second switch (M2) is connected such that, in open state, it will connect a second terminal of the inductor (L) with the ground (-),
characterized in that
it further comprises a switch control circuit (SCC), which is configured to be controlled with a second control signal (S2), delivered to an input terminal of the switch control circuit (SCC), such that in a first state of the second control signal (S2) the switch control circuit (SCC) keeps the second switch (M2) open and in a second state of the second control signal (S2) the switch control circuit (SCC) keeps the second switch (M2) such that there is a voltage drop across the second switch (M2).
2. The system according to claim 1, **characterized in that** the switch control circuit (SCC) comprises a second diode (D2) configured to deliver, to the switch control circuit (SCC), the second control signal (S2).
3. The system according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** the at least one from the first switch (M1) and the second switch (M1) is a unipolar transistor or IGBT transistor.
4. The system according to claim 3, **characterized in that** the switch control circuit (SCC) comprises a first resistor (R1) and a Zener diode (DZ) connected such that
a first terminal of the Zener diode (DZ) is connected to the second terminal of the inductor (L),
a second terminal of the Zener diode (DZ) is connected to a first terminal of the first resistor (R1), a gate terminal of the second switch (M2), and the input terminal, wherein a forward direction of the Zener diode (DZ) is from the gate terminal of the second switch (M2) to the second terminal of the inductor (L),
a second terminal of the first resistor (R1) is connected to the ground (-).
5. The system according to claim 3, **characterized in that** the switch control circuit (SCC) comprises a second resistor (R2), a third resistor (R3), a fourth resistor (R4), a third diode (D3), a transistor (Q1) and at least one Zener diode (DZ1) connected such that

a first terminal of a first Zener diode (DZ1) is connected to the second terminal of the inductor (L),

a second terminal of a last Zener diode (DZ1) is connected to a first terminal of a third diode (D3), wherein all Zener diodes (DZ1) are connected in series, in the same direction and a forward direction of the Zener diodes (DZ1) is from the first terminal of the third diode (D3) to the second terminal of the inductor (L),

a second terminal of the third diode (D3) is connected to a first terminal of the second resistor (R2), and to a base terminal of the transistor (Q1), wherein a forward direction of the third diode (D3) is from the second terminal of the last Zener diode (DZ1) to the first terminal of the second resistor (R2),

a second terminal of the second resistor (R2) is connected to the ground (-),

a collector terminal of the transistor (Q1) is connected to an auxiliary power supply (PS) configured to provide stable DC voltage,

an emitter terminal of the transistor (Q1) is connected to the input terminal and to a first terminal of the third resistor (R3),

a second terminal of the third resistor (R3) is connected to a first terminal of the fourth resistor (R4), and to a gate terminal of the second switch (M2),

a second terminal of the fourth resistor (R4) is connected to the ground (-).

6. The system according to anyone of claims 3-5, **characterized in that** it further comprises a capacitor (C2) connected such that a first terminal of the capacitor (C2) is connected to the gate terminal of the second switch (M2) and a second terminal of the capacitor (C2) is connected to the ground (-).