

Microcontroller Based Less Switches Topology and Digital Gating Technique for Five Level Single Phase Inverter

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Abstract

The multilevel inverter is idea for connecting such distributed dc energy sources (solar and fuel cells in addition to rectified output of wind turbines) to a power grid. Multilevel Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) inverters have been gained importance in high performance power applications without requiring high ratings on individual 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.

In the present paper we introduce a power circuit for single phase five level inverter which contains a very lower number of switches and the technique for the generation of required signals to control the operation of the inverter switches. The presented technique is implemented via microcontroller ATMegal 6. The simulation and practical results are presented.

Keywords: Multilevel inverter, minimum switches inverter, digital gating, microcontroller.

الخلاصة

مغيرات القدرة متعدد المستويات (Multilevel Inverter) هي فكرة لربط عدة مصادر مختلفة للجهد المستمر (مثل مصادر الطاقة الشمسية أو خلايا الوقود أو المصدر المنتج من طاقة الرياح بعد تقويمها) وتحويلها إلى جهد متناوب ومن ثم ربطها إلى الشبكة الوطنية. إن تقنية تحويل الجهد المستمر إلى متناوب باستخدام فكرة تضمين عرض النبضة (PWM) اكتسبت أهمية كبيرة في نوعية الجهد المنتج في الخرج وتحسن أداء مغير القدرة لأن هذه التقنية تؤدي إلى تحسين نوعية الجهد المنتج ونقل من التوافقيات الموجودة فيه. كما أن الهدف الأساسي من مغيرات القدرة متعددة المستويات تساعد في رفع الجهد دون الحاجة إلى استخدام مفاتيح تتحمل الجهد العالي وأنا ممكن أن يتوزع الجهد العالي عليها لأنها مربوطة على التوالي.

في هذه الورقة نقدم أولاً دائرة مغير قدرة ذو الخمسة مستويات بعدد من المفاتيح الالكترونية (خمس مفاتيح فقط) أقل من العدد اللازم لمغير القدرة التقليدي ذو الخمسة مستويات حيث يتم استخدام ستة عشر مفتاح إلكتروني وبهذا يتم اختصار خمس مفاتيح بتكلفتها ودوائر السيطرة عليها حيث يكون الأمر اقتصادياً وفنياً. أيضاً تم تقديم تقنية مقترحة رقمية لتوليد نبضات السيطرة على المفاتيح الالكترونية للمغير.

من ناحية التطبيق، تم أولاً عمل محاكاة لمغير القدرة المقترح ومن ثم قمنا بتنفيذ دائرة المغير بالكامل عملياً واستخدمنا المسيطر الدقيق (Microcontroller) من نوع ATMEGA16 لغرض تطبيق التقنية الرقمية المقترحة لتوليد النبضات اللازمة لتشغيل والسيطرة على المفاتيح الالكترونية للمغير ومن خلال التطبيق العملي حصلنا على النتائج المطلوبة المعروضة في البحث وهي نتائج مرضية وثبتت العمل الصحيح للمغير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العاكس متعددة المستويات، ومفاتيح الحد الأدنى العاكس، النابضة الرقمي، متحكم

1. introduction

Multilevel inverter has become an effective and practical solution for reducing switching losses in high power voltage source inverter (VSI) applications [J. Rodriguez, J. Lai, and F. Peng, 2002][L. G. Franquelo, J. Rodriguez *et. al.*, 2008]. By synthesizing the ac output voltage from several levels of dc voltages, a staircase or multilevel output waveform is produced. For a conventional VSI, the maximum voltage level output is determined by the voltage blocking capability of each device. In many cases, the power device blocking capability could not reach the required DC link voltage, hence limiting

their application. Ingenious methods, such as device series connection to increase the blocking capacity may result in very complicated and unreliable circuits [L. G. Franquelo, J. Rodriguez *et. al.*, 2008].

By using a multilevel structure, the stress on each device can be reduced in proportional to the number of levels, thus the inverter can handle higher voltages [B. A. Welchko, M. B. de Rossiter Correa, and T. A. Lipo, 2004]. It may be possible, in certain application to avoid expensive and bulky step-up transformers.

Another significant advantage of a multilevel output waveform is that several voltage levels leads to a better and more sinusoidal voltage waveform. As a result, a lower total harmonic distortion (THD) is obtained. In another perspective, the harmonic in the output waveform can be reduced without increasing switching frequency or decreasing the inverter power output [R. Teichmann and S. Berne, 2005]. As the number of voltage levels reach infinity, the output THD approaches zero. The number of the achievable voltage levels, however, is limited by voltage unbalance problems, voltage clamping requirement, circuit layout, and packaging constraints. In motor application, high dV/dt in power supply generates high stress on motor windings and requires additional motor insulation. Furthermore, high dV/dt of semiconductor devices increases the electromagnetic interference (EMI), common mode voltage and possibility of failure on motor. With several levels in output waveform constructed by multilevel inverter, the switching dV/dt stresses are reduced [B. A. Welchko, M. B. de Rossiter Correa, and T. A. Lipo, 2004]. With these known advantages, multilevel VSI has become a popular alternative to the conventional VSI. There are various works carried out in this area but there appear to be limited publications on the analytical method to calculate the harmonics spectra of the output voltage. The multilevel inverter is idea for connecting such distributed dc energy sources (solar and fuel cells in addition to rectified output of wind turbines) to an power grid. Multilevel Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) inverters have been gained importance in high performance power applications without requiring high ratings on individual devices, as static var compensators, drives and active power filters. A multilevel inverter divides the dc rail directly or indirectly, so that the output of the leg can be more than two discrete levels. As both amplitude modulation and pulse width modulation are used in this, the quality of the output waveform gets improved with low distortion. The advantages of multilevel inverter are good power quality, low switching losses, reduced output dV/dt and high voltage capability. [S. Busquets-Monge, S. Alepuz, J. Bordonau, and J. Peracaula, 2008][Mohammed El Gamal Ahmed Lotfy G. E. M. Ali, 2008].

Increasing the number of voltage levels in the inverter increases the power rating. The three main topologies of multilevel inverters are the diode clamped inverter, flying capacitor inverter, and the cascaded H-bridge inverter [J. Rodríguez, J. Lai, and F. Peng, 2002][L. G. Franquelo, *et. al.*, 2008].

When we are talking about the numbers of power switches to form the multi level inverter, we found that for example in case of five level diode clamped inverter each leg requires 8 power switches, 12 diodes, and 4 capacitors for sharing the DC-link, (in general $(m-1)$ switches, $(m-1)(m-2)$ diodes and $(m-1)$ capacitors for sharing the dc link). In case of capacitor clamped five level inverter, it requires 8 switches, 6 capacitors and 4 capacitors for sharing the DC-link, (in general $(m-1)$ switches and $(m-1)*(m-2)/2$ capacitors in addition to $(m-1)$ capacitors for sharing the dc link). So it is simple to note the power circuit complication in addition to the complexity of the generation of the

signals to control the operation of the switches.[R. Mitova, J.-C. Crebier, L. Aubard, and C. Schaeffer, 2008]

In the present paper we introduce a power circuit for single phase five level inverter which contains a very lower number of switches and the technique for the generation of required signals to control the operation of the inverter switches. The presented technique is implemented via microcontroller. The simulation and practical results are presented.

2. Classical Multilevel Power Circuit topology and operation.

It is a fact, until today, multilevel topologies are the best alternative to implement low-frequency based inverters with low output voltage distortion. The most common multilevel topologies are as follows.

• Diode-Clamped Multilevel Inverter (DCMLI)

The circuit of DCMI is shown in figure (1) for five level inverter. A total eight switches and twelve diodes of equal voltage rating are used. In this circuit not only the main switches are clamped by the clamping diodes, the clamping diodes are clamped mutually by other clamping diodes. Thus the need for large RC network to deal with voltage sharing problem among series connected diode is removed. In general, a single m-level inverter phase leg requires (m-1) storage capacitors, 2(m-1) switches and (m-1)(m-2) diodes.

For five level case, the output voltage levels and their corresponding switching state are listed in table (I). For simplicity the operation can be decomposed into two level switching cells, in cell (a), switches S_{a2} , S_{a3} and S_{a4} are always on, while switches S_{a1} and $S_{a'4}$ work alternately to give the output voltage V_{ao} of V_{dc} and $3V_{dc}/4$ respectively. Similarly, in cell (b), switches S_{a3} , S_{a4} and $S_{a'1}$ are always on, while switches S_{a2} and $S_{a'2}$ work alternately to give the output voltage V_{ao} of $3V_{dc}/4$ and $V_{dc}/2$ respectively. In cell (c), switches S_{a4} , $S_{a'1}$ and $S_{a'2}$ are always on, while switches S_{a3} and $S_{a'3}$ work alternately to give the output voltage V_{ao} of $V_{dc}/2$ and $V_{dc}/4$ respectively. Finally, in cell (d), switches $S_{a'1}$, $S_{a'2}$ and $S_{a'3}$ are always on, while switches S_{a4} and $S_{a'4}$ work alternately to give the output voltage V_{ao} of $V_{dc}/4$ and 0 respectively.[S. Busquets-Monge, S. Alepuz, J. Rocabert, and J. Bordonau, 2008][M.Nathiya N and Ramabai B.Snehalatha, 2010][[Durgasukumar, G.](#) --- [Pathak, M.K.](#),2010]

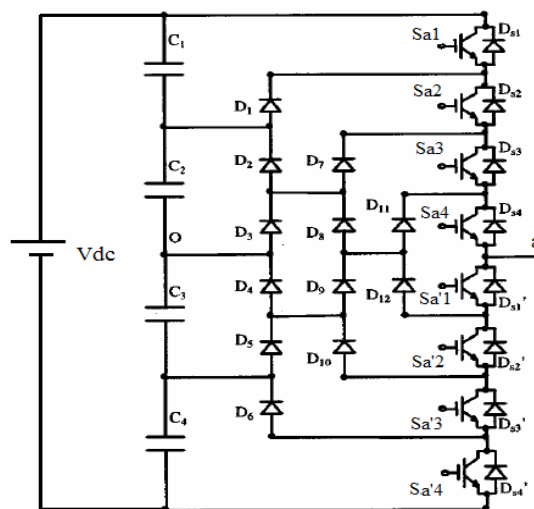


Figure (1) Diode clamped one leg of five level inverter circuit.

Table (I) - Diode clamped five level inverter voltage levels and their switching states.

Output V_{ao}	Switch State							
	S_{a1}	S_{a2}	S_{a3}	S_{a4}	$S_{a'1}$	$S_{a'2}$	$S_{a'3}$	$S_{a'4}$
$V_5 = V_{dc} / 2$	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
$V_4 = V_{dc} / 4$	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
$V_3 = 0$	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
$V_2 = -V_{dc} / 4$	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
$V_1 = -V_{dc} / 2$	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

• **Capacitor Clamped Multilevel Inverter (CCMLI)**

A similar topology to the DCMLI topology is the Capacitor Clamped (CC), or flying capacitor, multilevel inverter topology, which can be seen in figure (2). Instead of using clamping diodes it uses capacitors to hold the voltages to the desired values. The number of capacitors required is $(m-1)*(m-2)/2$ in addition to $(m-1)$ number of capacitors on a shared DC-bus, where m is the level number of the inverter. Instead of clamping diodes, one or more (depending on position and level of the inverter) capacitors are used to create the output voltages. They are connected to the midpoints of two switches pairs on the same position on each side of the midpoint between the switches [C. Crebier and N. Rouger, 2008].

The big difference is the use of clamping capacitors instead of clamping diodes, and since capacitors do not block reverse voltages the number of switching combinations increase. [M.Nathiya N and Ramabai B.Snehalatha, 2010] Several switching states will be able to generate the same voltage level, giving the topology redundant switching states. The sum of a certain output voltage is generated by the DCbus voltage $\pm V_{dc} / 2$ and one or more of the clamping capacitors voltages added together. [D.Mohan and Sreejith B.Kurub, 2012]

Table (II) illustrates the switching of operation of capacitor clamped five level Inverter.

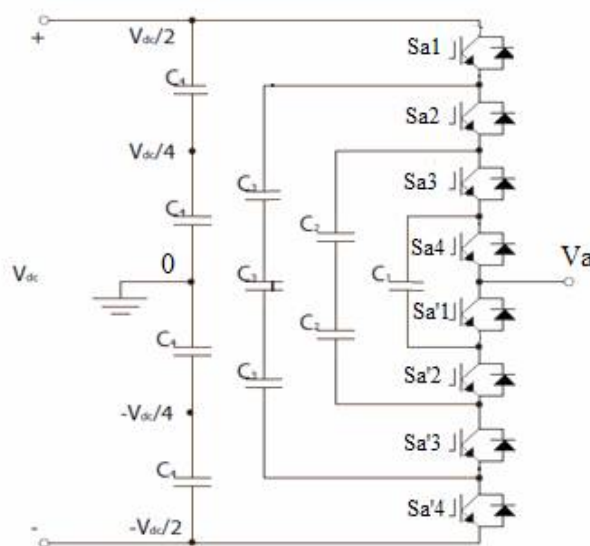


Figure (2) Circuit diagram of one leg of capacitor clamped five level inverter.

Table (II) Switching states for capacitor clamped five level Inverter.

Output Voltage	Sa1	Sa2	Sa3	Sa4	Sa'1	Sa'2	Sa'3	Sa'4
Vdc/2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Vdc/4	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
-Vdc/4	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
-Vdc/2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

• **Multilevel Inverter Using Cascaded-Inverters. (CMLI)**

This type of multilevel inverter, uses cascaded of H-bridge inverters (single phase full bridge) with separate dc sources. The general function of this multilevel inverter is the same as that of the other two previous inverters. The multilevel inverter using cascaded-inverter with SDCSs synthesizes a desired voltage from several independent sources of dc voltages, which may be obtained from either batteries, fuel cells, or solar cells. This configuration recently becomes very popular in ac power supply and adjustable speed drive applications. This new inverter can avoid extra clamping diodes or voltage balancing capacitors. A single-phase m-level configuration of such an inverter is shown in figure (3).[M.Nathiya N and Ramabai B.Snehalatha, 2010][N. Rouger, J.-C. *et. al*, 2008][[Wang Gen ping](#) , [Tan Yu mei](#), and [Yi Ling-zhi](#),2011]

Each bridge is associated with a single-phase full-bridge inverter. The ac terminal voltages of different level inverters are connected in series. By different combinations of the four switches, S1-S4, each inverter level can generate three different voltage outputs, +Vdc, -Vdc, and zero. The ac output of each of the different level of full-bridge inverters are connected in series such that the synthesized voltage waveform is the sum of the inverter outputs. Note that the number of output phase voltage levels is defined in different way from those of two previous inverters. In this topology, the number of output phase voltage levels is defined by $m = 2s + 1$, where s is the number of dc sources. The number of switches required is 2 (m-1). The advantage of this type is circuit layout. Modulated circuit layout and packaging is possible because each level has the same structure and there are no extra clamping diodes or voltage balancing capacitors.[[Wang Gen ping](#) ,and [Tan Yu mei](#), *et. al.*, 2011][M. Venu Madhav & K.S. Ravi Kumar , 2012] Finally, a comparison between the three types of multilevel inverter is summarized in table (III).

Table (III) Comparison of power components required for one leg.

Inverter Configuration	Diode-Clamped	Capacitor-clamped	Cascade Inverter
Main Switching devices	2(m-1)	2(m-1)	2(m-1)
Main Diodes	2(m-1)	2(m-1)	2(m-1)
Clamping Diodes	(m-1)(m-2)	0	0
DC bus capacitors	(m-1)	(m-1)	(m-1)/2
Clamping capacitors	0	(m-1)(m-2)/2	0

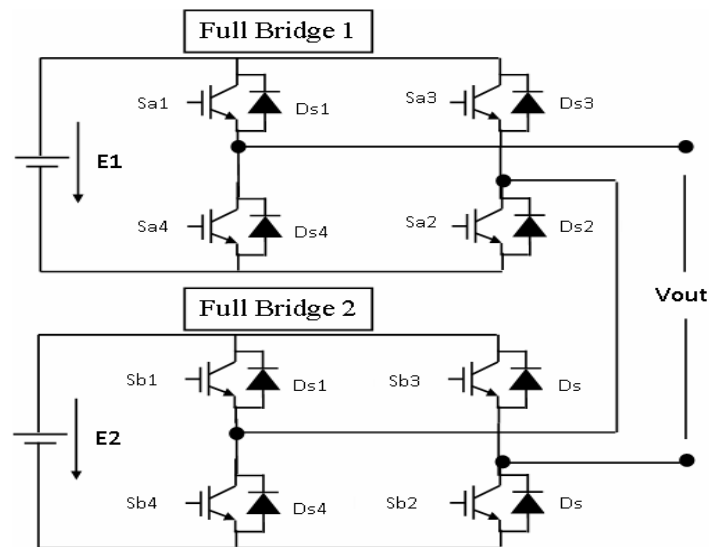


Figure (3) circuit diagram of Cascade multilevel inverter.

3. Low Switches Number Five Level Inverter. (LSFLI)

It is clear from the upper presented types of inverter and referring to table (III) that the number of the components used is high, for example the circuit of single phase bridge diode clamped five level inverter requires 16 switches, 24 clamping diodes which rise the cost and the complexity of the control circuit.

In the presented five level inverter topology it requires only five switches and four diodes of the same rating as shown in figure (4).

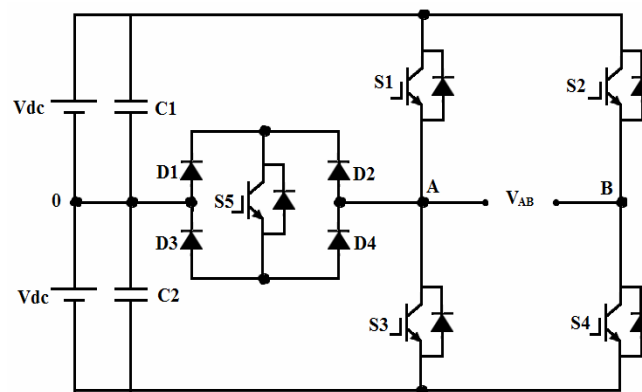


Figure (4) Circuit diagram of low number of switches five level inverter.

The operation of the circuit is as follows:

During the positive half cycle of the reference output voltage.

- S4 is switched ON (S2 is OFF)
- If the PWM signal is applied on the gate of switch S1 (during which case switch S3 is OFF) there are two cases : When Switch S1 is turned ON, S5 is OFF (which means both S3 and S5 are off, and of course S4 is ON) , so the output voltage(V_{AB}) is (+2 V_{dc}); the other case when S1 is OFF, S5 is ON (which means that S3 OFF and S5 ON, and of course S4 ON), in such case the point A of the output voltage is

connected to the midpoint of the DC source which gives an output voltage ($V_{AB} = (0 - (-V_{dc})) = +V_{dc}$).

- If the PWM signal is applied on the gate of switch S3 (during which case switch S1 is OFF) there are two cases : When Switch S3 is turned OFF, S5 is ON (which means S1 is OFF, S3 is OFF, S4 is ON, and S5 is ON), so the output voltage ($V_{AB} = (0 - (-V_{dc})) = +V_{dc}$); the other case when S3 is ON, S5 is OFF (which means that S1 OFF, S3 ON, S4 is ON, and S5 is OFF), in such case the load is short circuited by the lower part of the bridge and the output voltage ($V_{AB} = 0$).
- Summary of this period : when S1 is turned ON and OFF the output voltage varies between $+2V_{dc}$ and $+V_{dc}$ respectively. When S3 is turned OFF and ON the output voltage varies between $+V_{dc}$ and 0.

During the negative half cycle of the reference output voltage.

- S2 is switched ON (S4 is OFF)
- If the PWM signal is applied on the gate of switch S3 (during which case switch S1 is OFF) there are two cases : When Switch S3 is turned ON, S5 is OFF (which means both S1 and S5 are off, and of course S2 is ON), so the output voltage (V_{AB}) is $(-2V_{dc})$; the other case when S3 is OFF, S5 is ON (which means that S3 OFF and S5 ON, and of course S2 ON), in such case the point A of the output voltage is connected to the midpoint of the DC source which gives an output voltage ($V_{AB} = (0 - (+V_{dc})) = -V_{dc}$).
- If the PWM signal is applied on the gate of switch S1 (during which case switch S3 is OFF) there are two cases : When Switch S1 is turned OFF, S5 is ON (which means S3 is OFF, S1 is OFF, S2 is ON, and S5 is ON), so the output voltage ($V_{AB} = (0 - (+V_{dc})) = -V_{dc}$); the other case when S1 is ON, S5 is OFF (which means that S1 ON, S3 OFF, S2 is ON, and S5 is OFF), in such case the load is short circuited by the upper part of the bridge and the output voltage ($V_{AB} = 0$).
- Summary of this period : when S1 is turned ON and OFF the output voltage varies between $+2V_{dc}$ and $+V_{dc}$ respectively. When S3 is turned OFF and ON the output voltage varies between $+V_{dc}$ and 0.
- Summary of this period : when S3 is turned ON and OFF the output voltage varies between $-2V_{dc}$ and $-V_{dc}$ respectively. When S1 is turned OFF and ON the output voltage varies between $-V_{dc}$ and 0.

Table (IV) summarized the switching states of the low switches five level inverter.

Then the advantages of the presented five level circuit are :

1. Reduction in the number of components the initial cost reduces.
2. Controlling becomes easier.
3. Losses becomes less due to the elimination of the harmonics.
4. Apt structure for industrial applications.
5. Overall weight reduces because of the usage of less number of components.

Table (IV) The switching state and output voltage of low number of switches five level inverter.

Output Voltage (V_{AB})	Switches state				
	S5	S4	S3	S2	S1
$+2V_{dc}$	0	1	0	0	1
$+V_{dc}$	1	1	0	0	0
0	0/0	1 or 0	1 or 0	0 or 1	0 or 1
$-V_{dc}$	1	0	0	1	0
$-2V_{dc}$	0	0	1	1	0

4. Gating pulses generation.

If we suppose that the reference (wanted) sine wave output voltage of frequency of F_R of peak value of A_R and the modulation (Carrier) signal has a frequency of F_c whose peak value of A_c then the modulation index (MI) is A_R/A_c and the frequency modulation (FMR) is F_c/F_R . In order to generate the required gating pulses, the basic idea depend on a sinusoidal reference signal of frequency F_R is first rectified and compared with the carrier triangular signals. There are two triangular signals, the first one (V_{T1}) vary from two peaks of zero and $0.5 V_m$, while the second one (V_{T2}) is of the same phase shift with the first signal but has an offset of $0.5V$.

During the positive half cycle of the reference signal (V_R), the crossing of the reference signal with (V_{T1}) generates the gating signals for the switch S3 and the crossing of the reference signal with (V_{T2}) generates the gating signals for the switch S1. S4 is ON during this period and S5 is the inversion of ($S1 + S3$).

During the negative half cycle of the reference signal, the crossing of the reference signal with (V_{T1}) generates the gating signals for the switch S1 and the crossing of the reference signal with (V_{T2}) generates the gating signals for the switch S3. S2 is ON during this period and S5 is the inversion of ($S1 + S3$).

The algorithm depends depends on the principle that the value of the reference sine voltage between two sampling periods (the sampling period equal to reference time/FMR) can be transformed in a pulse signal whose average value is the same as that of the reference voltage during the same period. Figure (5) shows the principle of the gating signals generation in addition to the output voltage.

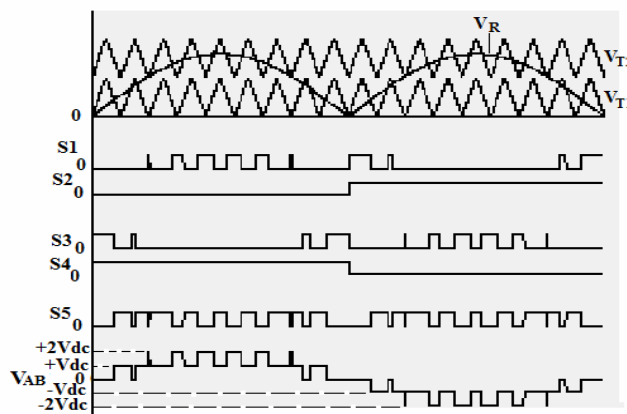


Figure (5) Principle of gating signals generation for the inverter switches (FMR=18, MI=0.7).

5. Hardware Implementation

The generation of the necessary gating signals for S1 to S5 are generated using the mentioned algorithm by means of a microcontroller the hardware consists of the following parts:

- ATMEGA16 in which the algorithm is implemented.
- TLP521-4 photocoupler for isolation and driving circuit.
- MOSFET IRF540.
- 1N-4007 Diode.

The variation of the modulation index can be varied externally by means of a variable dc input, while the generation of sine and triangular waveforms and their comparison operation and other required logic operation is realized inside the microcontroller. Once the switches signals are output from the microcontroller, the signals are applied to the MOSFET gates via isolation and driving circuit. Figure (6) shows software flowchart, the algorithm is implemented in the microcontroller using flowcode V4 programming. Figure (7) demonstrate the hardware circuit diagram.

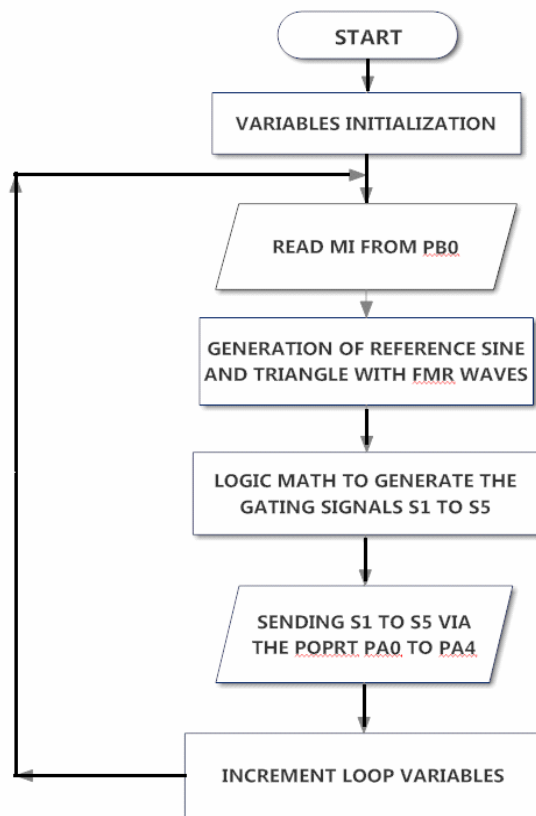


Figure (6) the flowchart of the proposed gating signal generation for five level Inverter.

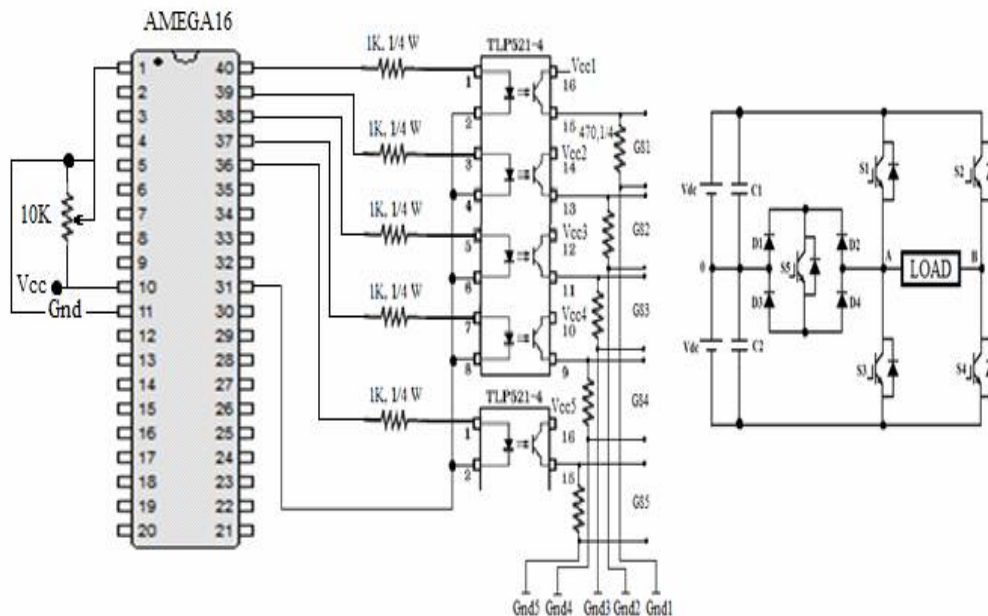


Figure (7) Proposed hardware circuit layout of single phase five level inverter.

6. Simulation and practical results.

The system presented in this paper (figure 7) firstly simulation using two well known programming languages (MATLAB and Visual Basic). Figure (8) shows the results of four cases of simulation using MATLAB while figure (9) shows the results of four cases using Visual Basic program.

The proposed hardware of the inverter is implemented practically and tested for many cases some of them are presented in figure (10) in which cases the modulation index, (MI), its value is varied by means of external variable dc voltage, and the frequency modulation ratio, (FMR) are varied, it is noted that when the modulation index is equal or below 0.5 then the inverter works in three level mode while the inverter works in five level mode if the modulation index more than 0.5. In addition to the output voltage the values of total harmonic distortion (THD) are also presented for some cases as listed in table (V) for MI=0.9.

Table (V) the values of THD against the FMR

FMR	15	18	30	40	60	80	100
% THD	31.0	30.5	30.5	27	26	25	18

7. Conclusions.

Multilevel inverter PWM offers more degree of freedom and advantages over the traditional two level PWM inverter. The traditional five level bridge inverter requires 16 power switches with their gating signal circuit in addition to the 12 power diodes, while the inverter power circuit presented in this paper requires only five switches and four power diodes.

The algorithm for the generation of the gating signal for the power switches is implemented by microcontroller atmega16 and the driving circuits are also designed.

The presented inverter is implemented practically and the experimental results given are very closed to the simulation results and there are very reasonable.

It is also important to point out that as the FMR increase, the THD decreases, of course the switching losses is the limit.

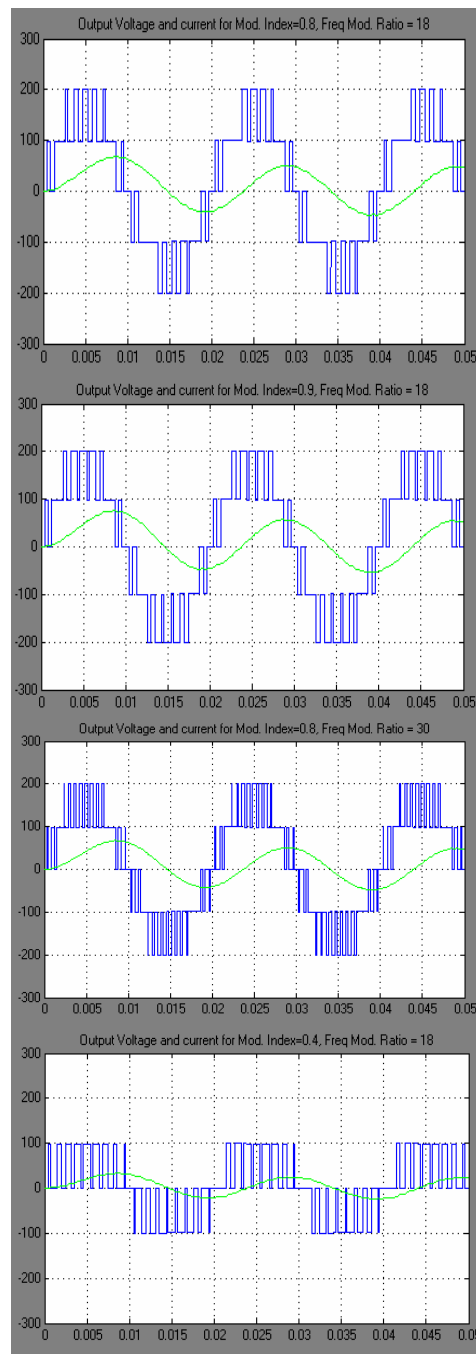


Figure (8) Shows the simulation Results using MATLAB for different MI.

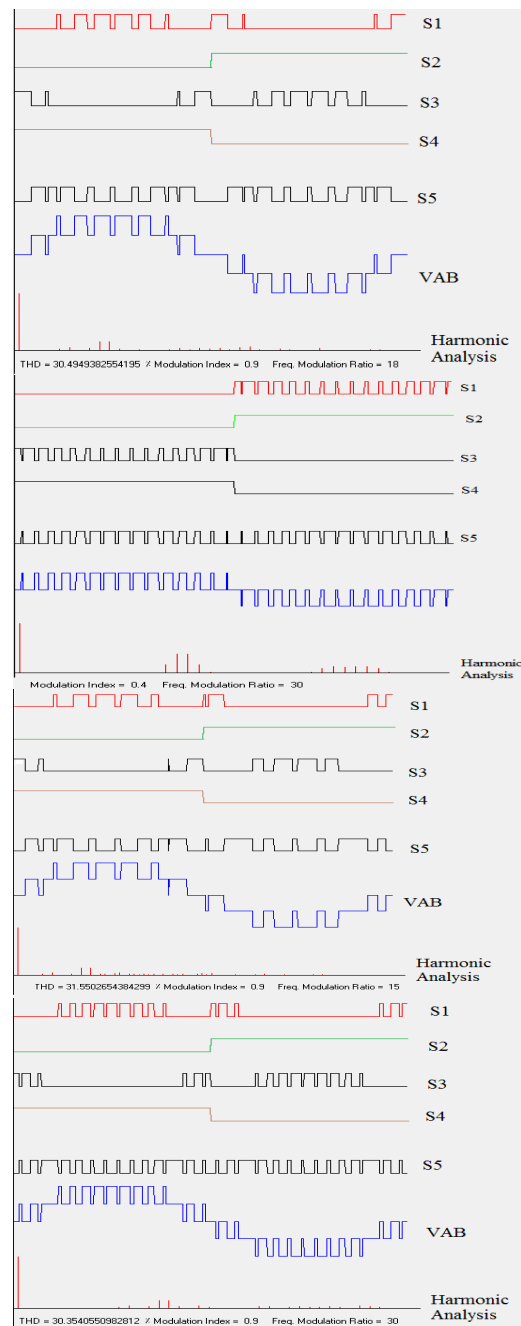
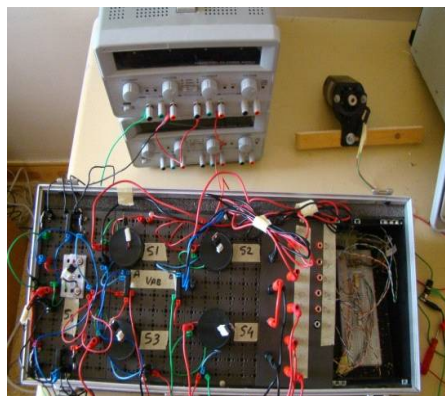
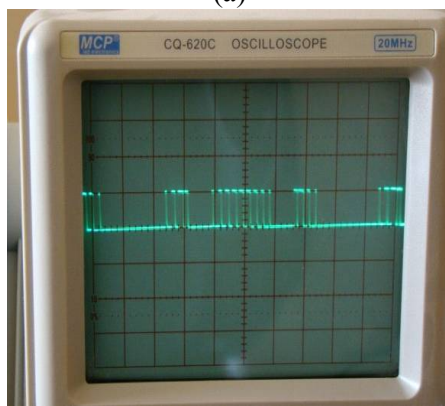


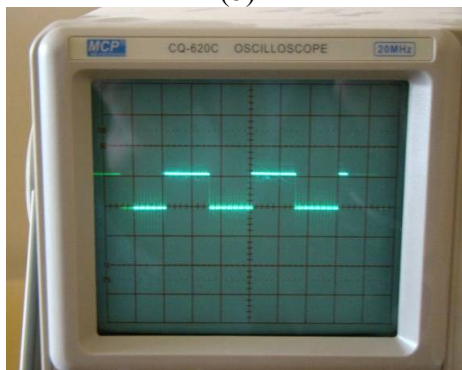
Figure (9) Shows the simulation Results using Visual basic for different MI.



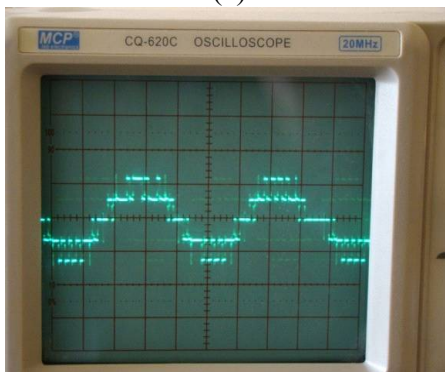
(a)



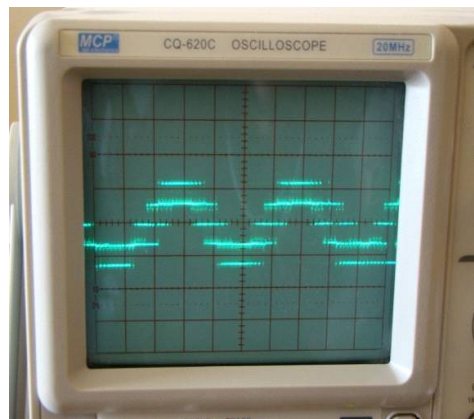
(b)



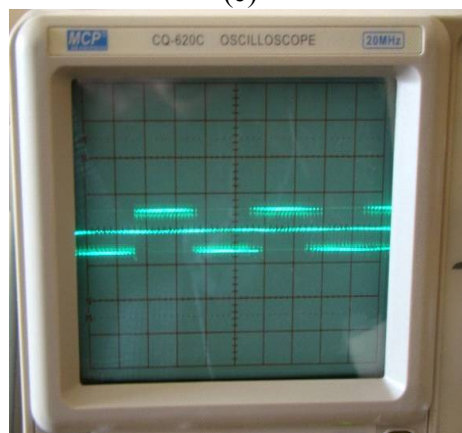
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Figure (10) Experimental results : a) Implemented prototype setup, b) & c) gating for S1 and S4 signals respectively, d) Output voltage for MI=0.8 and FMR=18, e) Output voltage for MI=0.8 and FMR=30, and f) Output voltage for MI=0.4 and FMR=18.

8. References

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