

Dielectric function of *a*-Si:H based on local network structures

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For hydrogenated amorphous silicon (*a*-Si:H) layers prepared by plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition, we have found clear relationships between the dielectric function in the ultraviolet/visible region and  $\text{SiH}_n$  ( $n = 1-2$ ) local bonding states by applying real-time spectroscopic ellipsometry and infrared attenuated total reflection spectroscopy. In particular, the amplitude of the  $\epsilon_2$  spectra obtained from various *a*-Si:H layers is expressed completely by the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bond density in the *a*-Si:H and reduces strongly with increasing the  $\text{SiH}_2$  content, indicating that microvoids present in the *a*-Si:H network are surrounded by the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state. On the other hand, no significant void formation occurs by the generation of the  $\text{SiH}$  local bonding due to rather dense surrounding structures. Depending on the  $\text{SiH}_n$  bonding states, the whole *a*-Si:H dielectric function shifts toward higher energies, as the  $\text{SiH}_n$  hydrogen contents in the *a*-Si:H increase. Based on these findings, we have established a new *a*-Si:H dielectric function model that incorporates the void structure terminated with  $\text{SiH}_2$  and  $\epsilon_2$  spectral shift induced by the  $\text{SiH}_n$  local structures. This model is appropriate for a wide variety of *a*-Si:H layers deposited at different substrate temperatures and plasma conditions and, conversely, allows the characterization of the  $\text{SiH}_n$  contents from the *a*-Si:H dielectric functions in the ultraviolet/visible region. From results obtained in this study, the local network structures and electronic states of *a*-Si:H are discussed.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The network structure of hydrogenated amorphous silicon (*a*-Si:H) thin films and the resulting optoelectronic properties have long been a subject of intense discussion<sup>1</sup> since the first demonstration of *p,n*-type conductivity control in *a*-Si:H by Spear and Le Comber.<sup>2,3</sup> Although a continuous random network is generally assumed for *a*-Si:H,<sup>4-8</sup> the optoelectronic properties of *a*-Si:H are unique and depend strongly on H incorporated in the amorphous network.<sup>9-18</sup> More specifically, the band-edge absorption of *a*-Si:H shifts toward higher energies with increasing the total hydrogen content ( $C_{\text{total}}$ ) in *a*-Si:H.<sup>9,10</sup> Thus H introduced during *a*-Si:H growth processes not only passivates Si dangling bonds but also modifies the fundamental properties of *a*-Si:H.<sup>1</sup>

Several studies have shown that, when H is incorporated into *a*-Si:H, deformation of the network structure occurs with the generation of microvoids in the *a*-Si:H matrix.<sup>19-27</sup> Unfortunately, there has been little consensus on the detailed void structures in *a*-Si:H and various *a*-Si:H void structures have been reported from different characterization techniques including small-angle x-ray scattering (SAXS),<sup>19-21</sup> neutron scattering,<sup>22</sup> positron annihilation,<sup>23,24</sup> infrared spectroscopy (IR),<sup>25,26</sup> and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR).<sup>27</sup> One of the controversies over the void structure in *a*-Si:H arises from the internal surface structure of microvoids. In general, such void surfaces present in *a*-Si:H layers are considered to be terminated with  $\text{SiH}_n$  ( $n = 1-2$ ) bonding states,<sup>25,26</sup> but the interpretation of IR<sup>25,26,28-34</sup> and NMR<sup>27,35-40</sup> results is still highly controversial. Moreover, the size of the microvoids in *a*-Si:H varies depending on *a*-Si:H preparation conditions as well as characterization techniques, and the diameter of voids has been reported to be  $\sim 8$  Å (SAXS),<sup>19,20</sup>  $\sim 20$  Å (positron annihilation<sup>23</sup> and NMR<sup>27</sup>), and  $> 20$  Å (SAXS<sup>21</sup> and neutron scattering<sup>22</sup>).

The microvoid formation in the *a*-Si:H network is expected to change optical constants and dielectric function of *a*-Si:H

in the visible/ultraviolet (UV) region. As known widely, the *a*-Si:H dielectric function,  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E) = \epsilon_1(E) - i\epsilon_2(E)$ , shows a broad feature with a single  $\epsilon_2$  peak at  $E = 3.6$  eV.<sup>11,12,41</sup> This  $\epsilon_2$  peak basically shows the fundamental light absorption in *a*-Si:H,<sup>41</sup> and thus provides a measure of the material density in *a*-Si:H. Accordingly, the *a*-Si:H network structure with microvoids and its relation to the optical transitions can best be investigated from  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$ . In fact, the  $\epsilon_2$  spectra of *a*-Si:H have been reported to vary systematically with  $C_{\text{total}}$ , and the amplitude of the  $\epsilon_2$  peak reduces at higher  $C_{\text{total}}$ .<sup>11,12</sup> The relationships between  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  and  $\text{SiH}_n$  local bonding structures can be related to the microvoid structures in the *a*-Si:H network.

To express  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$ , on the other hand, various dielectric function models, including the Forouhi-Bloomer model,<sup>42</sup> model dielectric function theory,<sup>43</sup> band model,<sup>44</sup> tetrahedral model,<sup>45,46</sup> Tauc-Lorentz model,<sup>47</sup> and Cody-Lorentz model,<sup>48</sup> have been proposed. In the Tauc-Lorentz model that has been applied extensively, the dielectric function is described by five independent parameters, namely, amplitude parameter, broadening parameter, band gap, and peak position of an  $\epsilon_2$  peak, and an  $\epsilon_1$  value at high energies.<sup>47</sup> Although dielectric function modeling with such parameters is suitable to express the optical constants of various amorphous materials, the assessment of film quality becomes rather difficult from such models. In the case of *a*-Si:H, for example, the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding mode, generally characterized by the  $\sim 2080$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  peak in IR spectra, has been an important indicator for *a*-Si:H film quality, as light-induced degradation that occurs in the solar cell devices shows a good correlation with the generation of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state in *a*-Si:H.<sup>14-18</sup> For the *a*-Si:H solar cell application, therefore, it is of significant importance to develop an *a*-Si:H dielectric function model that allows the characterization of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state.

In this study, we have investigated the relationships between  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in the visible/UV region and  $\text{SiH}_n$  local bonding

states. The amplitude of  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  is found to show a direct correlation with the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bond formation in  $a\text{-Si:H}$ , indicating that microvoids in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  network are terminated by the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonds, while the  $\text{SiH}$  bonding state is present in rather dense network structures. These  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  local structures induce the  $\varepsilon_2$  spectral shifts toward higher energies with different shift values, as the  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  bond densities in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  increase. As a result, we have developed a dielectric function model based on the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  local network structures.

## II. EXPERIMENT

We prepared  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers by a conventional rf plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) system. This PECVD system is equipped with real-time spectroscopic ellipsometry (SE) and infrared attenuated total reflection spectroscopy (ATR).<sup>49</sup> In this study, a series of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers were deposited on  $\text{Si}(100)$  substrates covered with 30-Å-thick native oxides at different substrate temperatures ( $T_s$ ) ranging from 80 to 310 °C. The calibration of  $T_s$  was performed by estimating near-surface temperatures using the reported temperature response of the dielectric function for crystalline silicon ( $c\text{-Si}$ ).<sup>50</sup> In the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  depositions, a fixed  $\text{SiH}_4$  flow rate of 5 SCCM (SCCM denotes cubic centimeter per minute at STP), an rf power ( $P_{\text{rf}}$ ) of 13 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, and a pressure of 50 mTorr were used, and the electrode spacing in the PECVD was 4 cm. These deposition conditions yield a relatively slow  $a\text{-Si:H}$  deposition rate of 0.4 Å/s ( $T_s \leq 280$  °C). At  $T_s = 310$  °C, the deposition rate increases to 0.5 Å/s due to H desorption from the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  growing surface.<sup>51</sup> The thickness of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers deposited on the substrates is 1000 Å. For the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  depositions at high temperatures, however, the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  thickness was reduced to 300 Å ( $T_s = 230, 280$  °C) and 200 Å ( $T_s = 310$  °C), as the thick  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers deposited at high  $T_s$  peeled off from the substrates due to the high compressive stresses in these layers.<sup>52</sup>

During the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  depositions, the real-time SE and ATR spectra were measured simultaneously. The SE measurements were performed using a rotating-compensator instrument (J. A. Woollam, M-2000). The real-time SE spectra were collected with a measurement repetition time of 10 s in photon energies ranging from 1.7 to 5.0 eV. We also performed *ex situ* SE measurements using a rotating-analyze ellipsometry instrument with a compensator (J. A. Woollam, VASE), in order to extend the SE measurement region from 0.75 to 5.0 eV.

The real-time ATR spectra were measured by employing a Fourier-transform IR instrument (Nicolet, Magna 560) with a repetition time of 30 s. At  $T_s = 280\text{--}310$  °C, a longer repetition time of 60 s was used due to lower measurement sensitivity at high  $T_s$ . For the ATR measurements, trapezoidal  $c\text{-Si}$  ATR prisms with a size of  $80 \times 20 \times 1$  mm<sup>3</sup> were employed. The total number of reflection on an effective surface area of  $60 \times 20$  mm<sup>2</sup> is 30, which provides quite high sensitivity for the measurements.<sup>49</sup> In the ATR measurements, we eliminated unfavorable interference effects induced by the  $a\text{-Si:H/SiO}_2/c\text{-Si}$  structure by irradiating  $p$ -polarized IR light into the ATR prism.<sup>49</sup> The measurement of the ATR spectra was performed using a spectra resolution of 8 cm<sup>-1</sup> in a wave-number range from 1500 to 4000 cm<sup>-1</sup>. In our case, the lowest measurable

range in the ATR spectra is limited by the onset of the strong absorption of the  $c\text{-Si}$  ATR prism.

## III. SE AND ATR ANALYSES

For the analysis of real-time SE spectra, we constructed an optical model of multiple layers consisting of ambient/surface roughness layer ( $a\text{-Si:H}$ )/bulk layer ( $a\text{-Si:H}$ )/ $\text{SiO}_2$  (30 Å)/ $c\text{-Si}$  (substrate).<sup>53</sup> The dielectric function of the surface roughness layer was modeled as a 50/50 vol.% mixture of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  bulk layer and voids, applying the Bruggeman effective-medium approximation (EMA).<sup>53,54</sup> In order to determine  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  deposited at different  $T_s$ , a global error minimization scheme was used. In this method, the overall analysis is made self-consistently under the assumption that the dielectric function of the depositing film does not change within the analyzing film thickness.<sup>53,54</sup> This analysis allows us to obtain a time evolution of the surface roughness layer thickness ( $d_s$ ), bulk layer thickness ( $d_b$ ), in addition to the dielectric function of the film. From the analysis, however,  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  at  $T_s$  is determined. The  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  at room temperature can be extracted from the room-temperature SE spectra measured after the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  deposition. In this case, the mathematical inversion of the room-temperature spectra is performed assuming that  $d_s$  and  $d_b$  of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layer do not vary after the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  deposition.<sup>54</sup> In our analysis, however, slight adjustments for  $d_s$  and  $d_b$  were made for the mathematical inversion to remove artifacts from the dielectric function. On the other hand, the SE spectra at the lower energy region (0.75–1.7 eV) were obtained from the *ex situ* measurements mentioned earlier. These *ex situ* spectra, however, include the effect of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  oxidation that occurs after removing the sample from the deposition system. We have removed this oxidation effect by introducing additional surface roughness and/or  $\text{SiO}_2$  contributions into the optical model, so that  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  obtained from the *ex situ* measurement matches with the one determined from the *in situ* measurement. Finally, by combining the *ex situ* and *in situ* results,  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in a range from 0.75 to 5.0 eV was determined.

The data analysis procedure for the real-time ATR spectra has already been established previously.<sup>49</sup> From the measured ATR absorbance spectra  $A(\omega)$ , where  $\omega$  denotes the wave number, the absorption coefficient  $\alpha(\omega)$  can be calculated directly using

$$\alpha(\omega) = 2.303 \times A(\omega) \text{Re}(\cos \theta) / (2dM). \quad (1)$$

Here,  $\theta$  denotes the transmission angle of the IR light in thin films formed on ATR prisms, and  $\theta$  can be obtained easily by applying Snell's law. In Eq. (1),  $d$  and  $M$  represent the layer thickness and total number of the light reflection on the film side ( $M = 30$  in our case), respectively. From SE results, we obtained  $d$  as  $d = d_b + 0.5d_s$ , where the coefficient of 0.5 for  $d_s$  indicates 50 vol.% of voids assumed for  $d_s$ . From  $\alpha(\omega)$  in Eq. (1), the hydrogen content  $C_H$  for each  $\text{SiH}_n$  bonding mode in  $a\text{-Si:H}$  can be estimated as follows:

$$C_H = \frac{A}{D} \left( \int \frac{\alpha(\omega)}{\omega} d\omega \right) \times 100 \text{ at.}\%, \quad (2)$$

where  $A$  is a proportionality constant of the  $\text{SiH}_n$  bonding states and  $D$  is the atomic number density of  $a\text{-Si:H}$ .<sup>49</sup> In this study, two IR peaks generally observed at

$\sim 2000 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $\sim 2080 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  are assigned to the SiH and SiH<sub>2</sub> stretching modes, respectively, as will be discussed in Sec. VA. For the calculation of the SiH<sub>n</sub> contents, we applied values of  $D = 5.0 \times 10^{22} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ,  $A_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ , and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2} = 2.2 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ , based on the result reported by Langford *et al.*<sup>55</sup> By applying  $A_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2}$  to Eq. (2), the SiH content ( $C_{\text{SiH}}$ ) and SiH<sub>2</sub> content ( $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ ) in the *a*-Si:H layers were estimated. From these values, we further obtained  $C_{\text{total}}$  as  $C_{\text{total}} = C_{\text{SiH}} + C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ .

In the *a*-Si:H deposition on the SiO<sub>2</sub>/c-Si substrates, on the other hand, a SiH<sub>2</sub>-rich interface layer with a thickness of  $\sim 30 \text{ \AA}$  is formed on the substrate due to the island growth of *a*-Si:H on foreign substrates.<sup>56</sup> This interface layer has a quite large  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  of  $\sim 20 \text{ at.}\%$  and provides a constant contribution to the measured ATR spectra.<sup>56</sup> In the SE measurement, however, the optical response of the thin interface layer becomes negligible as the *a*-Si:H layer thickness increases, since the light reflection from the *a*-Si:H/substrate interface region becomes weaker. Thus we have eliminated the contribution of the SiH<sub>2</sub>-rich interface layer by subtracting a real-time ATR spectrum obtained during the initial growth regime from a real-time ATR spectrum obtained after the *a*-Si:H deposition, in order to investigate the correlation between  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  and the SiH<sub>n</sub> local bonding states, particularly in the *a*-Si:H bulk layer. The resulting ATR spectrum was then analyzed to estimate the SiH<sub>n</sub> content in the *a*-Si:H bulk layer.

#### IV. RESULTS

##### A. Dielectric functions of *a*-Si:H

Figure 1 shows the room-temperature dielectric functions of the *a*-Si:H layers deposited at different  $T_s$  from 80 to 310 °C. As confirmed from Fig. 1, the  $\epsilon_1$  spectra in Fig. 1(a) and  $\epsilon_2$  spectra in Fig. 1(b) show relatively large variations with  $T_s$ . In particular, the overall  $\epsilon_1$  values and the amplitude of the broad  $\epsilon_2$  peak at 3.6 eV decrease as  $T_s$  reduces. Moreover, it can be seen that the whole dielectric function shifts toward higher energies with decreasing  $T_s$ . At  $T_s \geq 280^\circ\text{C}$ , however, the amplitude of the  $\epsilon_2$  peak is constant and only the slight  $\epsilon_2$ -spectral shift occurs, as shown in Fig. 1(c).

Since the dielectric function  $\epsilon(E) = \epsilon_1(E) - i\epsilon_2(E)$  is expressed by  $\epsilon_1(E) = n(E)^2 - k(E)^2$  and  $\epsilon_2(E) = 2n(E)k(E)$ , where  $n$  and  $k$  are the refractive index and extinction coefficient, respectively, the  $\epsilon_2$  spectra in Fig. 1(b) basically show the light absorption properties in *a*-Si:H. Thus the result of Fig. 1(b) indicates that the fundamental light absorption in the *a*-Si:H reduces at lower  $T_s$ , as reported previously.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the onset of the light absorption ( $\epsilon_2 > 0$ ) at lower energies around 1.7 eV roughly corresponds to the optical gap of *a*-Si:H. Accordingly, the shift of the absorption onset in Fig. 1(b) indicates the optical gap widening in the *a*-Si:H with decreasing  $T_s$ . At energies well below the light absorption regime, on the other hand,  $\epsilon_1(E)$  shows a constant value, referred to as the high-frequency dielectric constant  $\epsilon_\infty$ .<sup>54</sup> From  $\epsilon_\infty$ , the high-frequency refractive index  $n_\infty$  can be estimated from  $\epsilon_\infty = n_\infty^2$ , since  $k = 0$  in the region. As shown in Fig. 1(a), the constant  $\epsilon_1$  value at  $E < 1.0 \text{ eV}$  reduces with decreasing  $T_s$ , indicating that  $n_\infty$  reduces at lower  $T_s$  by the formation of porous *a*-Si:H network structures.

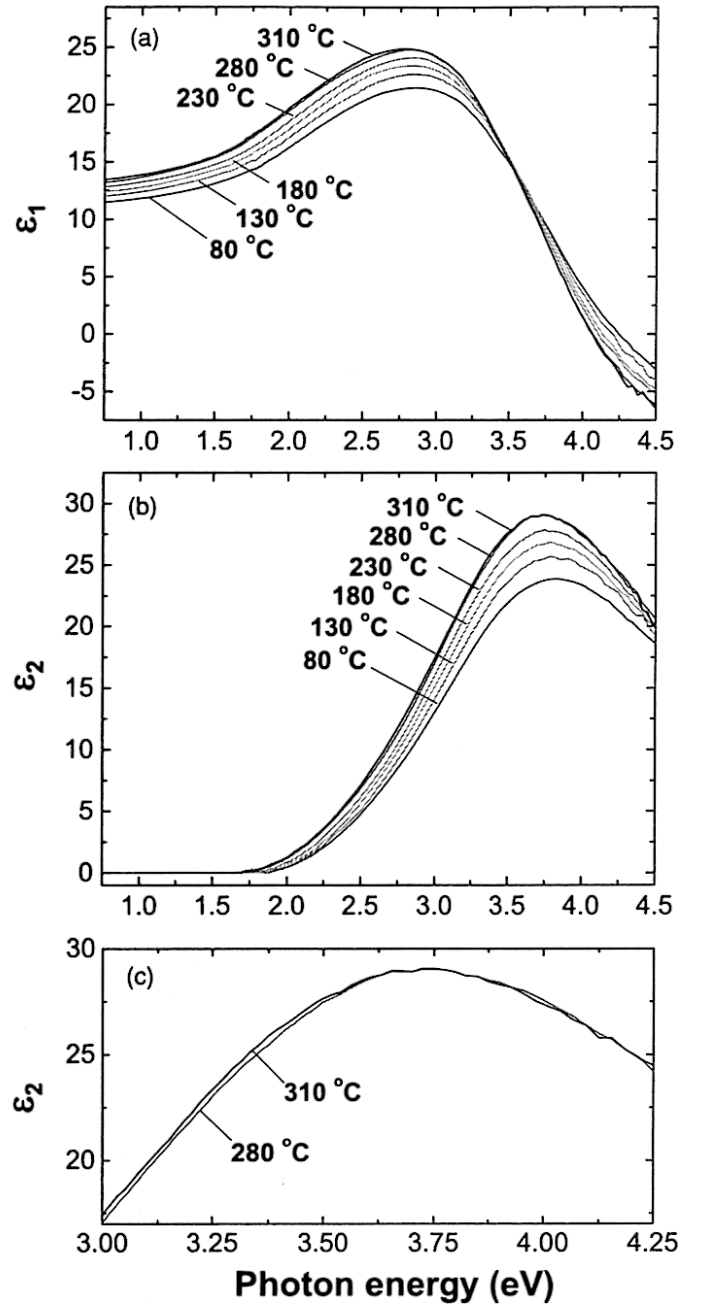


FIG. 1. (Color online) (a)  $\epsilon_1$  spectra, (b)  $\epsilon_2$  spectra of the *a*-Si:H layers deposited at different substrate temperatures of  $T_s = 80$ – $310^\circ\text{C}$ , and (c)  $\epsilon_2$  spectra of the *a*-Si:H for  $T_s = 280$  and  $310^\circ\text{C}$  in the selected energy region.

The obtained  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in Fig. 1 was further analyzed using the Tauc-Lorentz model.<sup>47</sup> In this model, the  $\epsilon_2(E)$  of amorphous materials is expressed by the product of the Tauc gap and Lorentz model:

$$\epsilon_2(E) = \frac{ACE_0(E - E_g)^2}{(E^2 - E_0^2)^2 + C^2E^2} \frac{1}{E} \quad (E > E_g), \quad (3)$$

$$= 0 \quad (E \leq E_g), \quad (4)$$

where  $A$ ,  $C$ ,  $E_0$ , and  $E_g$  represent the amplitude parameter, broadening parameter, peak transition energy, and Tauc optical

gap. The  $\varepsilon_1(E)$  of the Tauc-Lorentz model has been obtained using the Kramers-Kronig relations and is given by

$$\begin{aligned} \varepsilon_1(E) = & \varepsilon_1(\infty) + \frac{AC}{\pi\xi^4} \frac{a_{\text{in}}}{2\alpha E_0} \ln \left( \frac{E_0^2 + E_g^2 + \alpha E_g}{E_0^2 + E_g^2 - \alpha E_g} \right) \\ & - \frac{A}{\pi\xi^4} \frac{a_{\text{tan}}}{E_0} \left[ \pi - \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{2E_g + \alpha}{C} \right) \right. \\ & \left. + \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{-2E_g + \alpha}{C} \right) \right] + 2 \frac{AE_0}{\pi\xi^4\alpha} E_g(E^2 - \gamma^2) \\ & \times \left[ \pi + 2 \tan^{-1} \left( 2 \frac{\gamma^2 - E_g^2}{\alpha C} \right) \right] - \frac{AE_0 C}{\pi\xi^4} \frac{E^2 + E_g^2}{E} \\ & \times \ln \left( \frac{|E - E_g|}{E + E_g} \right) + \frac{2AE_0 C}{\pi\xi^4} E_g \\ & \times \ln \left[ \frac{|E - E_g|(E + E_g)}{\sqrt{(E_0^2 - E_g^2)^2 + E_g^2 C^2}} \right], \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

where

$$a_{\text{in}} = (E_g^2 - E_0^2)E^2 + E_g^2 C^2 - E_0^2(E_0^2 + 3E_g^2), \quad (6)$$

$$a_{\text{tan}} = (E^2 - E_0^2)(E_0^2 + E_g^2) + E_g^2 C^2, \quad (7)$$

$$\xi^4 = (E^2 - \gamma^2)^2 + \alpha^2 C^2/4, \quad (8)$$

$$\alpha = \sqrt{4E_0^2 - C^2}, \quad (9)$$

$$\gamma = \sqrt{E_0^2 - C^2/2}. \quad (10)$$

The  $\varepsilon_1(\infty)$  in Eq. (5) shows the energy-independent contribution to  $\varepsilon_1$  at high energies. As a result, the dielectric function by the Tauc-Lorentz model is described by five parameters  $\{A, C, E_g, E_0, \varepsilon_1(\infty)\}$ .

Figure 2 shows  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  of  $T_s = 310^\circ\text{C}$ . The solid lines in the figure indicate the calculation result obtained by applying the Tauc-Lorentz model, and a good fitting to the experimental data can be seen in the whole measured region. Table I summarizes the Tauc-Lorentz parameters determined from similar analyses performed for the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers shown in Fig. 1. In this analysis, we used fixed  $C = 2.33$  eV, as this value shows a minor variation with  $T_s$ . In Table I,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers, obtained from ATR analyses described in Sec. IV B, are also shown. Figure 3 shows the variation of the Tauc-Lorentz parameters  $\{A, E_g, E_0, \varepsilon_1(\infty)\}$  with  $C_{\text{total}}$  in

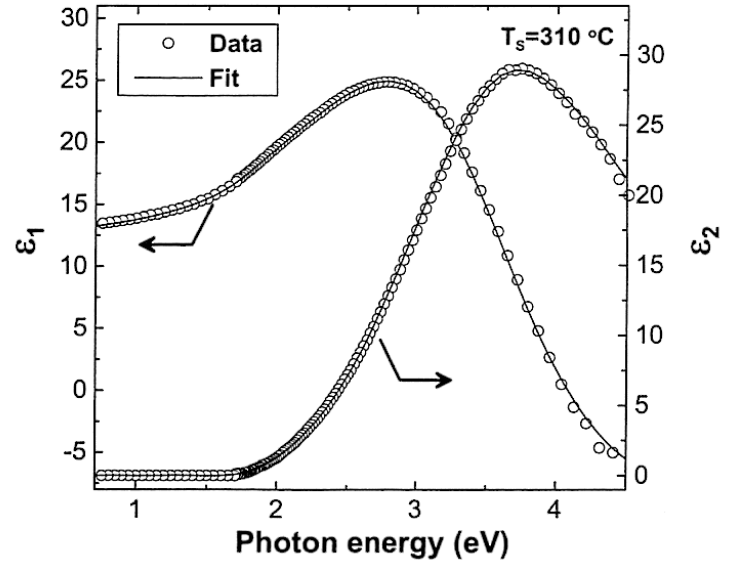


FIG. 2. Dielectric function of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layer for  $T_s = 310^\circ\text{C}$ . The open circles show the experimental data shown in Fig. 1, and the solid lines show the result of the fitting analysis using the Tauc-Lorentz model.

the  $a\text{-Si:H}$ . With increasing  $C_{\text{total}}$ , the parameter  $A$  gradually reduces. This variation simply shows the amplitude reduction observed in the  $\varepsilon_2$  spectra in Fig. 1(b). The linear variations of  $E_g$  and  $E_0$  in Fig. 3 correspond to the shift of  $\varepsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  toward higher energies with increasing  $C_{\text{total}}$  (or decreasing  $T_s$ ). The increase in  $\varepsilon_1(\infty)$  indicates the baseline shift of the  $\varepsilon_1$  spectrum with  $C_{\text{total}}$ . From the result shown in Fig. 3, the dielectric function modeling of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  can be performed to some extent. Nevertheless, the application area of the model is rather limited, as  $a\text{-Si:H}$  properties are represented simply by  $C_{\text{total}}$  in this case.

## B. $\text{SiH}_n$ local bonding structures

Figure 4 shows the IR absorption spectra of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers for (a)  $T_s = 130^\circ\text{C}$  and (b)  $T_s = 80\text{--}310^\circ\text{C}$ . The absorption spectra in Fig. 4 have been obtained using Eq. (1). We analyzed all the ATR spectra assuming the four Gaussian peaks shown in Fig. 4(a). As mentioned earlier, the IR peaks at  $\sim 2000\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $\sim 2080\text{ cm}^{-1}$  have been assigned to  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  stretching modes, respectively. In the ATR analyses, we also included the weak IR peaks observed at  $\sim 2180\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $\sim 2250\text{ cm}^{-1}$  that are assigned to  $\text{SiH}_2(\text{O}_2)$  and  $\text{SiH}(\text{O}_3)$

TABLE I. Tauc-Lorentz parameters extracted from the fitting analysis of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  dielectric functions shown in Fig. 1 and  $\text{SiH}_n$  hydrogen contents deduced from Fig. 4(b).

Substrate temperature $T_s$ ( $^\circ\text{C}$ )	Tauc-Lorentz parameters <sup>a</sup>				Hydrogen contents	
	$A$ (eV)	$E_g$ (eV)	$E_0$ (eV)	$\varepsilon_1(\infty)$	$C_{\text{SiH}}$ (at. %)	$C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ (at. %)
80	199.37	1.744	3.673	0.920	$8.7 \pm 0.3$	$13.1 \pm 0.6$
130	207.94	1.717	3.670	0.597	$8.9 \pm 0.3$	$8.3 \pm 0.6$
180	211.90	1.688	3.656	0.440	$9.0 \pm 0.3$	$6.1 \pm 0.6$
230	214.05	1.659	3.649	0.309	$8.0 \pm 0.3$	$3.6 \pm 0.6$
280	217.98	1.627	3.637	0.073	$7.1 \pm 0.3$	$1.1 \pm 0.6$
310	217.28	1.614	3.626	0.080	$5.4 \pm 0.3$	$1.1 \pm 0.6$

<sup>a</sup> $C = 2.33$  eV (fixed).

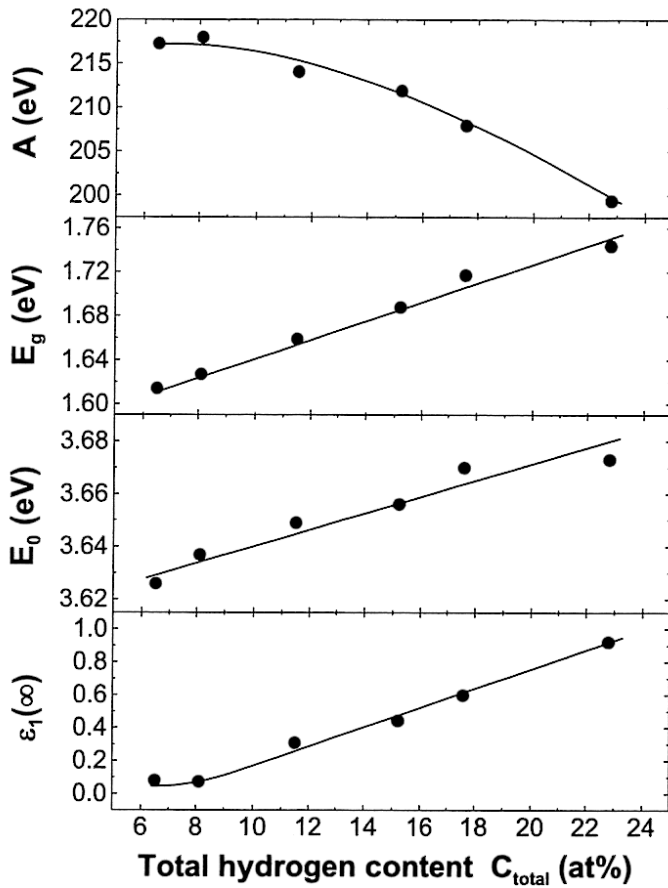


FIG. 3. Tauc-Lorentz parameters extracted from the *a*-Si:H dielectric functions in Fig. 1, plotted as a function of the total hydrogen content  $C_{\text{total}}$  in the *a*-Si:H layers.

bonding states, respectively.<sup>57,58</sup> As shown in Fig. 4(a), the total sum of the four peaks, indicated by the thick solid line, provides a good fitting to the measured ATR spectrum. The solid lines in Fig. 4(b) also show the result of the ATR analyses performed for the other *a*-Si:H layers.

In Fig. 4(b), the  $\text{SiH}_2$  absorption peak decreases drastically with increasing  $T_s$  and becomes constant at  $T_s \geq 280^\circ\text{C}$ , while the  $\text{SiH}$  peak shows a moderate variation. The peak position of the  $\text{SiH}$  bonding mode shifts slightly toward lower wave numbers. This is primarily caused by the variation of the measurement temperature, since the ATR spectra shown in Fig. 4 were obtained at the *a*-Si:H deposition temperatures. As reported previously,<sup>59</sup> both  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  peaks shift toward lower wave numbers with increasing the measurement temperature. In this study, the real-time spectra have been used for the analysis to remove the contribution of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  interface layer described in Sec. III.

Figure 5 shows  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  estimated from the ATR spectra in Fig. 4(b), plotted as a function of  $T_s$ . The actual values in Fig. 5 have been shown in Table I. In Fig. 5 and Table I, the confidence limits for  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  determined from the Gaussian peak fitting are shown. As confirmed from Fig. 5, with increasing  $T_s$ ,  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  reduces strongly up to  $T_s = 280^\circ\text{C}$  and shows a constant value of 1.1 at.% above  $280^\circ\text{C}$ . On the other hand,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  is constant at  $\sim 9$  at.% in the low-temperature region ( $T_s \leq 180^\circ\text{C}$ ), and decreases gradually at

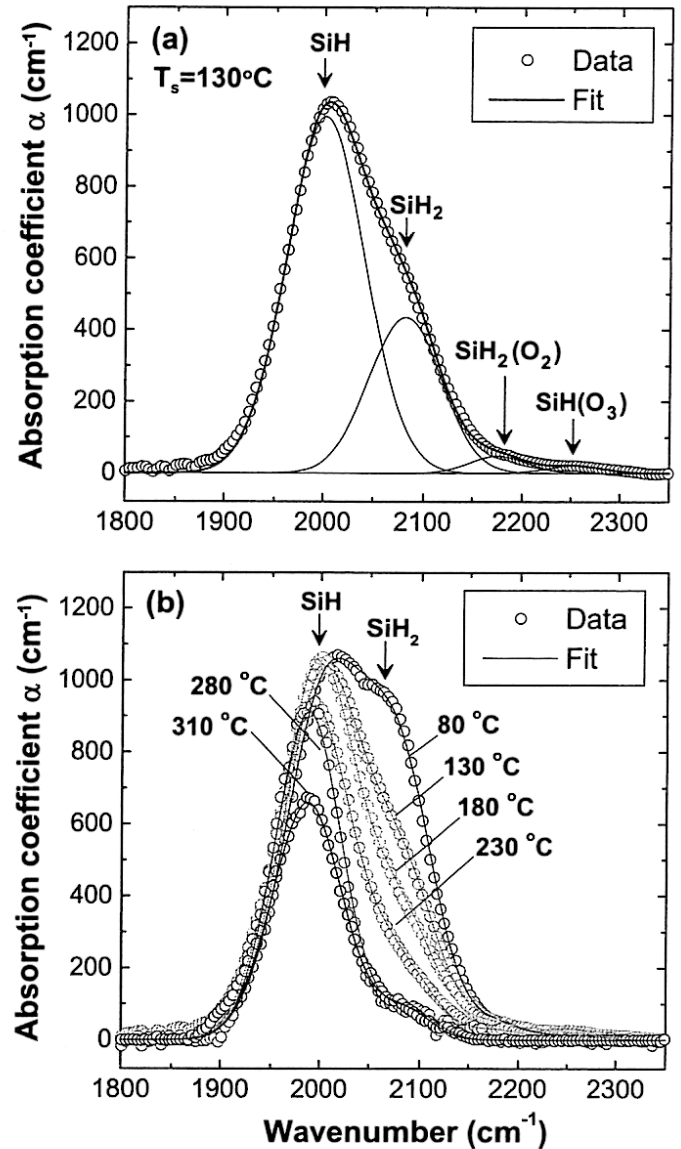


FIG. 4. (Color online) IR absorption spectra of the *a*-Si:H layers for (a)  $T_s = 130^\circ\text{C}$  and (b)  $T_s = 80$ – $310^\circ\text{C}$ . The solid lines show the results of the peak deconvolution analyses using the four Gaussian peaks in (a).

$T_s \geq 230^\circ\text{C}$ . A similar variation of the  $\text{SiH}_n$  contents versus  $T_s$  has been reported previously.<sup>60</sup> The result in Fig. 5 indicates clearly that H desorption during the *a*-Si:H growth occurs predominantly from H-rich structures that lead to the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bond formation at  $T_s < 280^\circ\text{C}$ , whereas the  $\text{SiH}$  bonding state is more thermally stable.

### C. Dielectric function model

From the results described above, we have established a dielectric function model based on the *a*-Si:H local network structures. In particular, we find that the amplitude of the *a*-Si:H  $\epsilon_2$  peak is described completely by  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in the *a*-Si:H layer. Figure 6 shows (a) the  $\epsilon_2$  peak value of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in Fig. 1 and (b)  $n_\infty$ , plotted as a function of  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in the *a*-Si:H layer. The  $\epsilon_2$  peak value in Fig. 6(a) simply represents the  $\epsilon_2$  value at the peak position around 3.6 eV, while  $n_\infty$  in



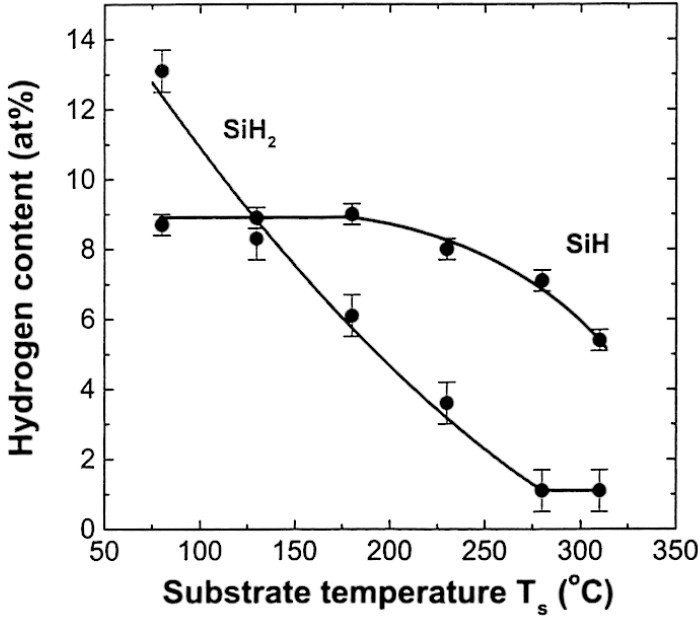


FIG. 5. (Color online)  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  contents in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers, plotted as a function of the substrate temperature for the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  deposition.

Fig. 6(b) shows  $n$  at  $\sim 0$  eV estimated from the Tauc-Lorentz parameters in Table I. It can be seen that the  $\epsilon_2$  peak value reduces quite linearly with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . This relationship can be confirmed easily by comparing the amplitude of the  $\epsilon_2$  peaks in Fig. 1(b) with  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in Fig. 5. Specifically, when  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  increases with constant  $C_{\text{SiH}} \sim 9$  at.% at  $T_s \leq 180^\circ\text{C}$ , the amplitude of the  $\epsilon_2$  spectra reduces strongly. On the contrary, when  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  changes with constant  $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 1.1$  at.% at  $T_s \geq 280^\circ\text{C}$ , there is no variation in the  $\epsilon_2$  peak amplitude. As confirmed from Fig. 6(b), on the other hand,  $n_\infty$  of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  also decreases linearly with  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . Quite interestingly,  $n_\infty$  of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  is higher than that of  $c\text{-Si}$  ( $n_\infty = 3.42$ ) when  $C_{\text{SiH}_2} < 9$  at.%. The higher  $n_\infty$  in  $a\text{-Si:H}$  at low  $C_{\text{total}}$  has also been confirmed previously.<sup>55,61</sup> The observed increase in  $n_\infty$  could be explained by the introduction of additional Si atoms by the ion bombardment in PECVD.

As mentioned earlier, the  $\epsilon_2$  peak shows the fundamental light absorption in  $a\text{-Si:H}$ . Thus the reduction in the  $\epsilon_2$  peak amplitude strongly suggests the decrease in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  film density due to the microvoid formation in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  network. Here, we assume that the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  decreases with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  by the formation of microvoids terminated with  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonds. The reduction in  $n_\infty$  with  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  is also consistent with our hypothesis. On the other hand, the  $\epsilon_2$  peak amplitude is rather independent of  $C_{\text{SiH}}$ . This phenomenon indicates that the  $\text{SiH}$  bonding state is embedded into dense  $a\text{-Si:H}$  network structures with no significant void fraction.

From the above hypothesis, we have constructed a new dielectric function model for  $a\text{-Si:H}$ , further assuming that  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in the visible/UV region is determined completely by  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . In particular,  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  has been modeled by taking into account two important effects; namely, (i) the amplitude reduction of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  with  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  due to the  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid formation, and (ii) the shift of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  toward higher energies with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . In this study,

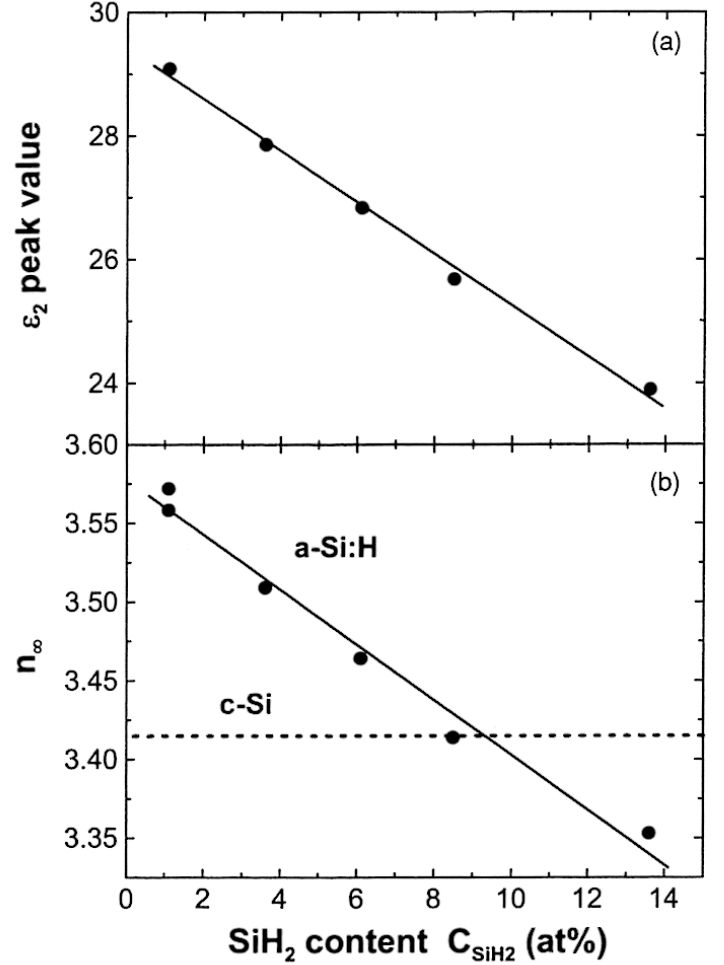


FIG. 6. (Color online) (a)  $\epsilon_2$  peak value and (b) high-frequency refractive index  $n_\infty$  of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers, plotted as a function of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  content in the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers.

the formation of the microvoids surrounded by  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonds is expressed by applying EMA:

$$f_{a\text{-Si}} \frac{\epsilon_{a\text{-Si}}(E) - \epsilon_m(E)}{\epsilon_{a\text{-Si}}(E) + 2\epsilon_m(E)} + f_{\text{cav}} \frac{\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E) - \epsilon_m(E)}{\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E) + 2\epsilon_m(E)} = 0, \quad (11)$$

where  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si}}(E)$  and  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E)$  denote the dielectric functions of  $a\text{-Si}$  without H and  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid cavity, respectively. It should be noted that  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E)$  is not necessary to be  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E) = 1$ , as a spherical cavity assumed for the  $\text{SiH}_2$  microvoids may include the effect of microscopic atomic configurations. In Eq. (11),  $f_{a\text{-Si}}$  and  $f_{\text{cav}}$  ( $f_{a\text{-Si}} + f_{\text{cav}} = 1$ ) represent the volume fractions of the  $a\text{-Si}$  and microvoid cavity. By solving Eq. (11), the dielectric function of the  $a\text{-Si}$  network with the  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid cavity is calculated as  $\epsilon_m(E)$ . On the other hand, the shift of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  toward higher energies with  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  can be confirmed from Figs. 1 and 3. We have modeled the energy shift simply by

$$\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E) = \epsilon_m(E - \Delta E_{\text{SiH}} - \Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2}), \quad (12)$$

where  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2}$  show the shift values of the dielectric function for  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ , respectively.

In our analysis,  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  in Eq. (11) was represented by  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  deposited at  $T_s = 310^\circ\text{C}$ , since this  $a\text{-Si:H}$  film shows the lowest H incorporation. To suppress the spectral noise of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  for  $T_s = 310^\circ\text{C}$ , the Tauc-Lorentz

parameters shown in Table I (310 °C) were used. For the actual calculation of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  using Eq. (12), however,  $f_{\text{cav}}$  and  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E)$  in Eq. (11) and  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in Eq. (12) should be determined. Here, we assume that  $f_{\text{cav}}$ ,  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}}$ , and  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2}$  vary linearly with  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  or  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ , and are given by

$$f_{\text{cav}} = V_{\text{cav}} \Delta C_{\text{SiH}_2}, \quad (13)$$

$$\Delta E_{\text{SiH}} = k_1 \Delta C_{\text{SiH}}, \quad (14)$$

$$\Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2} = k_2 \Delta C_{\text{SiH}_2}, \quad (15)$$

where  $V_{\text{cav}}$  shows the volume factor for the  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid cavity, and  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  indicate the coefficients for the energy shifts, respectively. In Eqs. (13)–(15),  $\Delta C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $\Delta C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  show the change in  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  from the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layer deposited at  $T_s = 310^\circ\text{C}$ , and are given by  $\Delta C_{\text{SiH}} = C_{\text{SiH}} - 5.4 \text{ at.}\%$  and  $\Delta C_{\text{SiH}_2} = C_{\text{SiH}_2} - 1.1 \text{ at.}\%$ . From  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ , therefore, the values of  $f_{\text{cav}}$ ,  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}}$ , and  $\Delta E_{\text{SiH}_2}$  can be obtained quite easily, if  $(V_{\text{cav}}, k_1, k_2)$  are known. We have determined these values from the fitting of all the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  dielectric functions obtained at  $T_s \leq 280^\circ\text{C}$ . In addition, we assumed  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}(E)$  as an energy-independent parameter.

Figure 7 shows the dielectric functions of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers deposited at  $T_s = 80\text{--}280^\circ\text{C}$ . The solid lines in Fig. 7 show the fitting result obtained from the above analysis. As shown in Fig. 7, the calculation result shows almost perfect agreement with the experimental data, supporting the validity of our dielectric function model. From this result, we concluded that the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  decreases with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  by the formation of microvoids terminated with  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonds. So far, a similar  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid structure has already been proposed.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, our result provides confirmation that the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  is determined almost completely by the  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid structure. The parameter values of  $(V_{\text{cav}}, k_1, k_2, \epsilon_{\text{cav}})$ , estimated by minimizing the fitting error, are  $V_{\text{cav}} = 1.01\%/ \text{at.}\%$ ,  $k_1 = 9.4 \text{ meV/at.}\%$ ,  $k_2 = 4.0 \text{ meV/at.}\%$ , and  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}} = 3.5$ , respectively. The result of Fig. 7 indicates clearly that the optical properties of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  in the visible/UV region are completely determined by the  $\text{SiH}_n$  local network structures; in other words, the fundamental  $a\text{-Si:H}$  network structure does not change with the H incorporation, and only the  $\text{SiH}_2$ -microvoid formation and the energy shift induced by  $\text{SiH}$  and  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding states occur. If our model is applied,  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  can be calculated from only two parameters: i.e.,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . Conversely,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  can be extracted from the fitting analysis of experimental  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$ . Figure 8 shows the plane view of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  network structure with the microvoid terminated with  $\text{SiH}_2$  and the  $\text{SiH}$  bonds embedded into the dense network. The network structure of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  will be discussed in Sec. V B.

#### D. Application of the $a\text{-Si:H}$ dielectric function model

In order to find the versatility of the above  $a\text{-Si:H}$ -dielectric-function model, we have estimated  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  of  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers deposited with different conditions using our model. Table II summarizes  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  of three different  $a\text{-Si:H}$  layers deduced from the SE analyses. For comparison,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  determined from the direct characterization by ATR

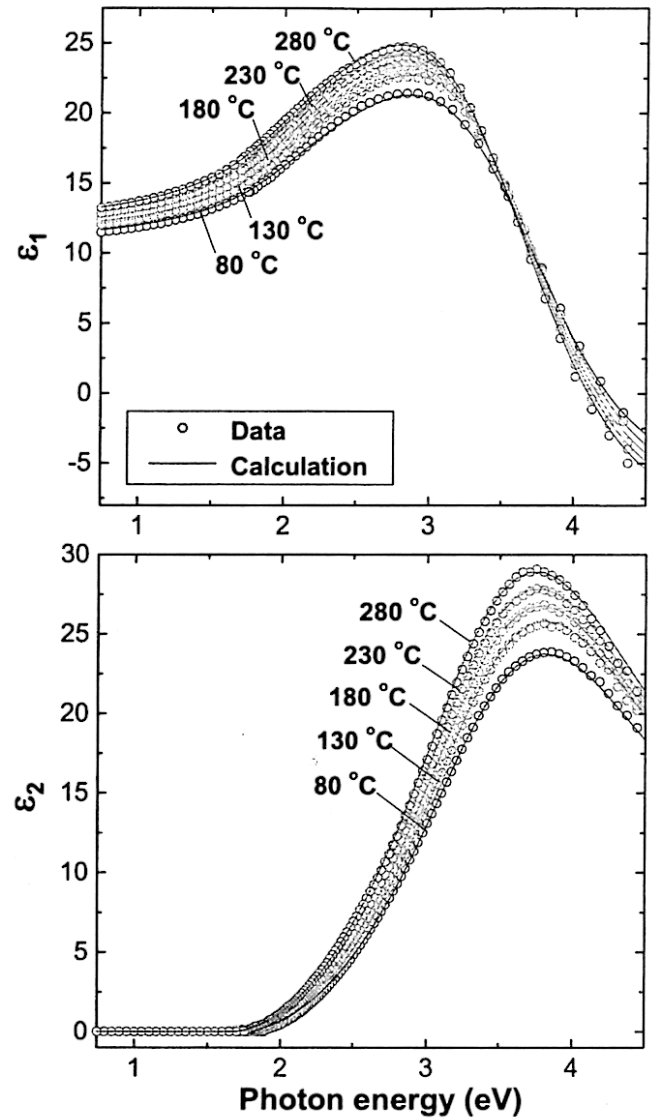


FIG. 7. (Color online) Analysis of the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  dielectric functions for  $T_s = 80\text{--}280^\circ\text{C}$ . The solid lines represent the result of the fitting analysis using the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  dielectric function model in this study.

are also shown in Table II. The error ranges for the SE analysis in Table II are denoted by the original error ranges in the ATR analysis, as the errors in the ATR deconvolution analysis are much larger than the confidence limits obtained in the SE fitting analyses.

It can be seen from Table II that  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  determined by SE and ATR agree quite well. This confirms our conclusion that  $a\text{-Si:H}$  optical properties are determined by the  $a\text{-Si:H}$  local network structures. In general, when  $P_{\text{rf}}$  is increased,  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  increases, together with the growth rate of  $a\text{-Si:H}$ .<sup>16–18</sup> This increase in  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  at higher  $P_{\text{rf}}$  is well reproduced in the SE and ATR results in Table II. In the case of sample 3,  $\text{H}_2$  gas was introduced into the reactor with a dilution ratio of  $[\text{H}_2]/[\text{SiH}_4] = 10$ , and  $T_s$  and  $P_{\text{rf}}$  were varied. Even in this case,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  estimated by SE show good agreement with those determined by ATR. As confirmed from Table II,  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  obtained from SE agrees well with that obtained from ATR with the differences of  $\leq 0.2 \text{ at.}\%$ . For  $C_{\text{SiH}}$ , however,

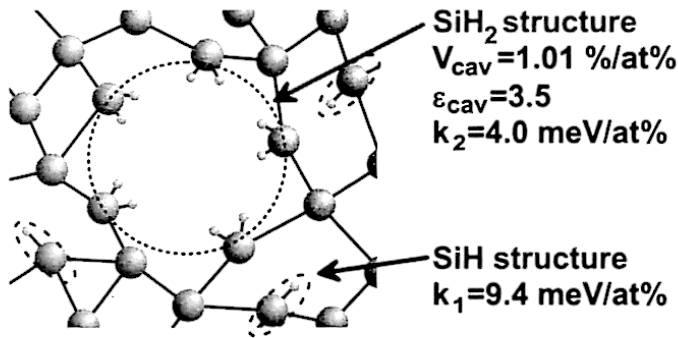


FIG. 8. (Color online) Plane view of the  $a$ -Si:H network structure with the  $\text{SiH}_2$  microvoid and the  $\text{SiH}$  structure embedded into the dense Si network.

the difference between the SE and ATR results increases. This originates from the fact that  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  changes only slightly with  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and the sensitivity for  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  is much lower. In our model, therefore,  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  can be estimated accurately from a large variation in the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$ , while  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  is determined from the energy shift of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  with less sensitivity.

As described in Sec. I, the characterization of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state is quite important to deduce the light-induced degradation in  $a$ -Si:H solar cells. In the case of the solar cell devices, however, the evaluation of  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  has been rather difficult, as IR light does not transmit glass or stainless-steel substrates on which the solar cells are fabricated. So far, the IR measurement of  $a$ -Si:H layers formed on these substrates has been performed by placing an attenuated total reflection (ATR) prism on the substrates.<sup>18</sup> The quantitative analysis of  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  is quite difficult in this case. If the  $a$ -Si:H dielectric function model developed in this study is applied, however,  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in the  $a$ -Si:H layers formed on the glass and stainless-steel substrates can be assessed quite easily from the SE analyses.

On the other hand, as confirmed from Table II, our model provides the consistent results for various  $a$ -Si:H layers fabricated by different  $T_s$ ,  $P_{\text{rf}}$ , and hydrogen dilution. For other  $a$ -Si:H layers deposited with quite different growth conditions or techniques, our dielectric function model may show some limitations. Although such limitations have not been found in this study, the application range of our model should be investigated further.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Assignment of IR peaks

Since the beginning of  $a$ -Si:H researches, the IR peak observed at  $\sim 2000 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  has been assigned to the  $\text{SiH}$  stretching mode vibration,<sup>28–33</sup> while the interpretation of the IR peak observed at  $\sim 2080 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  has been highly controversial; the peak has been attributed to the different stretching modes of (i)  $\text{SiH}_2$  overlapped with  $\text{SiH}_3$ ,<sup>28,31</sup> (ii)  $\text{SiH}_2$  overlapped with  $\text{SiH}$ ,<sup>33</sup> (iii)  $\text{SiH}_2$  with chainlike  $(\text{SiH}_2)_n$ ,<sup>29,30,32</sup> or (iv) clustered  $\text{SiH}$ .<sup>26,31</sup> Most of the studies reported so far, however, conclude that there is the contribution of the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state for the IR peak at  $\sim 2080 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . On the other hand, the IR spectra of  $a$ -Si:H layers often show a weak IR peak at  $\sim 890 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>28–31</sup> This peak has been assigned to the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bending mode unanimously<sup>28,30,32,33</sup> and appears only when the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding state exists. Recent IR studies show that the integrated absorbance of this  $\text{SiH}_2$  bending mode at  $\sim 890 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  shows almost perfect correlation with that of the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak.<sup>60,62</sup> This fact simply indicates that the IR peak at  $\sim 2080 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  originates from the  $\text{SiH}_2$  stretching mode with no major contributions from other modes. Moreover, as confirmed from Fig. 4, the half width of the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak is essentially similar to that of the  $\text{SiH}$  stretching mode. If the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak has a contribution other than the  $\text{SiH}_2$  stretching mode, the peak width is expected to become much broader. Accordingly, we have assigned the  $2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak to the  $\text{SiH}_2$  bonding mode.

Previously, on the other hand, the presence of the  $(\text{SiH}_2)_n$  chain structures in  $a$ -Si:H has also been suggested from a sharp IR peak at  $\sim 840 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , associated with the wagging mode<sup>29–32</sup> or bending mode.<sup>29,33</sup> For  $a$ -Si:H layers deposited by PECVD using  $\text{SiH}_4$ , the relationship between the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  and  $\sim 840\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peaks is nonlinear, although the integrated absorbance of the  $\sim 840\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak increases with that of the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak.<sup>60</sup> It should be emphasized that the  $\sim 840\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak appears only in specific  $a$ -Si:H growth conditions, such as  $a$ -Si:H deposition using a Ar and  $\text{SiH}_4$  gas mixture<sup>25,28–31,62</sup> and  $a$ -Si:H deposition at high growth rates ( $>1.7 \text{ Å/s}$ ).<sup>60</sup> In fact, in our  $a$ -Si:H layers, the presence of the  $\sim 840\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak has not been confirmed, probably due to the low growth rate of  $0.4 \text{ Å/s}$  in these layers. In this study, therefore, we have ruled out the possibility of the  $(\text{SiH}_2)_n$ -chain structure formation in the microvoid shown in Fig. 8.

As described in Sec. III,  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  have been estimated using proportionality constants of  $A_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2} = 2.2 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ .<sup>55</sup> So far, various values have also been reported as the proportionality constants of the  $\text{SiH}_n$

TABLE II.  $\text{SiH}_n$  hydrogen contents in  $a$ -Si:H layers obtained from SE and ATR with different growth conditions.

Sample	Growth conditions	Hydrogen contents by SE (at.%)	Hydrogen contents by ATR (at.%)
1	$P_{\text{rf}} = 13 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ , $T_s = 180 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 6.3 \pm 0.6$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 6.1 \pm 0.6$
2	$P_{\text{rf}} = 38 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ , $T_s = 180 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 8.1 \pm 0.6$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 8.6 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 8.0 \pm 0.6$
3	$P_{\text{rf}} = 64 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ , $T_s = 195 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ , $[\text{H}_2]/[\text{SiH}_4] = 10$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 9.8 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 6.1 \pm 0.6$	$C_{\text{SiH}} = 9.2 \pm 0.3$ $C_{\text{SiH}_2} = 6.2 \pm 0.6$



modes.<sup>31,34,63,64</sup> Even if we adopt other values for  $A_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2}$ , however, only the coefficients of  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  change and our dielectric function model is still valid. Thus it should be noted that  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  and the resulting  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  represent the values when  $A_{\text{SiH}} = 9.0 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2} = 2.2 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  are used.

### B. *a*-Si:H network structure

As described in Sec. I, several measurement techniques confirmed the formation of the microvoid structures in *a*-Si:H. In particular, the structural studies using SAXS indicate that the microvoid density in *a*-Si:H increases at lower  $T_s$  with a constant void size (diameter) of  $\sim 8 \text{ \AA}$ .<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the microvoid fraction determined by SAXS has been reported to vary linearly with the integrated absorbance of the  $\sim 2080\text{-cm}^{-1}$  peak<sup>20</sup> (or  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  in this study). The above SAXS results are quite consistent with our result. In our model,  $f_{\text{cav}}$  in the *a*-Si:H increases linearly with  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  ( $f_{\text{cav}} = V_{\text{cav}} \Delta C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ ) with constant  $V_{\text{cav}} = 1.01\%/ \text{at.}\%$ . On the contrary, if the microvoid size changes, the relationship between  $f_{\text{cav}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  is expected to become nonlinear. Accordingly, the excellent fitting assuming constant  $V_{\text{cav}}$  supports the variation in the microvoid density rather than the microvoid size with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  or decreasing  $T_s$ . It should be noted that the void size itself cannot be estimated from the analysis using EMA, as EMA assumes the size-independent optical properties for mixed phase materials.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, we obtained  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}} = 3.5$  ( $n_{\text{cav}} = 1.87$ ) from the fitting analysis of Fig. 7. The value of  $\epsilon_{\text{cav}}$  is larger than 1 and indicates the presence of SiH<sub>2</sub> or Si-Si bonds in the microvoid cavity. So far, it has been reported from IR<sup>65,66</sup> and NMR<sup>27,39,40</sup> measurements that the microvoids in the *a*-Si:H network contain a large amount of H<sub>2</sub> molecules.

Our result shows that the SiH local structure is optically dense and does not introduce additional microvoids. Recently, Smets *et al.* proposed that the SiH bonds exist mainly at vacancy sites, terminating the dangling bonds in the vacancies.<sup>64</sup> Such a SiH structure is consistent with our result, as a small number of the vacancies do not reduce the material density significantly and are not detectable in our analysis. As mentioned earlier, the SiH local structure can be eliminated only at high  $T_s$  and is thermally stable. Thus the isolated SiH structure is depicted in Fig. 8, although the clustered SiH at the vacancy sites is still possible.

### C. Electronic states of *a*-Si:H

The optical transitions in *a*-Si:H are generally represented by the random network model<sup>67-70</sup> that allows the light absorption with no momentum conservation.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the  $\epsilon_2$  peak position of  $\sim 3.6 \text{ eV}$  in *a*-Si:H roughly corresponds to the direct optical transitions at the  $\Gamma$  and  $\Lambda$  points (3.4 eV) and X point (4.3 eV) in *c*-Si.<sup>71</sup> Qualitatively, the broad spectral feature of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  can be interpreted by the random optical transitions in the energy-momentum space near the  $\Gamma$ ,  $\Lambda$ , and X points in *c*-Si.<sup>41</sup> Thus the optical transition in *a*-Si:H is influenced strongly by the local network structure, and the long-range disorder is not always necessary for the *a*-Si:H modeling.<sup>41,67,69,70,72</sup>

Theoretical calculations performed for *a*-Si:H show that the density of states (DOS) near the valence-band top originates primarily from the Si 3*p* orbital, while the DOS of the conduction-band bottom consists of the mixture of the *s*- and *p*-like orbitals.<sup>70,72</sup> The DOS of the *a*-Si:H valence band has been characterized using x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS).<sup>41,73</sup> Specifically, von Roedern *et al.* found that the top of the *a*-Si:H valence band shifts toward deeper energy positions as  $C_{\text{total}}$  in the *a*-Si:H increases.<sup>73</sup> It has been accepted widely that the energy states of the SiH<sub>*n*</sub> bonding are created far from the Fermi energy position and located deeply into the valence band.<sup>69,70,72,73</sup> As a result, the valence-band top shifts with  $C_{\text{total}}$  due to the reduction in the DOS by the Si(3*p*)-H(1*s*) interaction.<sup>69</sup> The tight-binding calculation for *a*-Si:H also confirmed the shift of the valence-band position with  $C_{\text{total}}$ .<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, the conduction-band bottom is less affected by the presence of the SiH<sub>*n*</sub> bonding states, and the inverse photoemission experiment showed no variation in the conduction-band edge position with H.<sup>74</sup>

In our model, the band-gap widening in *a*-Si:H, owing to the change in the valence-band position, has been reproduced by the shift of the whole  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  toward higher energies with increasing  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ . An important observation is the difference in the energy shift coefficients for  $C_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$ ; i.e.,  $k_1$  and  $k_2$ . As confirmed from Fig. 8,  $k_1 = 9.4 \text{ meV/at.}\%$  is much larger than  $k_2 = 4.0 \text{ meV/at.}\%$ . Although the values of  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  vary according to  $A_{\text{SiH}}$  and  $A_{\text{SiH}_2}$ , our result suggests that the SiH<sub>2</sub> bonding state is more localized and the interaction with the valence-band top is weaker, compared with the SiH bonding state, as reported previously.<sup>69</sup>

So far, the SiH<sub>2</sub> bonding state has been reported to show a strong correlation with the photoinduced degradation in *a*-Si:H.<sup>14-18</sup> The finding in this study further suggests that the degradation phenomenon occurs within the SiH<sub>2</sub>-microvoid structure. Nevertheless, the defect density created by the photoinduced degradation is of the order of  $\sim 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  (Refs. 15 and 17) and is far smaller than  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  ( $\sim 10^{21} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ). Thus it appears that specific local atomic structures with a density much smaller than  $C_{\text{SiH}_2}$  are involved in the actual photoinduced structural change. It has been reported that the presence of the  $\sim 2080 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  IR peak increases the Urbach edge parameter.<sup>13</sup> From this result, we suggest that the SiH<sub>2</sub>-microvoid structure enhances the formation of the tail state near the valence band.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The dielectric function and SiH<sub>*n*</sub> local bonding states of *a*-Si:H layers deposited at different substrate temperatures of  $T_s = 80\text{--}310^\circ\text{C}$  have been determined. We find that the amplitude of the *a*-Si:H dielectric function  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  decreases with increasing the SiH<sub>2</sub> content and is completely described by the density of the SiH<sub>2</sub> bonding state in *a*-Si:H. From this result, we concluded that the formation of the microvoids terminated with SiH<sub>2</sub> bonds occurs in the *a*-Si:H network with increasing the SiH<sub>2</sub> content or decreasing  $T_s$ . For the variation of the SiH bonding state, on the other hand, the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  shows a quite small change, indicating that the SiH local structure is embedded into the dense network structure. With increasing the SiH and SiH<sub>2</sub> contents, the whole *a*-Si:H

dielectric function is found to shift toward higher energies. From the above findings, we have established a dielectric function model by taking into account the two phenomena: (i) the SiH<sub>2</sub>-microvoid formation that reduces the amplitude of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  and (ii) the energy shifts of  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  induced by the SiH<sub>n</sub> bonding states. The effective-medium approximation has been applied to express the microvoid formation in the *a*-Si:H

network. Our model provides excellent fitting to  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  obtained using a wide variety of deposition conditions. From this result, we confirmed that the optical properties of *a*-Si:H in the visible/UV region are almost perfectly determined by the SiH and SiH<sub>2</sub> local network structures. As a result, we have developed a dielectric function model for  $\epsilon_{a\text{-Si:H}}(E)$  with only two variables of the SiH and SiH<sub>2</sub> contents.

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