

Sign-based Zero-Forcing Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O

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- Background
- State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O
- Conventional Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O
- Sign-based Zero-Forcing Adaptive Equalizer Control
- Implementation and Evaluation Results
- Summary

- Background
 - Applications of High-Speed I/O
 - Frequency-Dependent Channel Loss
 - Inter-Symbol Interference (ISI)
- State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O
- Conventional Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O
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Applications of High-Speed I/O

■ Application Channels

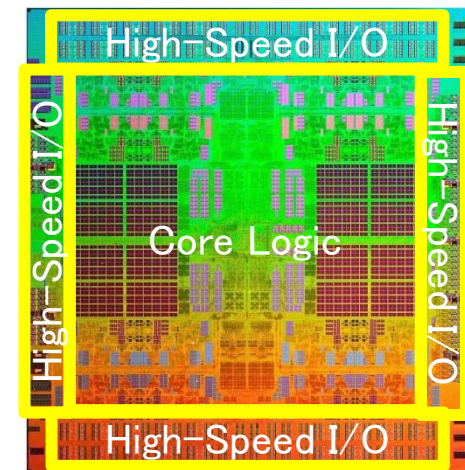
- On-board: Chip to chip with no connector
- Module I/F: Chip to module via 1 connector
- Backplane: Board to board via 2 connectors
- Cable: Rack to rack via 2 connectors

■ Examples

- Standard High-Speed Interfaces
 - OIF CEI, IEEE 802.3 Ethernet, PCI Express, etc
- Proprietary High-Speed Interfaces
 - CPU I/F, Bridge chip I/F, Switch chip I/F, etc

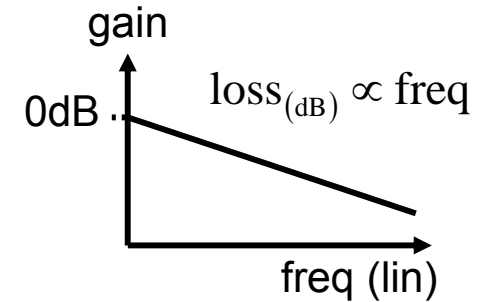
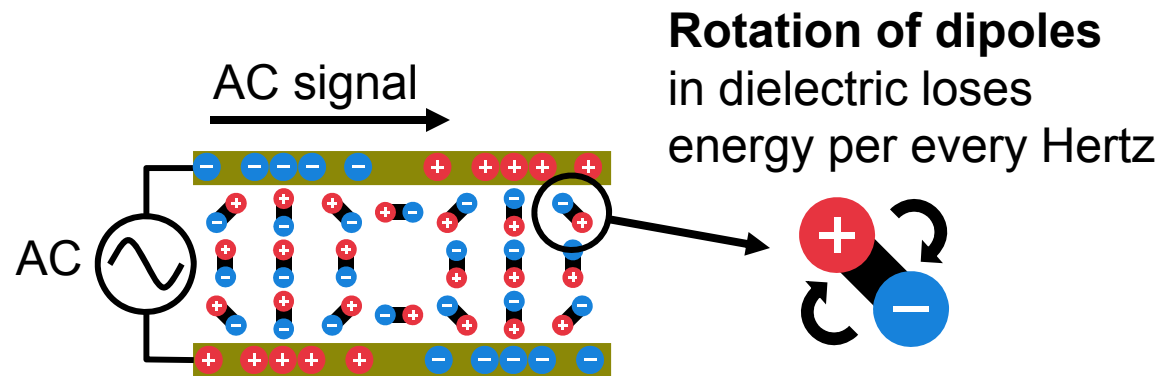
■ State-of-the-art Performance of HSIO

- Data rate 25~32Gbps per lane
- Channel loss 35~40dB at Nyquist frequency
- Channel length 0.3~1m PCB, 3~7m cable
- HSIO density 20~100+ lanes per chip

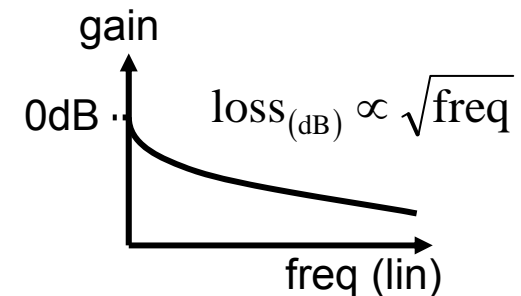
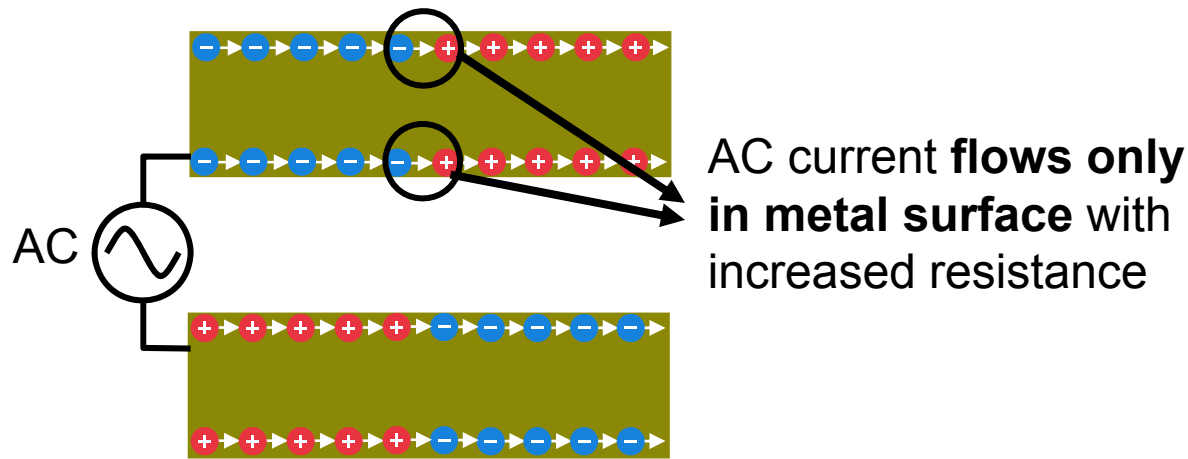


Frequency-Dependent Channel Loss^[1,2]

■ Dielectric Loss



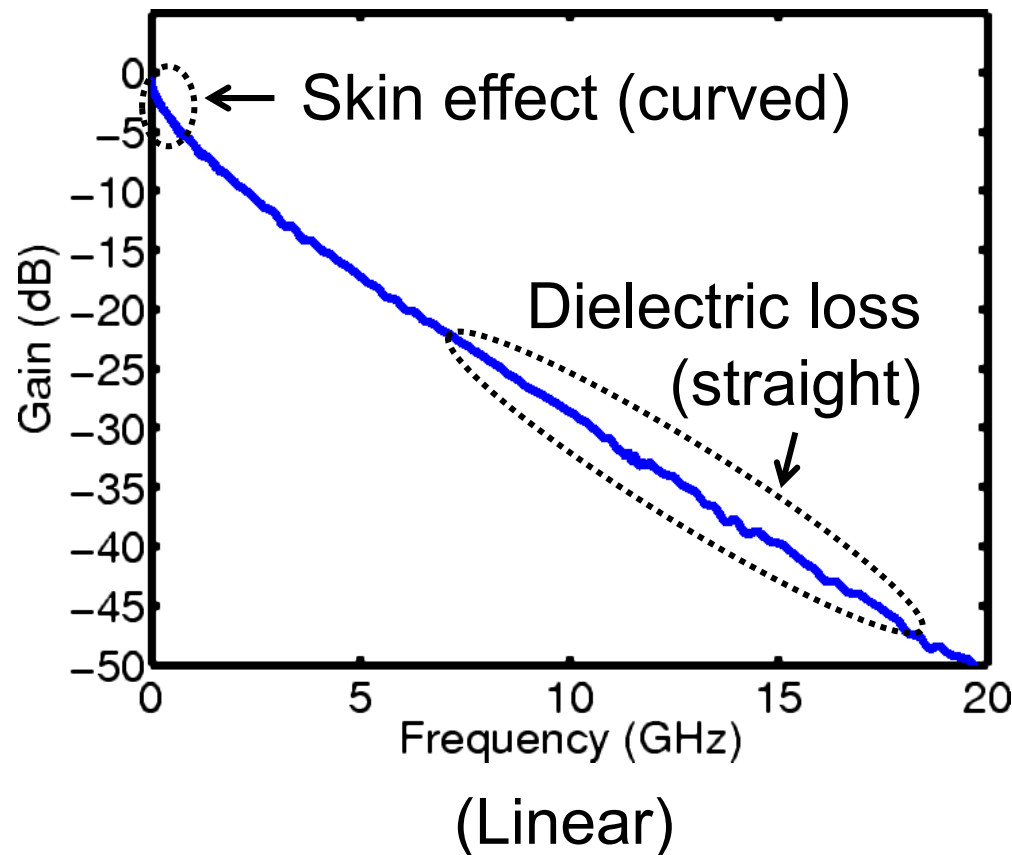
■ Skin Effect



Channel Loss Example (Linear Frequency Axis)

$$\text{loss (dB)} \propto k_1 \sqrt{f} + k_2 f$$

↑ ↑
Skin Effect Dielectric Loss



■ Skin effect

- Curved with concave up
- Primary cause at low freq

■ Dielectric loss

- Straight line
- Primary cause at high freq

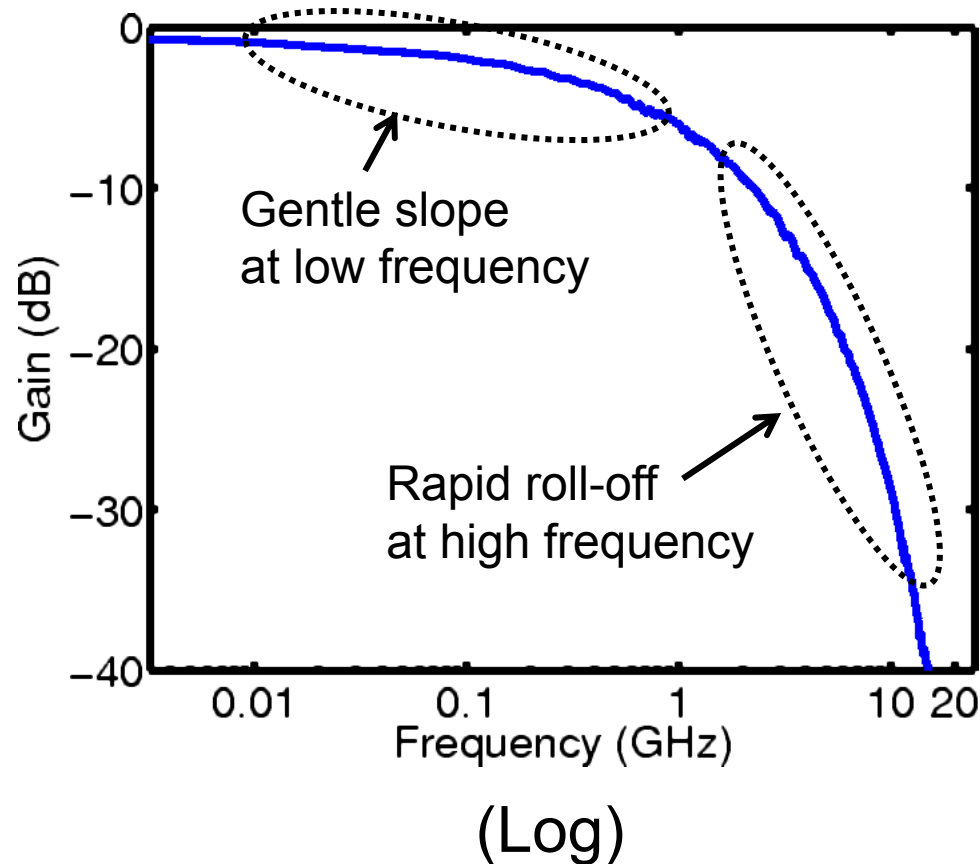
■ *We often overlook or neglect low-frequency loss*

- Loss is small
- Degenerated at DC and hardly recognized

Channel Loss Example (Log Frequency Axis)

$$\text{loss (dB)} \propto k_1 \sqrt{f} + k_2 f$$

↑ ↑
Skin Effect Dielectric Loss



Always exponential roll-off

- Regardless of skin effect or dielectric loss

Low-frequency loss

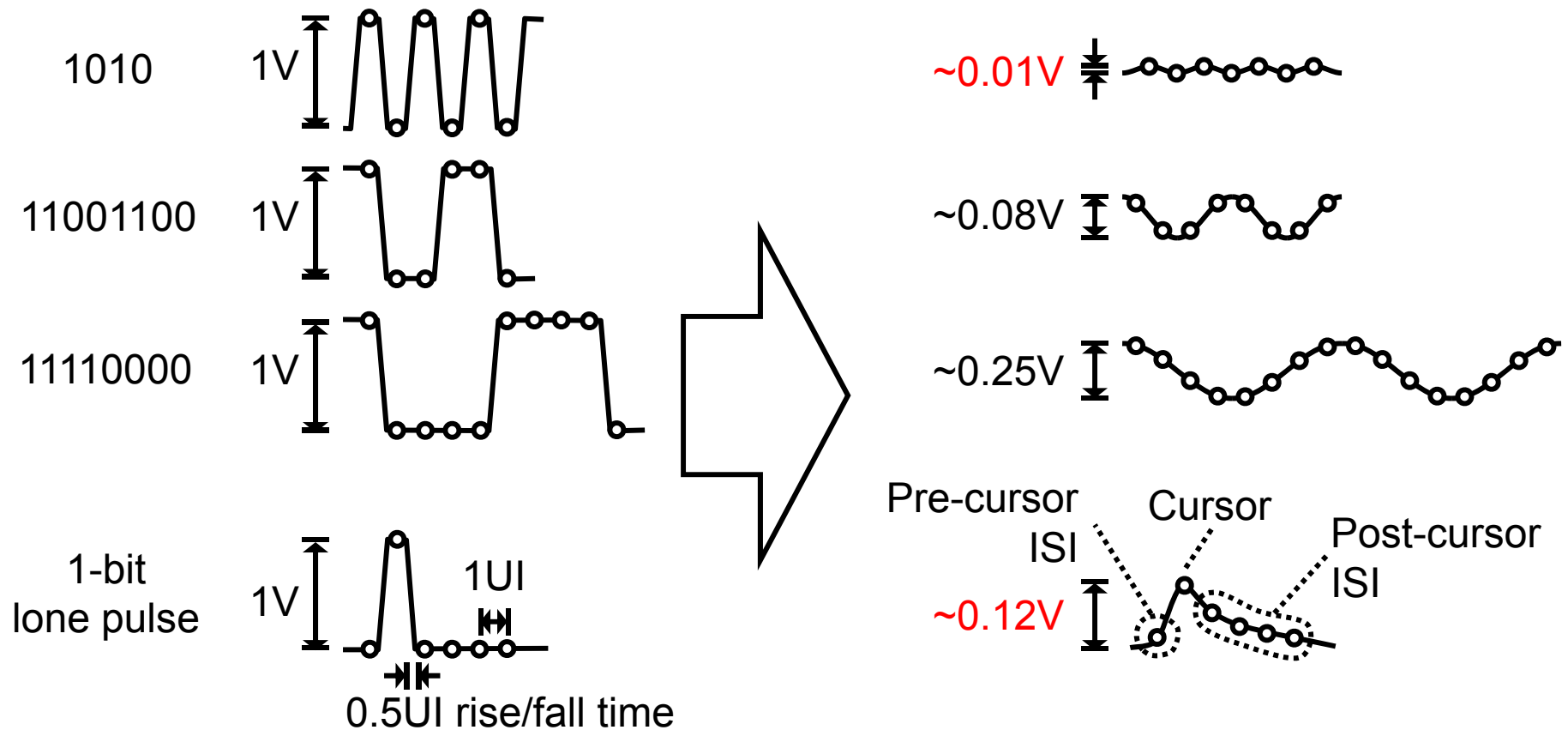
- Start as low as 10MHz
 - Skin depth 20um@10MHz
 - PCB trace thickness 35um
- Gentle slope
 - < 3dB/dec

Inter-Symbol Interference (ISI)



Loss **40.2dB** @ $f_b/2$
 23.6dB @ $f_b/4$

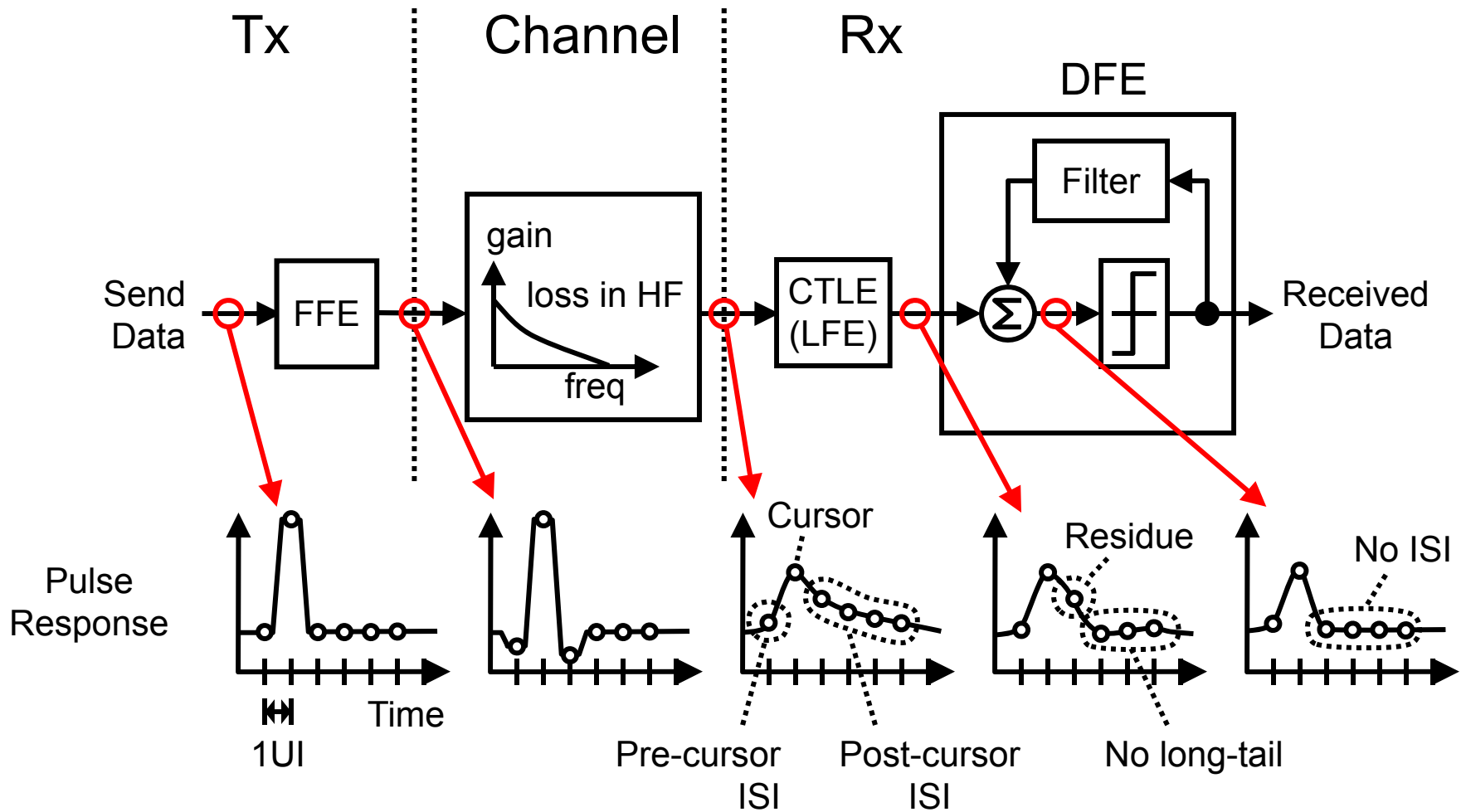
f_b : baud-rate frequency



UI: Unit Interval

- Background
- State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O
 - Conventional High-Frequency Equalizers
 - Overview
 - CTLE (Continuous-Time Linear Equalizer)
 - FFE (Feed-Forward Equalizer)
 - DFE (Decision-Feedback Equalizer)
 - Speculative DFE
 - Low-Frequency Equalizer
- Conventional Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O
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State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O



FFE: Feed-Forward Equalizer

CTLE: Continuous-Time Linear Equalizer

LFE: Low-Frequency Equalizer

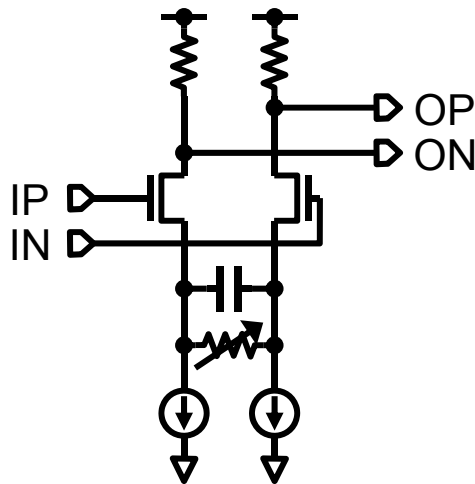
DFE: Decision-Feedback Equalizer

CTLE (Continuous-Time Linear Equalizer)^[3-7]

- Continuous-time high-pass filter

- Example

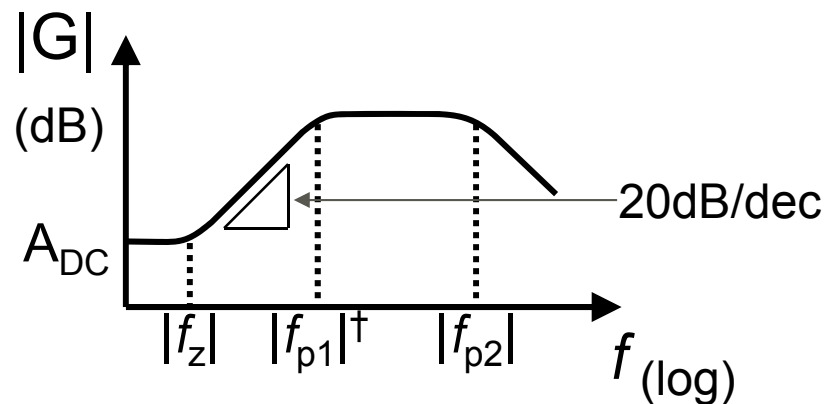
 - 1st order CTLE



Transfer Function in s domain:

$$G(s) = A_{DC} \frac{1 - \frac{s}{2\pi f_z}}{\left(1 - \frac{s}{2\pi f_{p1}}\right) \left(1 - \frac{s}{2\pi f_{p2}}\right)}$$

1 zero
2 poles



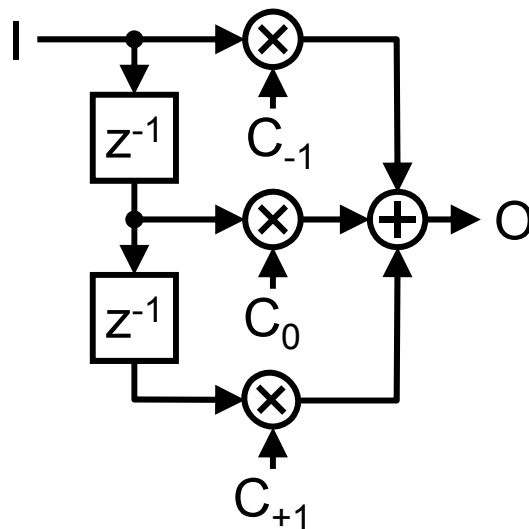
†: $|f_{p1}|$ is $\frac{1}{4} \sim \frac{1}{2}$ of baud-rate frequency.

FFE (Feed-Forward Equalizer)^[8-10]

■ Discrete-time high-pass filter

■ Example

■ 3-tap FFE



Transfer Function in z domain:

$$G(z) = C_{-1} + C_0 z^{-1} + C_{+1} z^{-2} = C_{-1} \frac{(z - z_1)(z - z_2)}{z^2}$$

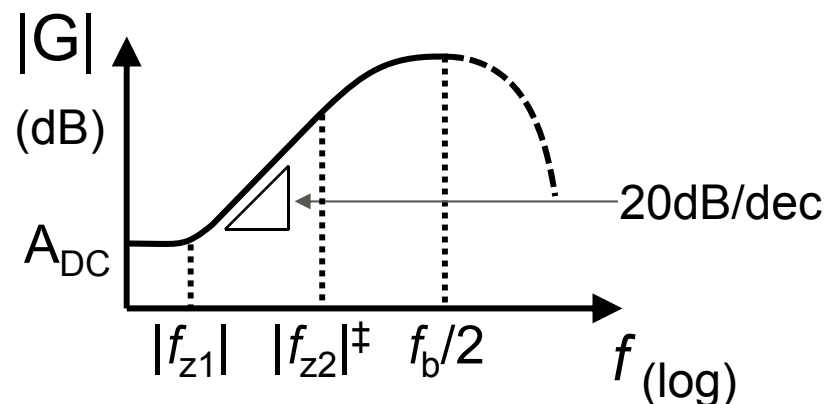
$$z = \exp(s/f_b)$$

$$z_1 = \exp(2\pi f_{z1}/f_b)$$

$$z_2 = \exp(2\pi f_{z2}/f_b)$$

2 zero

0 poles[†]

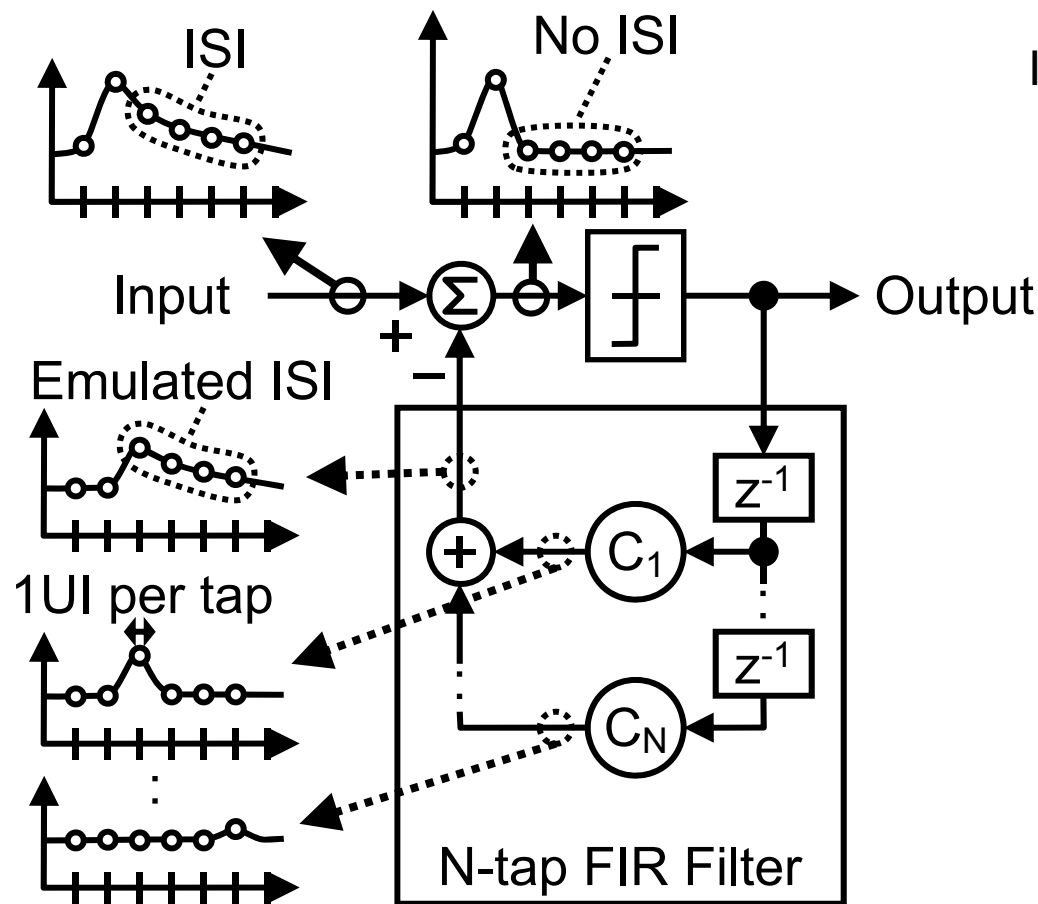


[†]: An FIR filter cannot have a pole. $f_b/2$ is not a pole, but the max effective frequency.

[‡]: f_{z1} (<0) on left half of s plane boosts gain. f_{z2} (>0) on right half of s plane adjusts phase.

DFE (Decision-Feedback Equalizer)^[11,12]

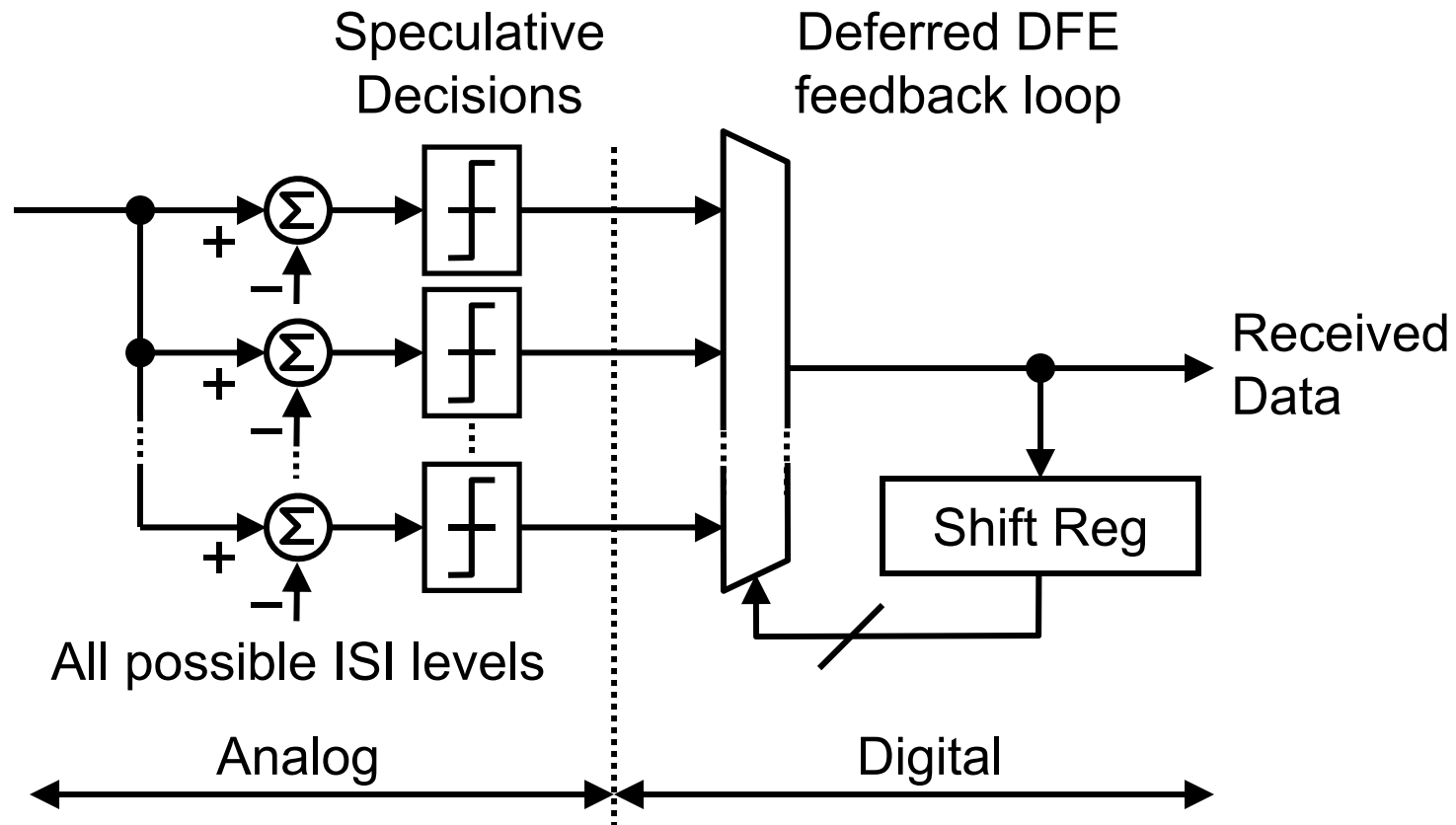
- Emulate ISI from previous decisions, and subtract it from input
- Example
 - N-tap DFE



ISI: Inter-Symbol Interference

Speculative DFE^[13,14]

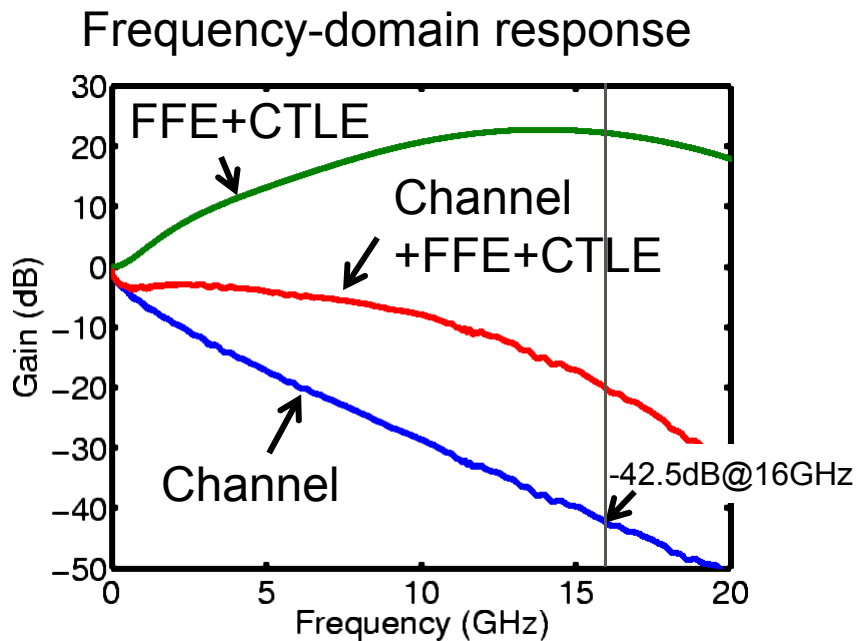
- Defer DFE feedback loop using speculative decisions



- Trade-off area/power for timing critical path

- Background
- **State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O**
 - Conventional High-Frequency Equalizers
 - Low-Frequency Equalizer
 - Performance Limit of Conventional High-Frequency Equalizers
 - Architecture of Low-Frequency Equalizer
 - Effect of Low-Frequency Equalizer
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Performance Limit of Conventional Equalizers

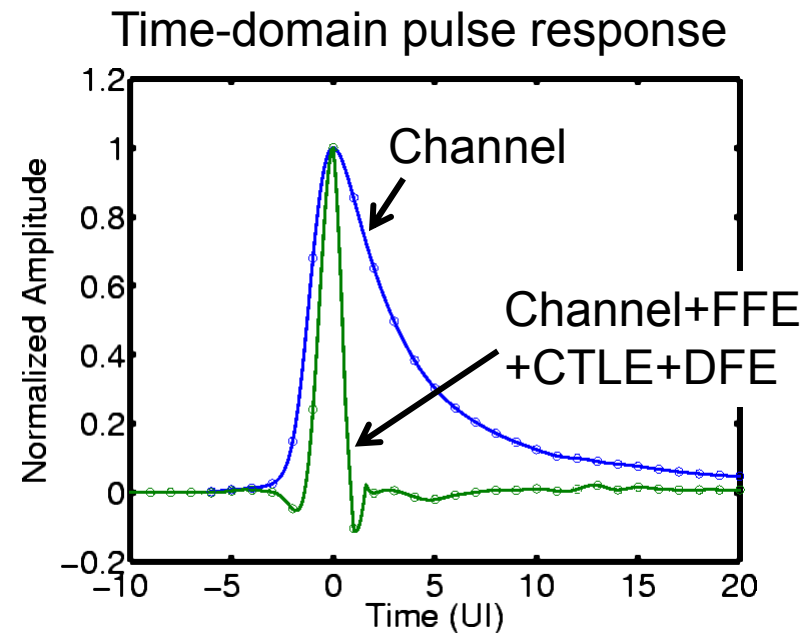


(Linear)

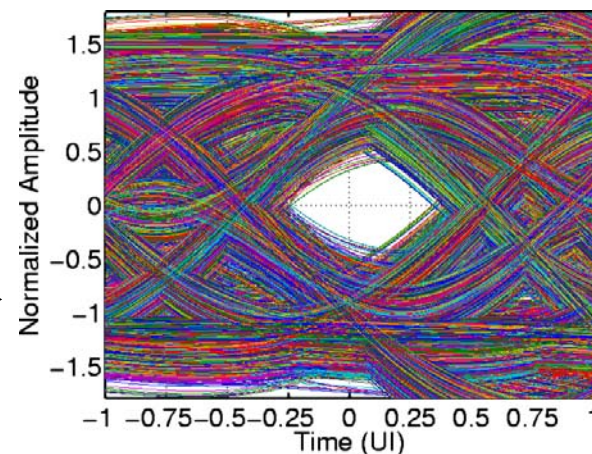
32Gbps, 4-tap FFE, 1st-order CTLE, 1-tap DFE

■ EQ parameters are the best values

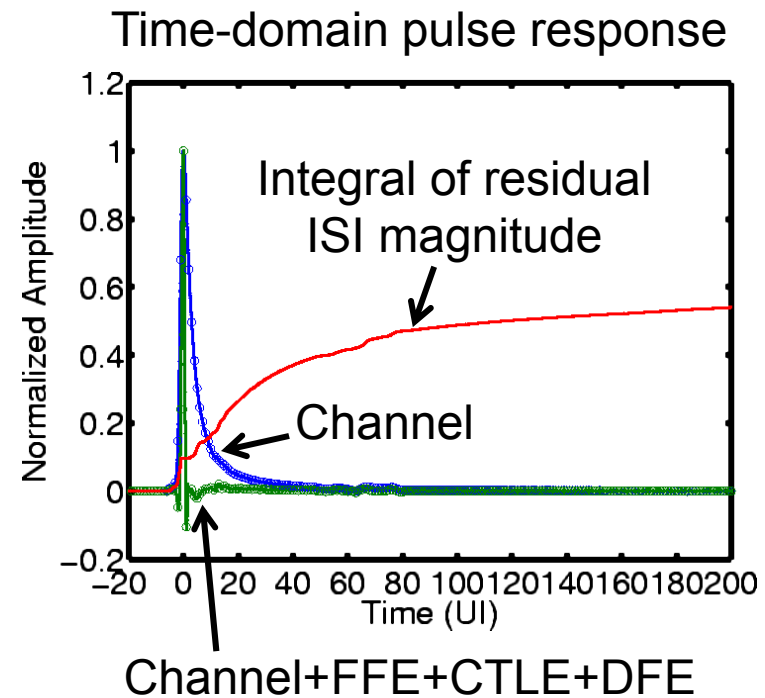
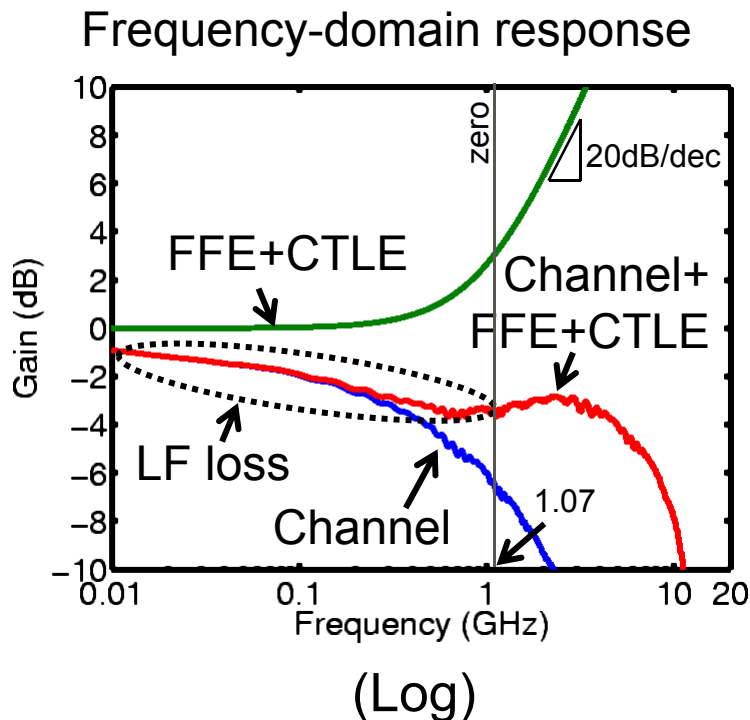
Why is this eye so bad? →



Eye diagram (PRBS31)



Uncompensated Low-Frequency Loss



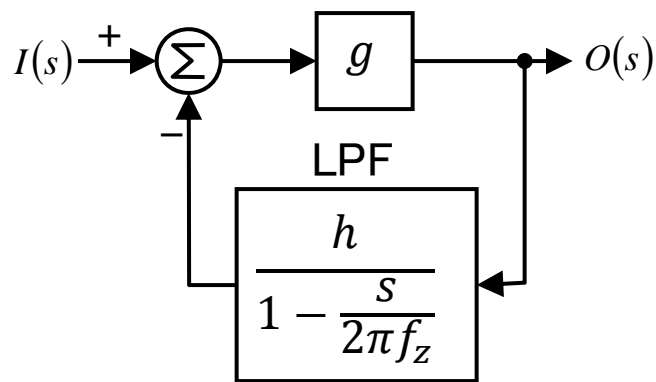
32Gbps, 4-tap FFE, 1st-order CTLE, 1-tap DFE

- Conventional EQs cannot compensate for low-frequency loss
 - CTLE and FFE have too steep slopes (20dB/dec)
 - If zero is moved to lower frequency, too much gain at high frequency
 - DFE can compensate for only short-term ISI (i.e. high-frequency loss)

Low-Frequency Equalizer (LFE)^[15,16]

- Amplify low-frequency by a small amount (compared to DC)
 - Closely spaced a pair of pole and zero in low frequency
 - A variant of CTLE for low frequency
 - Easy to implement in analog, but maybe difficult in digital

- Example
 - Feedback with LPF



Feed-forward with LPF is an alternative option

Transfer Function in s domain:

$$G(s) = A_{DC} \frac{1 - \frac{s}{2\pi f_z}}{1 - \frac{s}{2\pi f_p}}$$

$$s = j\omega = j2\pi f$$

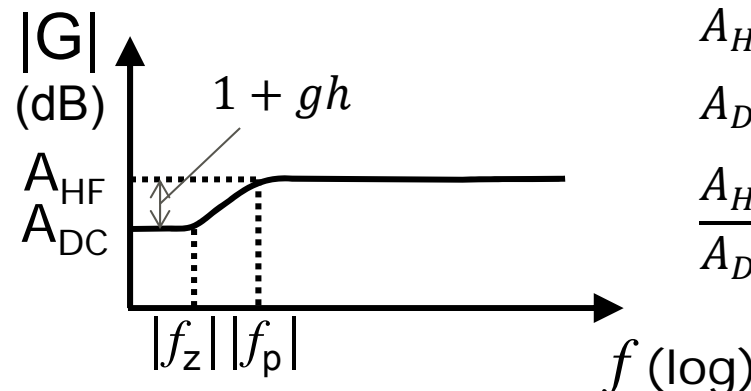
1 zero
1 pole

$$f_p = (1 + gh)f_z$$

$$A_{HF} = g$$

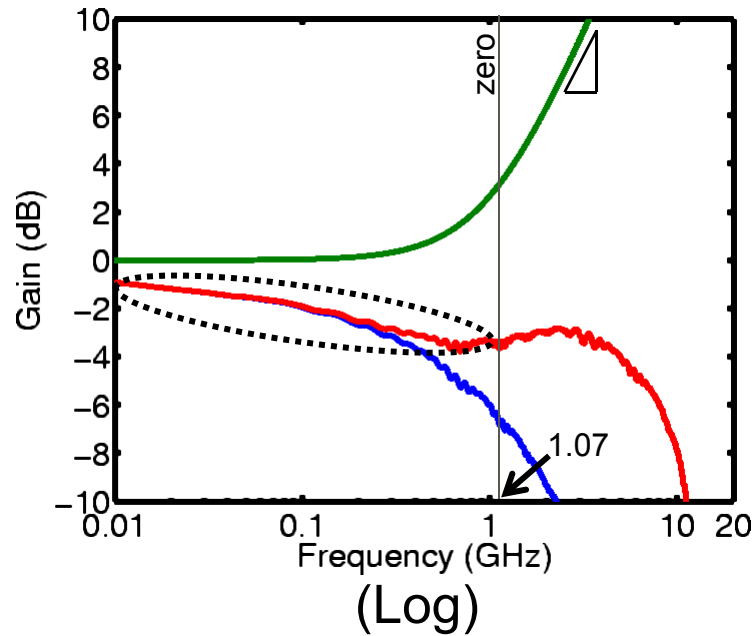
$$A_{DC} = \frac{g}{1 + gh}$$

$$\frac{A_{HF}}{A_{DC}} = 1 + gh$$

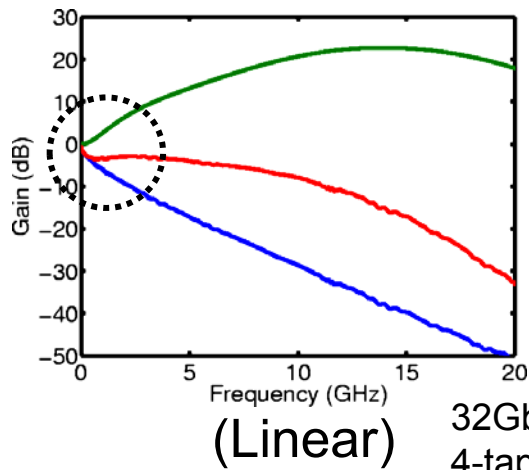
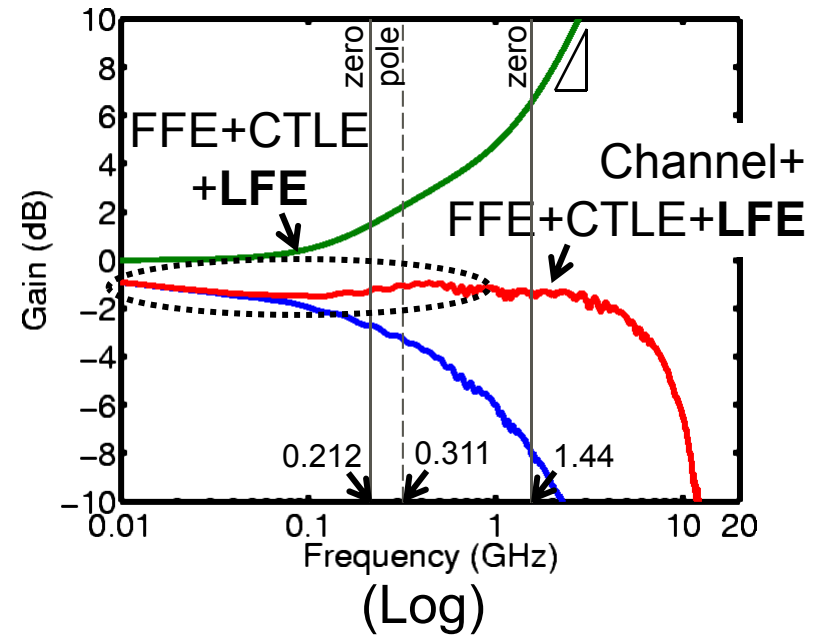


Effect of LFE in Frequency Domain

Only Conventional

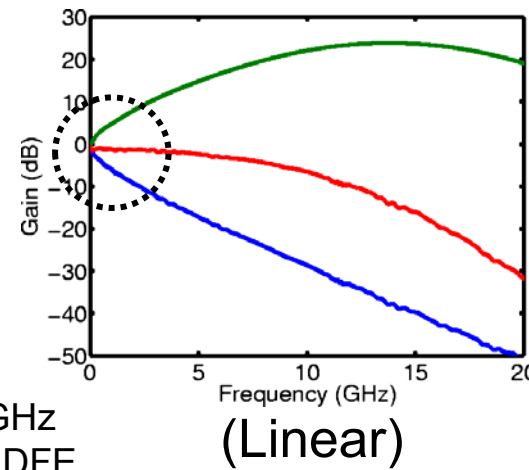


With LFE



(Linear)

32Gbps, Chan. loss 42.5dB@16GHz
4-tap FFE, 1st-order CTLE, 1-tap DFE

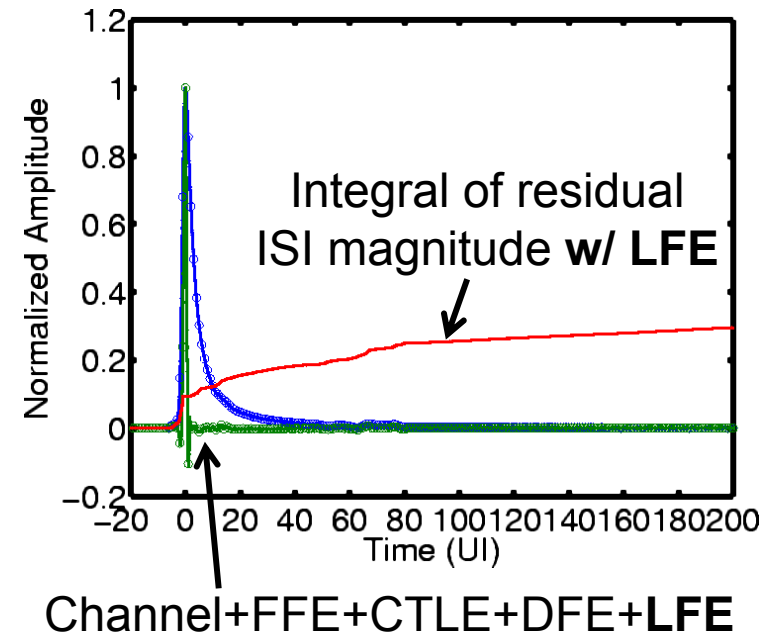
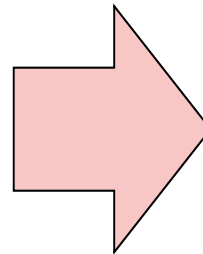
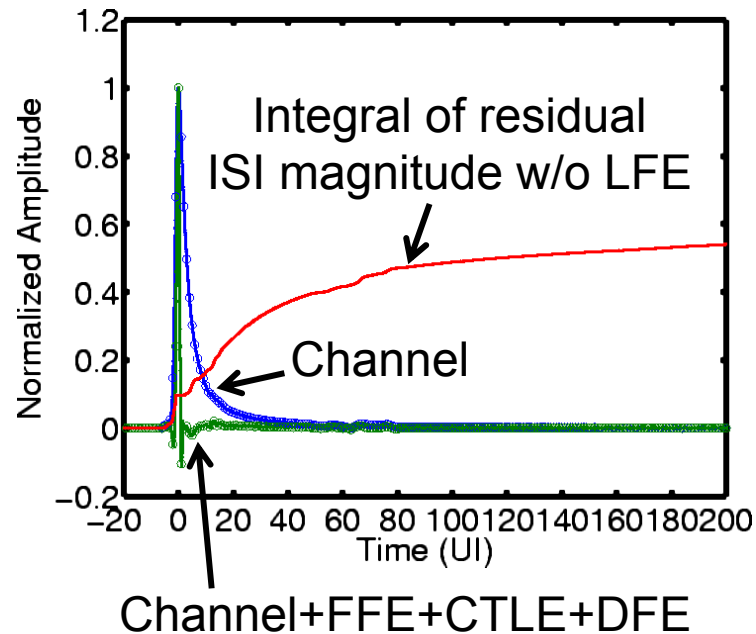


(Linear)

Effect of LFE in Time Domain

Only Conventional

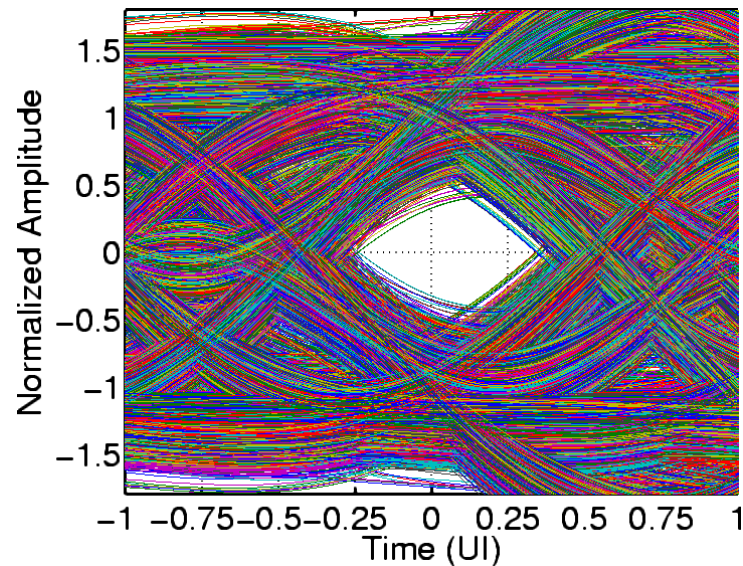
With LFE



32Gbps, Chan. loss 42.5dB@16GHz
4-tap FFE, 1st-order CTLE, 1-tap DFE

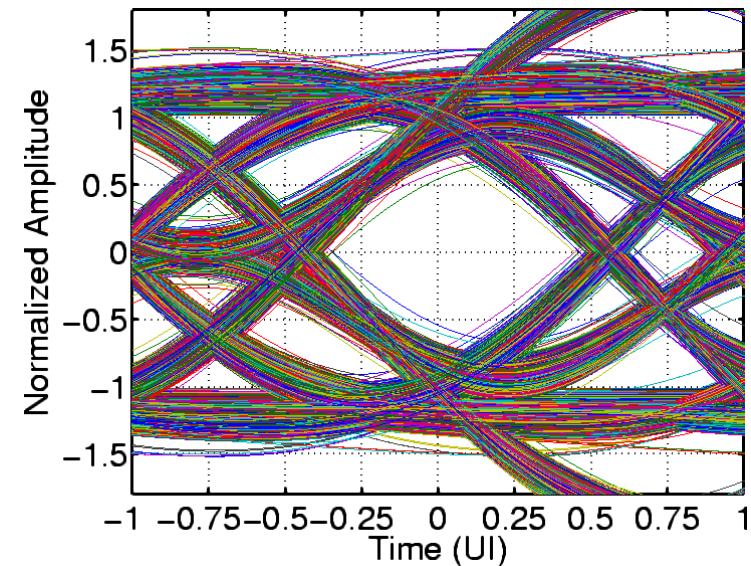
Effect of LFE on Eye Diagram (PRBS31)

Only Conventional



DDJ=0.42UI

With LFE



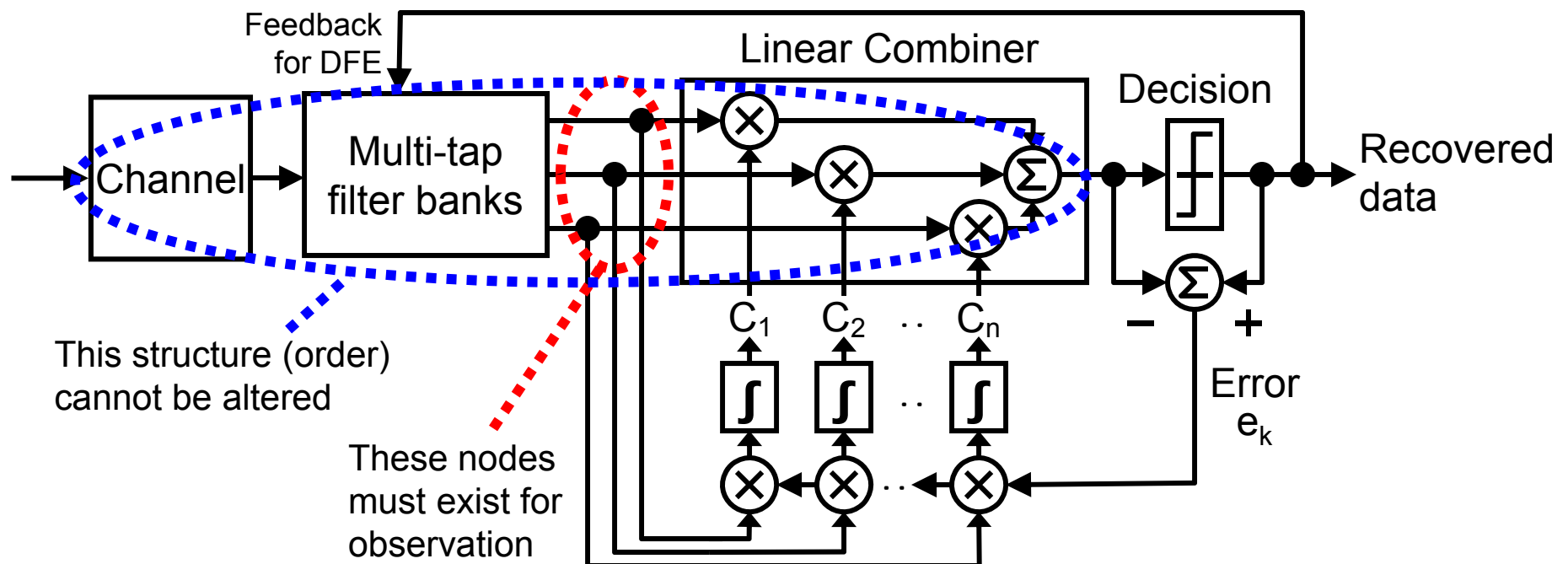
DDJ=0.21UI

32Gbps, Chan. loss 42.5dB@16GHz
4-tap FFE, 1st-order CTLE, 1-tap DFE

- Background
- State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O
- **Conventional Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O**
 - Least Mean Square (LMS and SS-LMS)
 - Zero Forcing (ZF)
 - Max Eye Opening
 - Spectrum Matching
- Sign-based Zero-Forcing Adaptive Equalizer Control
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Least Mean Square[†] (LMS^[17], SS-LMS^[18])

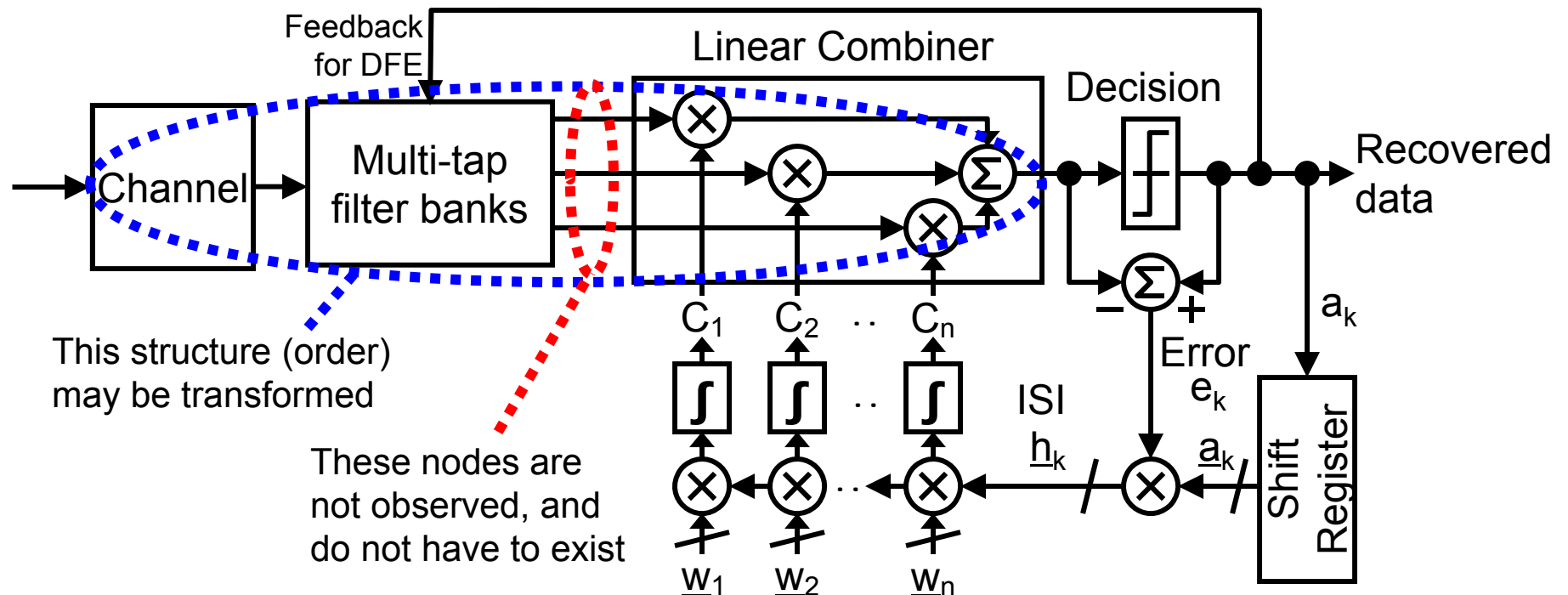
- Automatically achieve *Minimum Mean-Square Error* (Wiener Filter)
- Widely used in Digital Signal Processing (DSP)
- Strong restriction on filter structure (filter must be in below form)
 - Applicable to DFE, but often NOT to CTLE or LFE
 - NOT applicable to Tx FFE



[†] A.k.a. Stochastic Steepest Descent Method

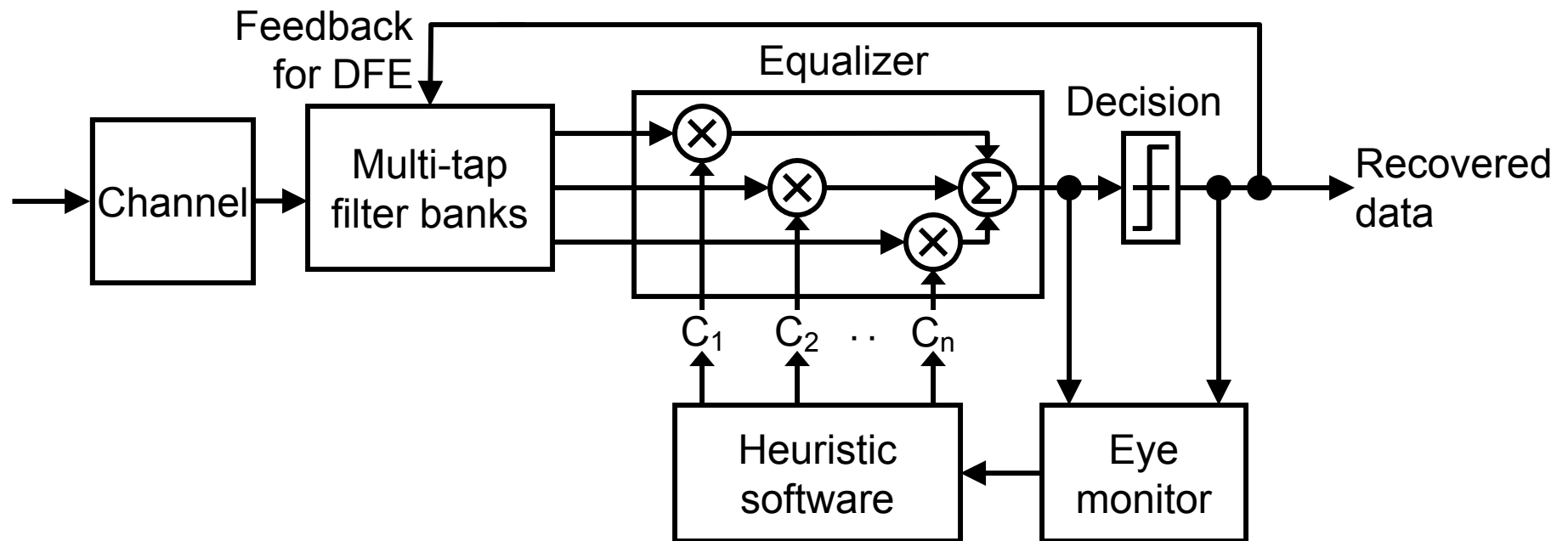
Zero Forcing (ZF)^[19,20]

- Force *weighted* sum of ISI towards zero
 - Also capable to achieve almost *Minimum Mean-Square Error* (Wiener Filter)
 - For the target (worst) channel, with proper weight vectors (e.g. Jacobian Matrix)
 - Not optimal for other channels, but it is usually acceptable for wide range of variation
 - Equivalent to LMS, if applied to DFE
- Flexible filter structure
 - Applicable to CTLE, LFE and Tx FFE



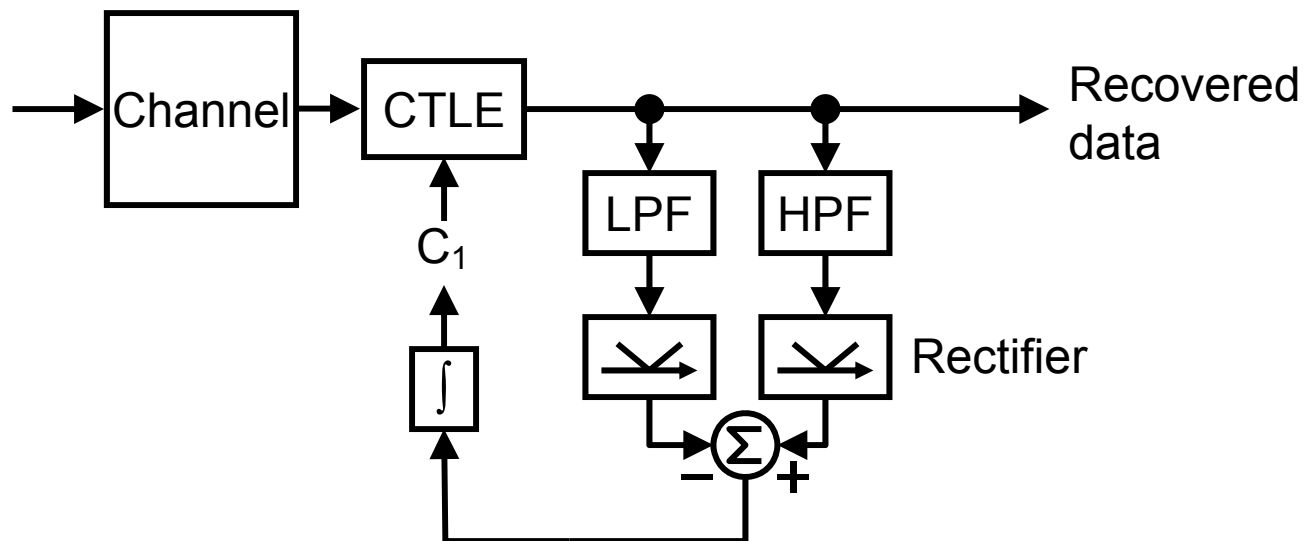
Max Eye Opening^[21]

- Maximize eye opening by adjusting EQ parameters
- Flexible filter structure
- Slow or inaccurate
 - Similar eyes for slightly different parameters must be compared
 - Precision eye measurement takes quite a long time



Spectrum Matching^[3,6]

- Force imbalance of spectrum towards zero
- Options to measure imbalance of spectrum
 - Multiple filters with different bands (e.g. LPF and HPF)
 - Slicer may be optionally used to generate the reference
 - Edge slew rate or pulse width may be used instead of spectrum
- Difficult to control more than one parameter
- Only for CTLE



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 - Pattern Filtering
 - Convolution and De-convolution of ISI
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 - Extension of S-ZF for Low-Frequency Equalizer
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■ Need random data

- If data is not random, equalizer parameter can drift
- Some wireline standards use 8B10B code
 - With 8B10B, data sequence can be periodic such as continuous 1010
 - Idle sequence in 8B10B has limited randomness

■ Limited flexibility or accuracy (except ZF)

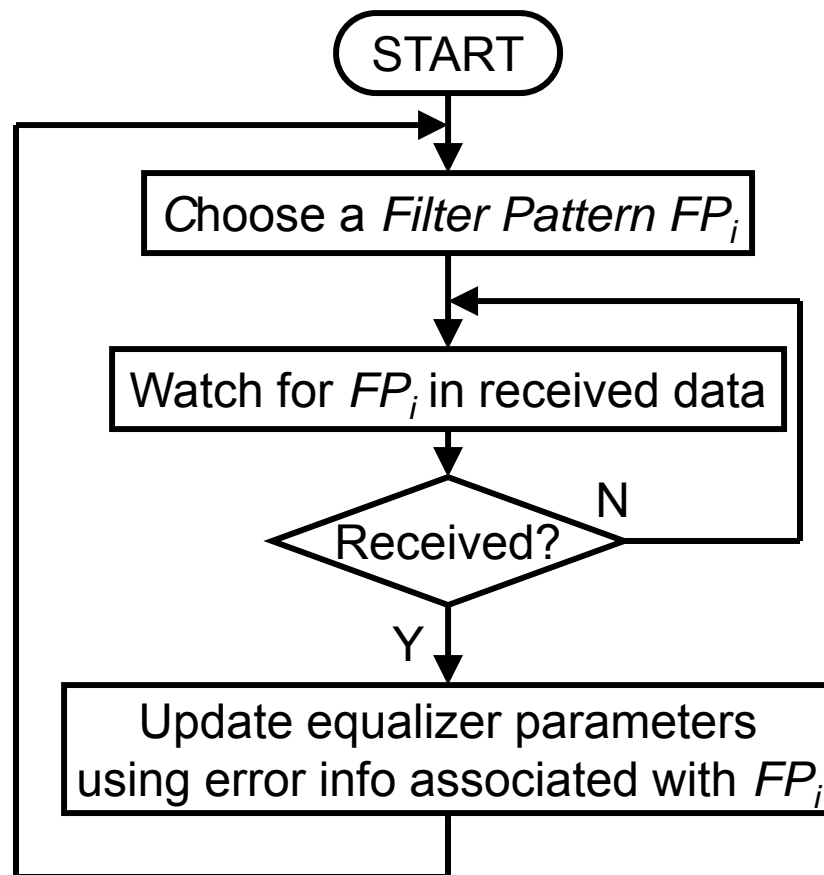
- LMS/SS-LMS easily achieve MMSE, but are not flexible
- Max Eye Opening is flexible, but inaccurate or slow
- Spectrum Matching is not flexible

- ZF is attractive, because it is flexible and able to achieve almost MMSE
 - But not well studied in DSP context, because LMS is better than ZF for DSP
 - Conventional ZF for DSP requires ADC which we would like to avoid

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Pattern Filtering^[22] (1/3)

- Do not passively use all received error information
- Actively choose error information to use



- Keep watching for the selected *Filter Pattern* FP_i (no timeout)
 - If the *Filter Pattern* FP_i is missing in the sequence, just wait forever
 - The sequence will eventually change
 - Do not update EQ parameters, when spectrum may be inadequate
 - Not halting updates for non-random data may cause parameter drift

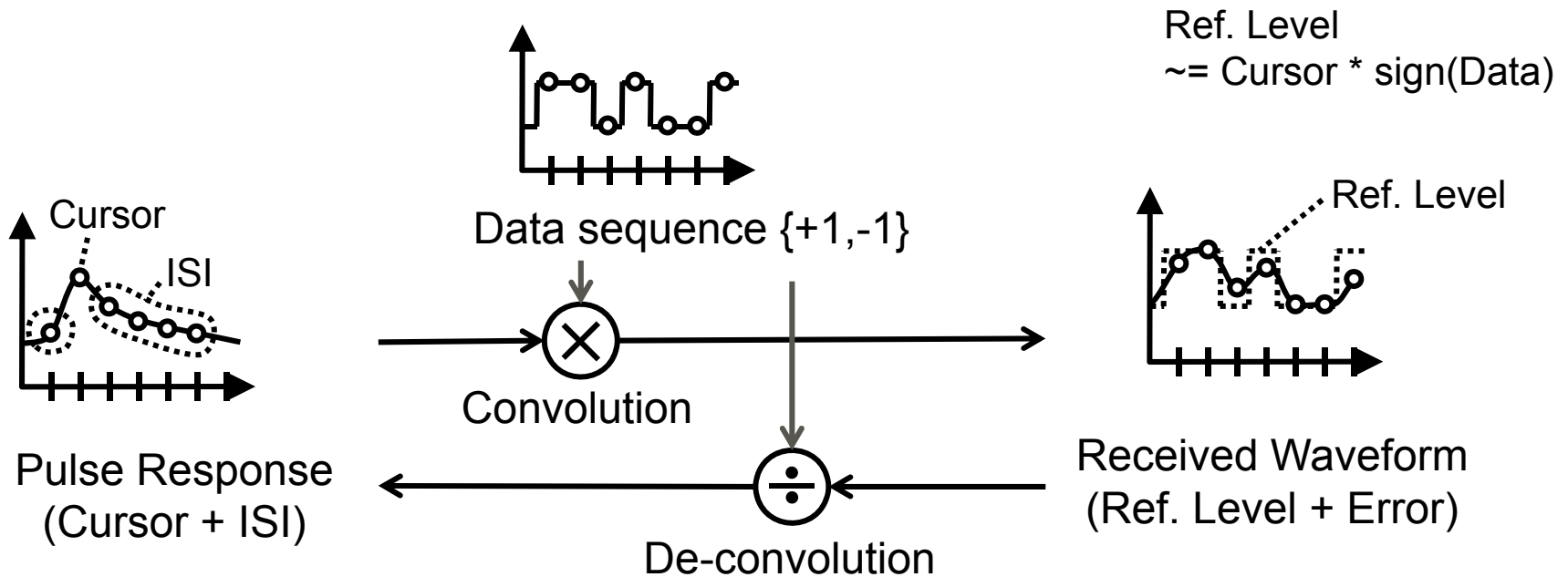
- *Pattern Filtering* works with limited random data
 - For mostly periodic patterns, adaptation works slowly but steadily by catching limited random data
 - E.g. Ethernet frame with short random header and long payload filled by periodic 8B10B data

Pattern Filtering (3/3)

- Two options to choose a *Filter Pattern* FP_i
 - Randomly (similar to conventional adaptive control)^[22]
 - Make conventional adaptive controls operable for non-random data
 - From a specific set of patterns, in some specific way^[23]
 - Enable De-convolution of ISI and S-ZF adaptation scheme

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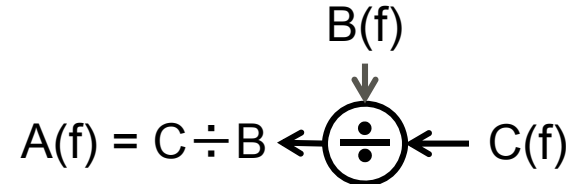
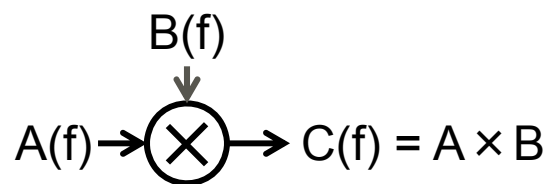
Convolution and De-convolution of ISI



Time Domain

Convolution

De-convolution



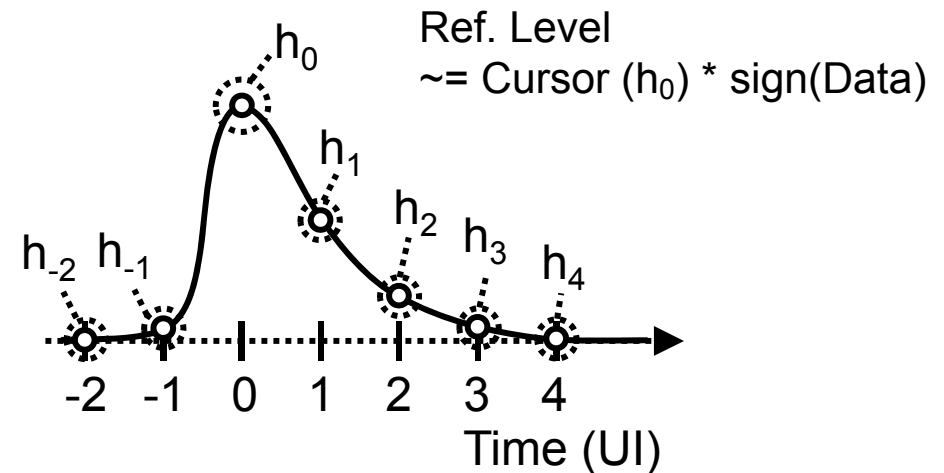
Frequency Domain

Multiplication

Division

Convolution : ISI \times Data \rightarrow Error

Pulse response
= Cursor (h_0) + ISI



Data Sequence:



Ref. Level + Error (E_4)

Error is convolution of Data and ISI

$$\text{Error } E_4 = \text{sign}(D_6) * h_{-2} + \text{sign}(D_5) * h_{-1} + (\text{sign}(D_4) * h_0 - \text{Ref. Level}) + \text{sign}(D_3) * h_1 + \text{sign}(D_2) * h_2 + \text{sign}(D_1) * h_3 + \text{sign}(D_0) * h_4$$

$\text{sign}(D_n) : \{+1, -1\}$

De-convolution : ISI ← Error ÷ Data^[23]

ISI is de-convolution of *Data* out of *Error*

FP0: 0 0 1 **1** 0 1 0



$$E_4^{FP0} = \cancel{-h_{-2}} + \cancel{h_{-1}} - \cancel{h_0} - \text{Ref. Level} + h_1 + h_2 - h_3 - h_4$$

FP1: 0 0 1 **0** 0 1 0



$$E_4^{FP1} = \cancel{-h_{-2}} + \cancel{h_{-1}} - \cancel{h_0} - \text{Ref. Level} - h_1 + h_2 - h_3 - h_4$$

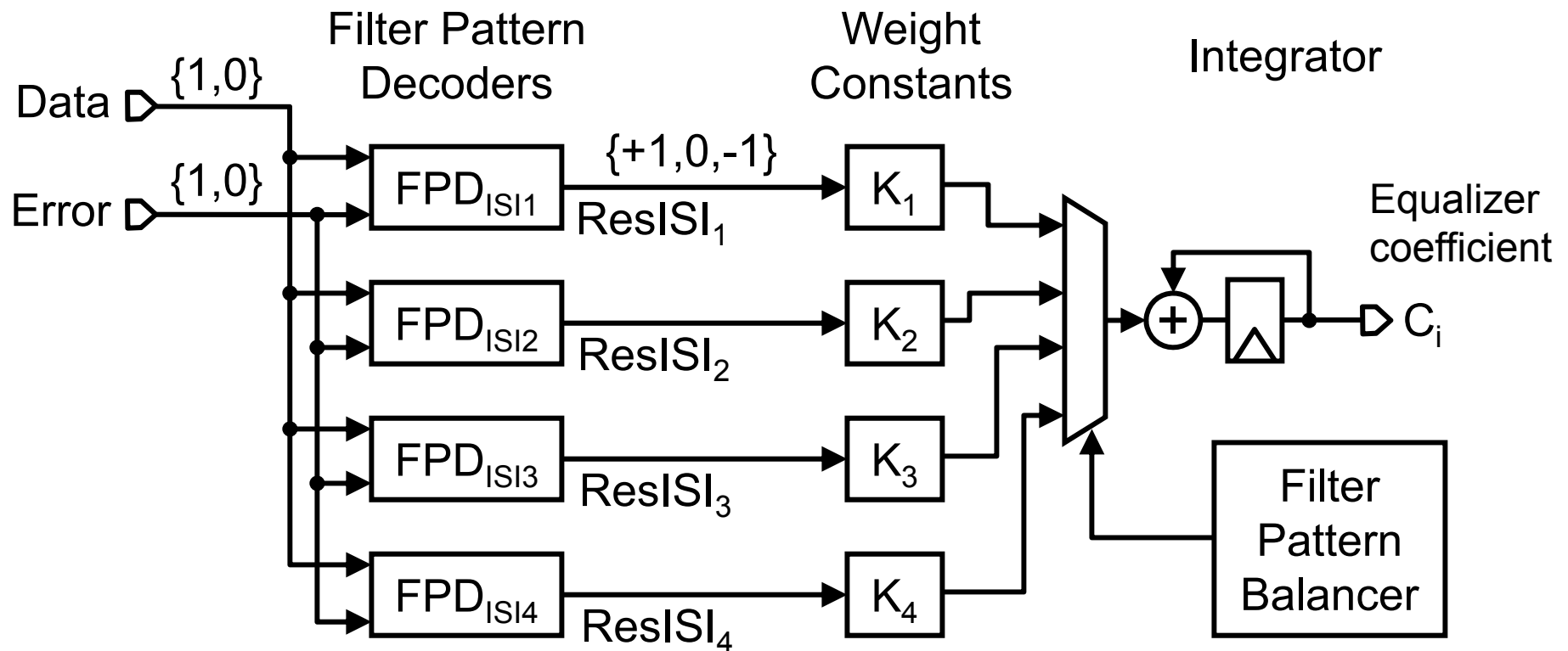
FP: Filter Pattern

$$E_4^{FP0} - E_4^{FP1} = 2 * h_1$$

Residual ISI h_1 can be calculated as the difference between error E_4 values for FP0 and FP1 which differ only at D_3

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Sign-based Zero-Forcing (S-ZF)^[23]



- FPD statistically de-convolves Data out of Error to $ResISI_n$
 - Average of $\{+1, -1\}$ of $ResISI_n$ indicates quantity of residual ISI at n UI
- Force weighted sum of average $ResISI_n$ towards Zero

Sign-based ISI De-convolution by FPD

- FPD performs $E_4^{FP0} - E_4^{FP1}$ statistically in a long term using *only error signs* without error quantities

Truth Table in FPD

Filter Pattern	D_0	D_1	D_2	D_3	D_4	D_5	D_6	E_4	ResISI ₁ ($\text{sign}(h_1) = \text{sign}(E_4) * \text{sign}(D_3)$)
FP0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	+1
				0				-1	
FP1				0	+1				
				1	-1				

- Average ResISI₁ shows difference of E_4 between FP0 and FP1
- ResISI₁ is correlation between D_3 and E_4 : same as conventional ZF which measures correlation between D_3 and E_4 for random data
- Data values other than D_3 are chosen a priori
 - Error value should NOT be always 1 or 0
 - Filter patterns should be always received during adaptation period

Key Operations in FPD and FPB

- Filter Pattern Decoder checks FP0/FP1 equally
 - To perform statistical subtraction correctly
 - Implemented by *alternately* watching for FP0 and FP1

- Filter Pattern Balancer checks multiple FPDs equally
 - To define adaptation characteristics only by weight const.
 - Implemented by watching for *FPDs randomly*

- FPD/B keep watching for the FP until it is received
 - *No timeout* to guarantee above statistics
 - Pattern tolerant
 - Will not drift for any non-random data sequence

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A Problem of Sign-based Zero Forcing

- Not applicable to Low-Frequency Equalizer
 - Filter Pattern must be very long to detect long-term ISI for LFE
 - LFE cancels long-term ISI in the range of 20~100 UI

 - Adaptation speed is too slow for Low-Frequency Equalizer
 - 50bit FP is received once every 31 hours for random data at 10Gb/s
 - 100bit FP is received once every 4×10^{12} years for random data at 10Gb/s

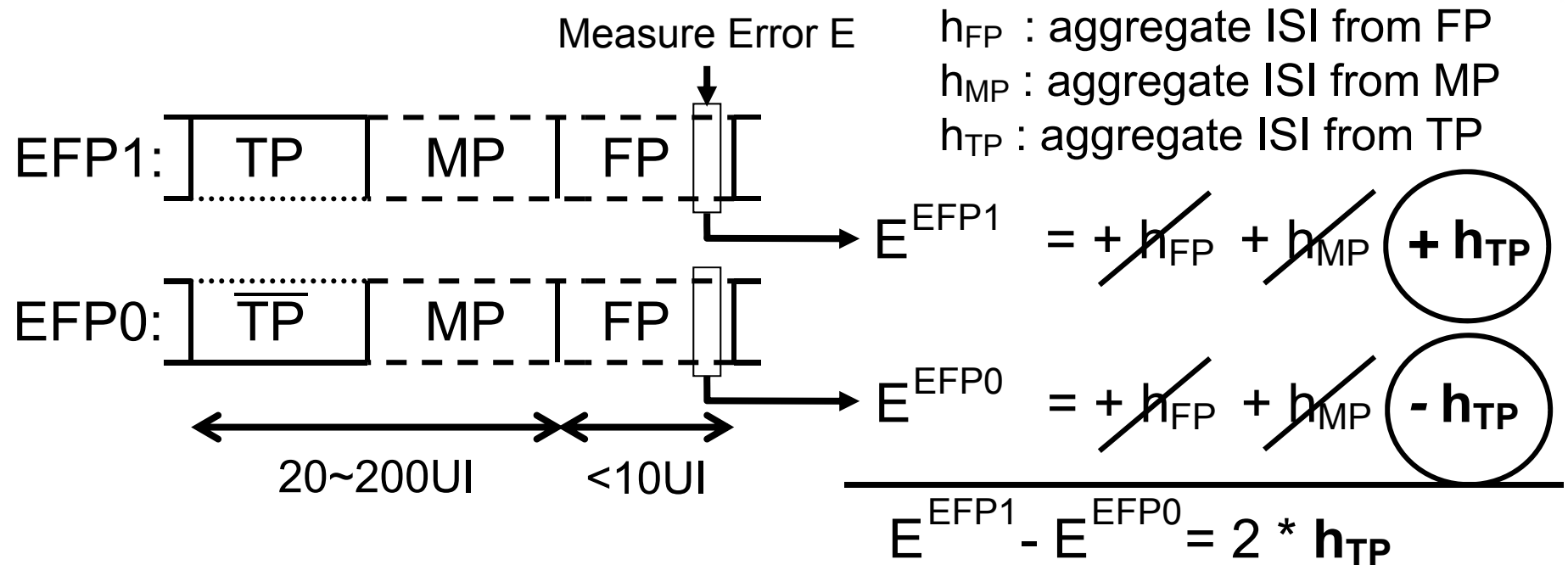
Extension of S-ZF for Low-Freq Equalizer^[24]



■ Basic idea:

- Handle Long-term ISI collectively in an aggregate manner
 - ISI for each individual bit is similar and not important for long-term ISI
 - Low-frequency equalizer cancels long-term ISI collectively

Extended Filter Pattern (EFP)



- FP (Filter Pattern) : Fixed 0/1 sequence (balanced ISI)
 - Minimize h_{FP}
- MP (Middle Pattern) : Equal 0/1 count (balanced 0/1)
 - Minimize h_{MP}
- TP (Tail Pattern) : Non-equal 0/1 count (imbalanced 0/1)
 - Maximize h_{TP}

Example of Extended Filter Pattern

	Earlier		Later		
	Tail Pattern	Middle Pattern	Filter Pattern	Error	ResISI
	50 bits	20 bits	$D_0 \sim D_6$	E_4	
EFP1	# of 1 \geq 34 bits	# of 0 = 10 bits	0 1 0 1 0 1 0	1	+1
	# of 0 \leq 16 bits			0	-1
EFP0	# of 0 \geq 34 bits	# of 1 = 10 bits		1	-1
	# of 1 \leq 16 bits			0	+1

Probability to receive above EFP0 or EFP1 in random sequence

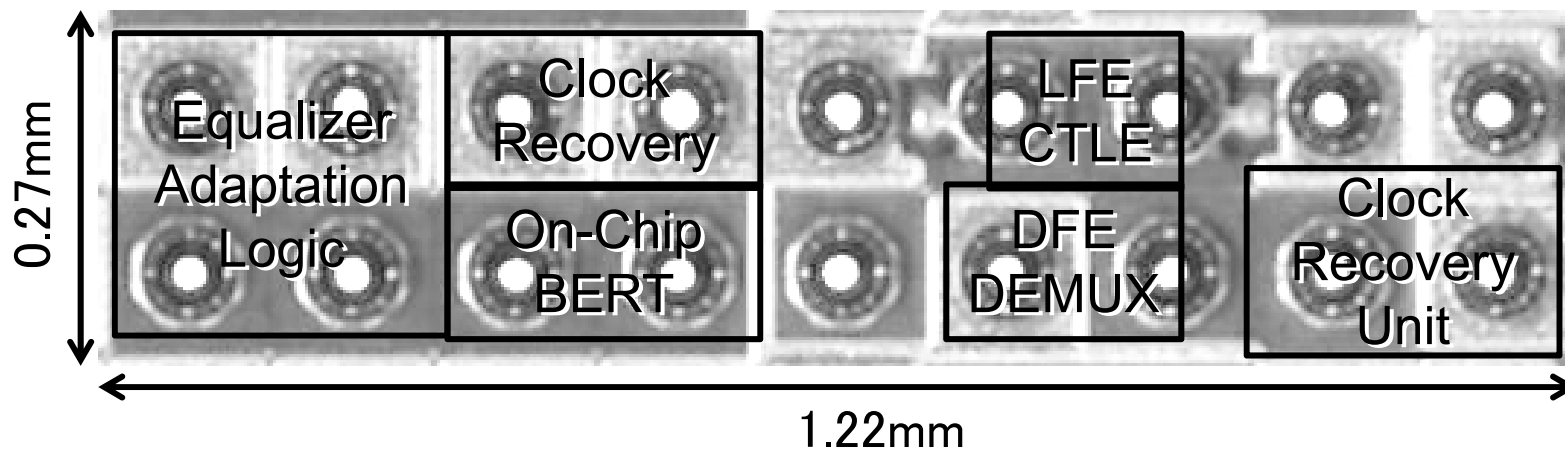
$$P = \sum_{k=0}^{16} \frac{C(50, k)}{2^{50}} \times \frac{C(20, 10)}{2^{20}} \times \frac{1}{2^7} = 0.0077 \times 0.1762 \times 0.0078 = 1.06 \times 10^{-5}$$

For example, if logic clock is 1GHz, we can detect $> 10k$ EFPs per second.

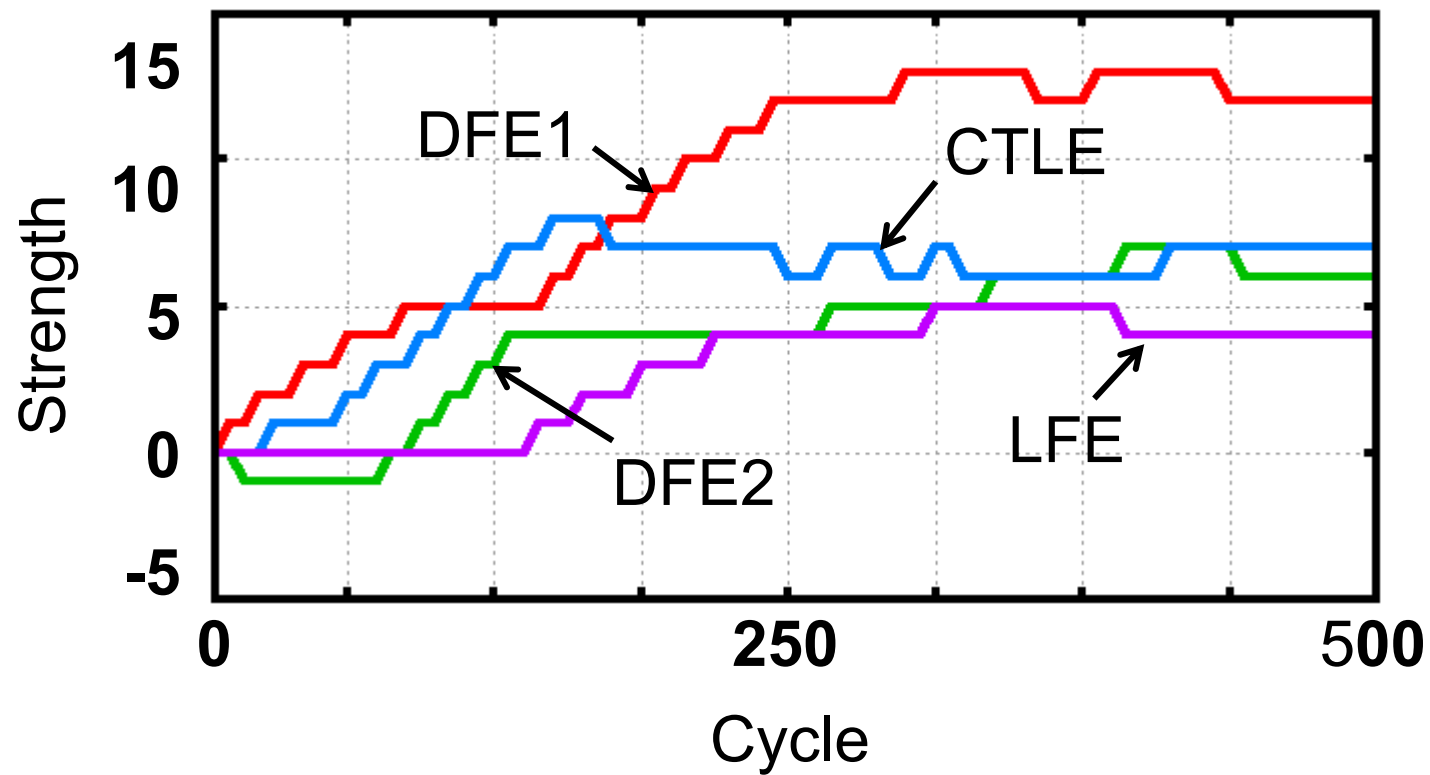
- Background
- State-of-the-art Equalizer for High-Speed I/O
- Conventional Adaptive Equalizer Control for High-Speed I/O
- Sign-based Zero-Forcing Adaptive Equalizer Control
- **Implementation and Evaluation Results**
- Summary

Implementation Example

- Equalizer: CTLE + LFE + 2-tap Speculative DFE
- Process technology: 28nm CMOS
- Data rate: 25Gb/s
- Power supply: 1.0V
- Power consumption: 240mW (RX)
- Area: 0.33mm² (RX)

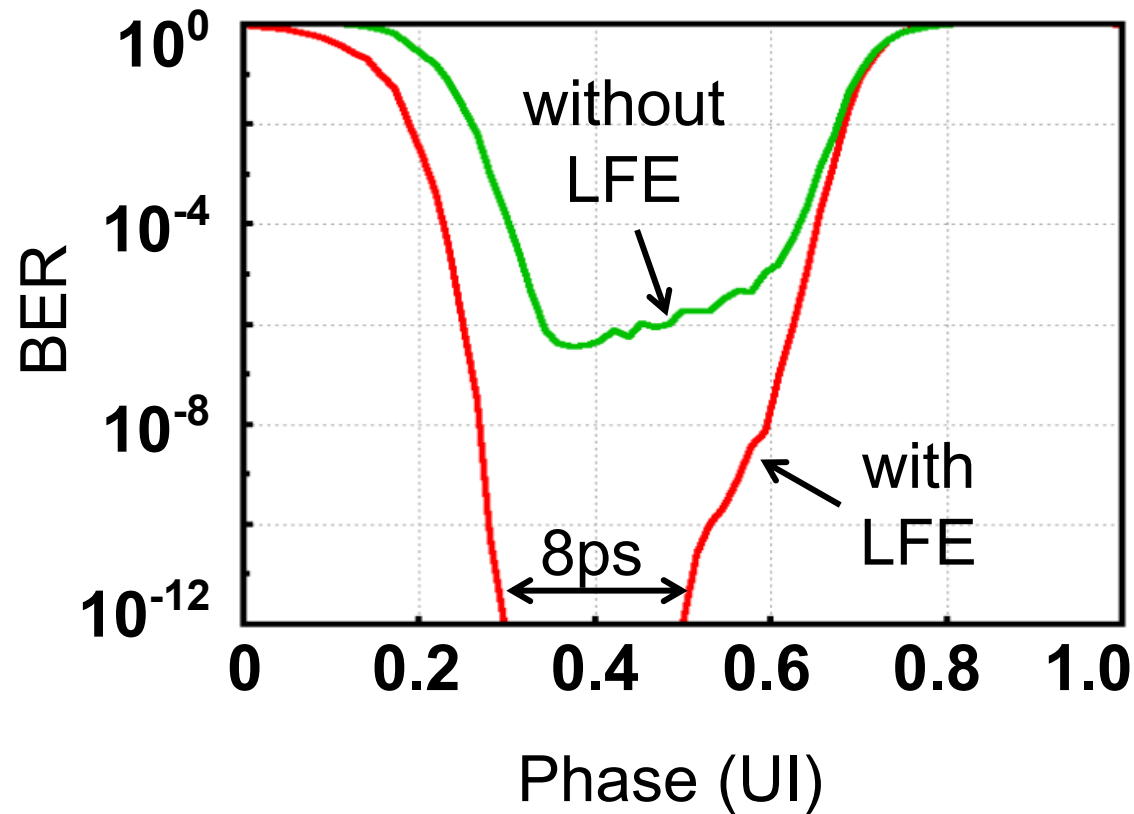


Measured Adaptation of Equalizer Parameters



Convergence time < 5 msec in real-time operation.

Measured BER for PRBS31



Channel loss : 25dB at Nyquist Frequency

- LMS automatically achieves MMSE (Wiener Filter)
 - Because of this beauty of LMS, ZF is hardly used in DSP context

- However, ZF is much more attractive in mixed-signal HSIO context
 - ZF is more flexible than LMS regarding to mixed-signal circuit architecture
 - ZF is also capable to achieve almost MMSE regarding to observed ISI
 - For the target channel, with proper weight vectors

- S-ZF is enabled by accurate ISI detection using Filter Pattern
 - ISI is accurately detected by explicit de-convolution of Data out of Error
 - FP also solves the problem of parameter drift due to non-random data

- Low-frequency loss has significant effects and should be equalized

- S-ZF is extended for LFE by handling long-term ISI collectively

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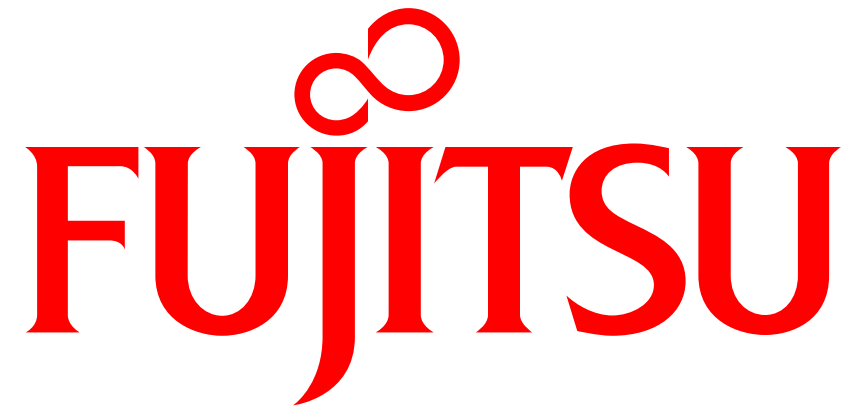
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