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TECHNICAL REPORT

Fibre optic communication system design guidelines – Part 16: Coherent receivers and transmitters with high-speed digital signal processing

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD 6
INTRODUCTION 8
1 Scope 9
2 Normative references 9
3 Terms, definitions, and abbreviated terms 9
3.1 Terms and definitions 9
3.2 Abbreviated terms 9
4 Background 12
5 Coherent transmission of vector-modulated signals 13
5.1 Typical receiver architecture 13
5.2 Typical transmitter architecture 14
5.3 Vector-modulated signals 15
5.3.1 Mathematical description 15
5.3.2 Binary amplitude and phase modulation 16
5.3.3 Quadrature amplitude modulation 17
5.3.4 Polarization multiplexing 18
5.3.5 Higher-dimensional coding and constellation shaping 18
6 Coherent receiver architectures and functional capabilities 19
6.1 Basic principle of coherent detection 19
6.1.1 General 19
6.1.2 Homodyne and heterodyne detection 19
6.1.3 Intradyne detection 21
6.1.4 Polarization dependence 21
6.1.5 Frequency dependence 22
6.1.6 Phase and polarization diversity 22
6.2 Single coherent mixer with balanced detection 23
6.2.1 Principle of operation 23
6.2.2 Common-mode rejection 24
6.2.3 Polarization dependence 26
6.2.4 Homodyne detection 27
6.2.5 Heterodyne detection 28
6.3 Dual coherent mixer with phase diversity 29
6.3.1 Principle of operation 29
6.3.2 Intradyne detection with frequency offset removal 31
6.3.3 Compensation of chromatic dispersion 33
6.3.4 Compensation of I-Q skew and phase offset 40
6.3.5 Spectral shaping and frequency equalization 42
6.4 Quadruple mixer with phase and polarization diversity 46
6.4.1 Principle of operation 46
6.4.2 Polarization demultiplexing 48
6.4.3 Compensation of polarization-mode dispersion 51
6.4.4 Compensation of polarization-dependent loss and residual CD 53
6.4.5 Carrier phase recovery 54
6.4.6 Impact of laser phase noise 55
6.5 High-resolution spectral analysis with coherent receivers 62
6.5.1 Measurement methods 62

6.5.2 Dual mixer with polarization diversity 63
6.5.3 Examples of high-resolution spectral analysis 64
7 Digital signal processing in coherent receivers 66
7.1 Basic features of digital signal processing 66
7.2 Real-time DSPs for fibre optic communication systems 70
7.2.1 Basic functions 70
7.2.2 Timing recovery 71
7.2.3 Cycle slip detection 71
7.2.4 Compensation of nonlinear transmission effects 71
7.2.5 FEC decoding and performance monitoring 72
7.3 Software-based DSPs for optical modulation analysers 73
8 Transmitters for vector-modulated signals 75
8.1 Generation of vector-modulated signals 75
8.2 Single Mach-Zehnder modulator 77
8.2.1 Principle of operation 77
8.2.2 Modulator extinction ratio 81
8.2.3 Adaptive bias control in Mach-Zehnder modulators 83
8.3 Dual Mach-Zehnder modulators 85
8.3.1 Quadrature-amplitude modulation 85
8.3.2 Compensation of finite extinction ratio 86
8.3.3 Adaptive control of I-Q phase 87
8.4 Quadruple modulators for polarization-multiplexed signals 91
9 Digital signal processing in transmitters for vector-modulated signals 94
9.1 Pre-distortion of optical signals 94
9.1.1 General 94
9.1.2 Pre-compensation of linear transmitter impairments 95
9.1.3 Determination of transmitter frequency response 96
9.1.4 Determination of transmitter skew 101
9.1.5 Pre-compensation of modulator nonlinearity 103
9.2 Symbol mapper, FEC encoding and framing 105
10 Implementation and typical performance specifications 106
10.1 Coherent receiver 106
10.1.1 Implementation 106
10.1.2 Typical performance specifications 107
10.2 Optical transmitter 108
10.2.1 Implementation 108
10.2.2 Typical performance specifications 109
10.3 Integrated coherent receiver and transmitter 111
10.4 Tuneable laser assemblies 111
10.4.1 Implementation 111
10.4.2 Typical performance specifications 111
Bibliography 113

Figure 1 – Coherent optical receiver 13
Figure 2 – Optical transmitter for coherent transmission 14
Figure 3 – Generation of vector modulated signals 16
Figure 4 – Examples of modulation formats for coherent communication 17
Figure 5 – Signal and local oscillator frequencies for homodyne detection 20

Figure 6 – Signal and local oscillator frequencies for heterodyne detection 20
Figure 7 – Electrical spectra of homodyne and heterodyne beat signals 21
Figure 8 – Single balanced mixer for coherent reception 24
Figure 9 – Balanced heterodyne mixer with electrical down-mixing 28
Figure 10 – Dual coherent mixer with phase diversity 30
Figure 11 – Intradyne beat spectrum with 2 GHz frequency offset 32
Figure 12 – Differential phase shifts introduced by 3 000 ps/nm GVD 33
Figure 13 – Transfer function for GVD of 3 ns/nm in frequency domain 34
Figure 14 – Inverse transfer functions for GVD of 3 ns/nm and 10 ns/nm in time domain 36
Figure 15 – Fractionally spaced equalizer with a tapped delay line 37
Figure 16 – Processing steps for CD compensation in the frequency domain 38
Figure 17 – Data processing for CD compensation in the frequency domain 39
Figure 18 – Dual coherent mixer with optical phase offset and signal skew 40
Figure 19 – Skew and phase offset removal in a DSP 41
Figure 20 – Example of an I-Q skew and phase error measurement 42
Figure 21 – Fifth-order Bessel filter emulated with a 5-tap FSE 43
Figure 22 – Shape of inverse Bessel filter generated with a 9-tap FSE 44
Figure 23 – Amplitude and phase of FSE-generated inverse Bessel filter 45
Figure 24 – Root-raised-cosine filter emulated with a 33-tap FSE 46
Figure 25 – Quadruple coherent mixer with phase and polarization diversity 47
Figure 26 – 2 × 2 matrix operation for adaptive polarization demultiplexing 49
Figure 27 – Constellation points of QPSK signal after polarization demultiplexing 50
Figure 28 – 16QAM signal before and after polarization demultiplexing 50
Figure 29 – FSE-based compensator for polarization-mode dispersion 52
Figure 30 – QPSK signal constellations for various amounts of PMD 52
Figure 31 – QPSK signal constellations for various amounts of PDL 53
Figure 32 – QPSK signal constellations for various amounts of GVD 53
Figure 33 – Optical phase noise of two narrow-linewidth lasers 56
Figure 34 – Optical frequency noise spectra of two lasers 58
Figure 35 – Optical phase noise spectra of two lasers 59
Figure 36 – Laser phase noise measurement with optical bandpass filter 60
Figure 37 – Dual coherent mixer with polarization diversity 63
Figure 38 – High-resolution optical spectrum of a 32 GBd QPSK signal 65
Figure 39 – QPSK signal measured with coherent OSA and with grating-based OSA 65
Figure 40 – Typical digital signal processing steps in a coherent receiver 67
Figure 41 – 100 Gbit/s PM-QPSK signal before and after fibre transmission 68
Figure 42 – De-convolution of a 100 Gbit/s PM-QPSK signal at various DSP stages 69
Figure 43 – Block diagram of specially designed integrated circuit with DSP 70
Figure 44 – Block diagram of OMA with software-based DSP 73
Figure 45 – Typical arrangement for generation of vector-modulated signals 76
Figure 46 – Differentially driven Mach-Zehnder modulator 77
Figure 47 – Mach-Zehnder modulator with adaptive bias control 78
Figure 48 – MZM operation for intensity modulation 79

Figure 49 – Nonlinear MZM operation for binary PSK/ASK 80
Figure 50 – Linear MZM operation for quaternary ASK signals 81
Figure 51 – Optical power variations in an NRZ-OOK signal with finite extinction ratio 82
Figure 52 – Optical and RF output power versus bias voltage for linear operation 83
Figure 53 – Dual MZM with adaptive I-Q phase control 86
Figure 54 – RF output power of I-Q modulator versus I-Q phase 88
Figure 55 – Error signal for I-Q phase control derived from MZM bias dither 90
Figure 56 – I-Q phase error resulting from offset in feedback signal 91
Figure 57 – Dual I-Q modulators for polarization multiplexing 92
Figure 58 – Adaptive bias and phase control in dual-polarization I-Q modulator 93
Figure 59 – Typical digital signal processing steps in the transmitter 95
Figure 60 – Spectrum and samples of a white test vector 96
Figure 61 – Magnitude of transmitter frequency response 97
Figure 62 – Phase of transmitter frequency response 98
Figure 63 – Example of magnitude and phase of a pre-compensation filter 99
Figure 64 – Tap coefficients and effect of a 9-tap pre-compensation filter 99
Figure 65 – Impact of pre-compensation on signal waveform in DSP and DAC 101
Figure 66 – I-Q skew in a single-sideband modulated signal 102
Figure 67 – Non-linear pre-distortion of a Mach-Zehnder modulator 103
Figure 68 – Linearized MZM operation for quaternary ASK 105

Table 1 – Typical receiver specifications 108
Table 2 – Typical modulator specifications 110
Table 3 – Additional specifications for integrated driver-modulator 110
Table 4 – Typical specifications for tuneable laser assemblies 112

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FIBRE OPTIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DESIGN GUIDELINES –

Part 16: Coherent receivers and transmitters with high-speed digital signal processing

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A list of all parts in the IEC 61282 series, published under the general title *Fibre optic communication system design guidelines*, can be found on the IEC website.

Future documents in this series will carry the new general title as cited above. Titles of existing documents in this series will be updated at the time of the next edition.

The committee has decided that the contents of this document will remain unchanged until the stability date indicated on the IEC website under "http://webstore.iec.ch" in the data related to the specific document. At this date, the document will be

- reconfirmed,
- withdrawn,
- replaced by a revised edition, or
- amended.

INTRODUCTION

Coherent optical receivers are widely used in long-haul fibre optic communication systems, especially in systems that transmit optical carriers at data rates of 100 Gbit/s and higher. While the principle of coherent detection is very similar to that of super-heterodyne (or homodyne) detection in radio and microwave receivers, its implementation is significantly more challenging. The main reason is that optical frequencies are substantially higher than radio frequencies, so it becomes more difficult to match the local oscillator frequency in the coherent receiver to the frequency of the transmitted optical signal. Furthermore, optical signals tend to be highly polarized, which means that the amplitude of a coherently received signal can be substantially reduced or even vanish if the polarization state of the local oscillator light does not match the polarization state of the received optical signal. This polarization matching is particularly difficult to achieve in fibre optic communications systems, which usually do not preserve the launched state of polarization of the transmitted signal. To overcome these problems, modern coherent receivers typically consist of four parallel coherent optical mixers that provide phase and polarization diversity, and they rely on high-speed digital signal processors to retrieve the transmitted data from the four received electrical signals.

This rather complex coherent receiver architecture is further justified by the fact that it allows the receiver to mitigate various types of signal impairments introduced in the fibre optic link (or in the receiver itself) simply by means of additional electronic signal processing. Most notably, it is possible to substantially reduce the signal distortions caused by polarization-mode dispersion (PMD) or uncompensated chromatic dispersion (CD) in the fibre link, without requiring additional optical PMD or CD compensators. For this reason, coherent optical communication systems generally allow signal transmission at much higher data rates than communication systems using direct-detection receivers. Furthermore, coherent detection with subsequent digital signal processing facilitates the decoding of complex vector-modulated signals, such as quadrature-amplitude modulated signals (QAM) and polarization-multiplexed (PM) signals, and thereby the transmission of higher data rates.

Aside from fibre optic communications systems, coherent optical receivers are also used in various test and measurement instrumentation. Most notable examples are optical modulation analysers (OMAs) and high-resolution optical spectrum analysers (HR-OSAs). Optical modulation analysers are high-performance optical reference receivers and are used to assess the signal quality of complex vector-modulated optical signals. They are typically composed of a carefully calibrated coherent receiver and a high-speed real-time digitizing oscilloscope to record the coherently received signals, which are then analysed with the help of a software-based digital signal processor.

High-resolution optical spectrum analysers are often used to analyse narrowband features of the optical spectrum of a modulated signal, such as a residual optical carrier or other spectral lines. In contrast to OMAs, they typically employ a low-speed coherent receiver, so as to utilize the frequency-selectivity of coherent detection. The key component in these instruments is a continuously tuneable local oscillator, which is scanned over the frequency range of the signal to be analysed while the total power of the coherently received signal is recorded. The spectral resolution of these instruments can be of the order of a few MHz. Other examples of coherent optical test instruments include in-service PMD analysers and in-band optical signal-to-noise ratio analysers for polarization-multiplexed signals.

FIBRE OPTIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DESIGN GUIDELINES –

Part 16: Coherent receivers and transmitters with high-speed digital signal processing

1 Scope

This part of IEC 61282 is a technical report on coherent optical receiver and transmitter technologies that are employed in fibre optic communication systems as well as in optical test and measurement equipment. This document describes the principle of operation and functional capabilities of coherent optical receivers as well as the operation of optical transmitters used to generate complex vector-modulated signals. It is intended to serve as a technical foundation for other IEC documents and standards related to coherent optical transmission techniques.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

IEC 60050-731, *International Electrotechnical Vocabulary (IEV) – Part 731: Optical fibre communication* (available at www.electropedia.org)

IEC TR 61931, *Fibre optic – Terminology*