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*Published in:*

Proceedings of the European Conference on Optical Communication (ECOC) 2011

*Publication date:*

2011

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

*Citation (APA):*

Li, B., Larsen, K. J., Zibar, D., & Tafur Monroy, I. (2011). Over 10 dB Net Coding Gain Based on 20% Overhead Hard Decision Forward Error Correction in 100G Optical Communication Systems. In *Proceedings of the European Conference on Optical Communication (ECOC) 2011* (pp. Tu.6.A). Optical Society of America. <http://www.ecoc2011.org/>

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# Over 10 dB Net Coding Gain Based on 20% Overhead Hard Decision Forward Error Correction in 100G Optical Communication Systems

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**Abstract:** We propose a product code with shortened BCH component codes for 100G optical communication systems. Simulation result shows that 10 dB net coding gain is promising at post-FEC BER of  $1E-15$ .

**OCIS codes:** (060.2330) Fiber optics communications; (060.4510) Optical communications

## 1. Introduction

Ever increasing demands of bandwidth have motivated optical transmission systems to evolve from 10G to 40G to 100G. To compensate the increasing loss over the link, forward error correction (FEC) has been considered as a cost effective solution. In this paper we propose a product code with shortened BCH component codes for high speed optical communication systems with 20% overhead. Based on hard decision decoding method, it can achieve potentially 10 dB Net Coding Gain (NCG) at post-FEC bit error rate (BER) of  $10^{-15}$ .

First generation and second generation FEC studied hard-decision FEC (HD-FEC) with various code constructions. The best reported performance is from Scholten *et al.* based on continuously interleaved BCH(1020,988) codewords of 9.35 dB NCG [1]. Justesen also mentioned around 9.3 dB NCG in [2] based on product code with BCH(1023,992) component code. Optical Internetworking Forum (OIF) recommended to increase the overhead to 20% due to the necessity for even higher NCG [3]. The study of HD-FEC is somewhat neglected afterwards.

Meanwhile, soft decision forward error correction (SD-FEC) gained a lot of interest. FPGA emulations are carried out for low density parity check (LDPC) code [4,5] and turbo product code (TPC) [6]. The achieved NCG is between 10.8 dB and 11.3 dB. Various codes are studied, including concatenation of different codes [7] and combination of codes and modulation formats [8]. Simulation results show a potential NCG between 9.7 dB and 11.38 dB. Soft decision decoding uses not only the conventional decision of value 1/0 as in the hard decision, but also information on reliabilities of these decisions. With the expense of more complexity, soft decision decoding method provides more gain than hard decision decoding method. Therefore, more effort is required for real implementation in Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) or Application-Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC). As the reliability information provided to SD-FEC is from signal demodulation block, the two blocks have to be considered together in implementation. Mizuochi *et al.* demonstrated in [4] that SD-FEC and demodulation should be implemented in the same ASIC to achieve the best performance and this consequently increases the complexity of implementation. Power consumption can be another issue due to more information processing.

A difficulty in iterative decoding for HD-FEC is that the introduced decoding errors in the component codes degrades decoding performance to an unacceptable level with accumulative iterations compared to the ideal case of no decoding error. We propose a product code with shortened BCH component codes. The decoding error probability of the component code is reduced to a very low level that has almost no effect on the performance of the product code. This product code has potentially more than 10 dB NCG at post-FEC BER of  $10^{-15}$ .

## 2. Code Construction and Decoding Algorithm

We choose the product code with (391,357) shortened BCH component codes as the candidate code. This code has an overhead of 20% as recommended by OIF. The code structure is shown in Fig. 1. We first construct a product code with BCH component codes in  $GF(2^{11})$ . In a BCH component code, the first 980 bits are fixed to 0s. The middle 357 bits are information bits and the last 34 bits are parity check bits that enable the BCH code to correct up to 3 errors. The minimum distance of the BCH code is 8 so that a codeword with 4 errors will not be decoded. The product code in  $GF(2^{11})$  is then shortened by removing all fixed 0s and this returns a product code with shortened BCH component codes.

We use iterative decoding for the product code. In the component code decoding stage, each shortened component code aims to correct up to 3 errors. The principle of the component code decoding algorithm consists of

three steps: to restore the BCH code, to decode BCH code and to use the shortened bits for further check. A row or a column is a BCH codeword in  $GF(2^{11})$  by extending it with 980 leading 0s. If there are no more than 3 errors, the correct codeword is returned by the decoding. However, a decoding error may happen when there are more than 3 errors in a codeword and it degrades the performance of the product code heavily after multiple iterations. We therefore propose to include a third step in the decoding algorithm to reduce the decoding error probability. If any bit in the shortened bits has value 1 in the returned BCH codeword, a decoding error is reported.

Use  $t$  to denote the maximum number of errors a code can correct. Decoding error probability of BCH code is  $1/(t!)$  when there are more than  $t$  errors. In the proposed code, a BCH component code can correct up to 3 errors. So we have  $t = 3$ . The introduced errors from decoding error can be regarded as randomly distributed in the codeword, though there are certain relationships between the error positions and the decoding algorithm. As decoding error with 3 new errors dominates, the theoretical decoding error probability of BCH component code is  $(1/(t!))(391/2047)^3 = 0.12\%$ . Simulation results match the theoretical prediction.

As the decoding error probability of component codes is very small, the performance of the product code does not degrade much compared to the ideal case of no decoding error.

### 3. Performance Results

Fig. 2 shows the simulation result of the proposed code in an additive white Gaussian noise Channel. One iteration consists of decoding rows once and decoding columns once. After 8 iterations, the curve drops drastically between input BER  $1.2 \cdot 10^{-2}$  and  $1.1 \cdot 10^{-2}$ . This translates to slightly more than 10 dB NCG.

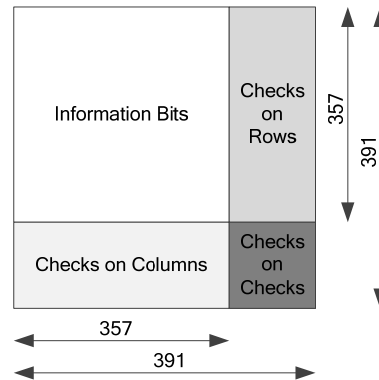


Fig. 1. Product Code Structure

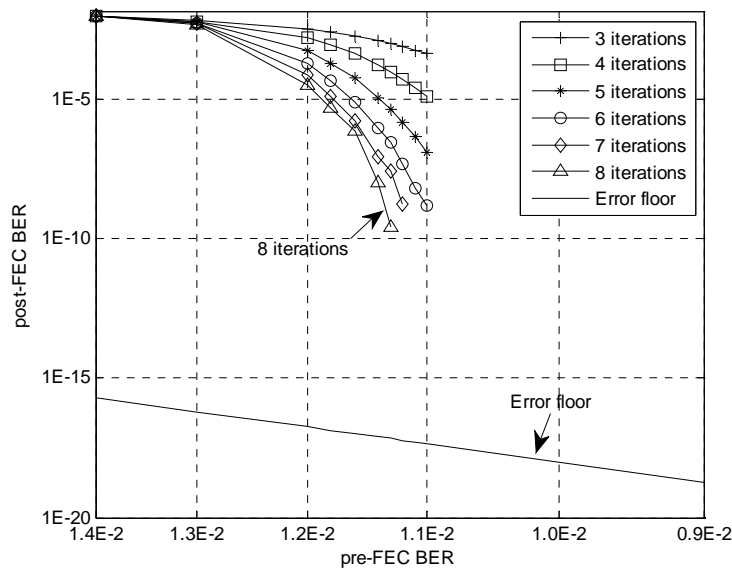


Fig. 2. BER curve

The error floor is calculated based on the formula  $(16/391/391) \binom{391}{4} p^{16}$ , where  $p$  is BER. This means that if the intersecting bits of 4 rows and 4 columns are all wrong, decoding fails. The error floor value is smaller than  $10^{-15}$  as shown in Fig. 2 and no further action is required.

Due to limited number of simulated frames, we take 10 iterations into consideration in the hardware implementation to ensure enough margin to get post-FEC BER of  $10^{-15}$  at pre-FEC BER of  $1.1 \cdot 10^{-2}$ .

#### 4. Hardware implementation

For easy hardware implementation in future, we employed the decoding algorithm in [9] as component code decoding algorithm. The algorithm takes advantage of the property that the shift of a BCH codeword is also a codeword. For a codeword of length  $n$ , it takes  $n$  rounds to get the decoding result. In each round, with a pre-setup table, it checks whether there are only 2 or less errors left by flipping the highest bit. If so, the highest bit is flipped. Otherwise the bit keeps its value. The codeword is then shifted by one bit for the next round. After  $n$  rounds, the bits in the codeword are back at original positions. Fig. 3 shows the flow of this decoding method. It is also pointed out in [9] that the major circuit area of ROM is  $(4m + 1) \cdot 2^m = (4 \cdot 11 + 1) \cdot 2048 = 90\text{K}$ . We use this algorithm to find the first error bit. The rest error positions will be deduced from checking syndrome values.

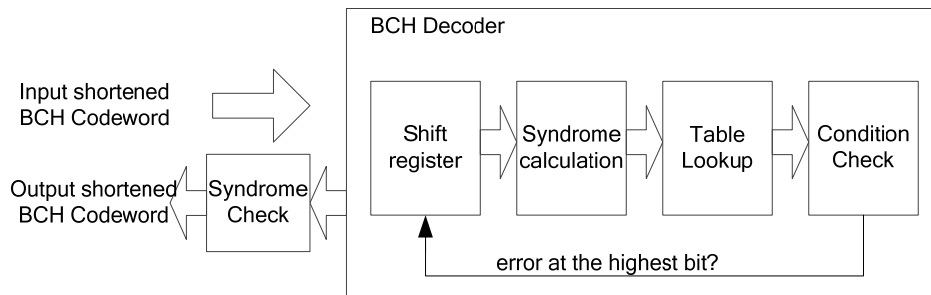


Fig. 3. Flow of Component Code Decoding

Now we look at the implementation complexity. In the row decoding of first iteration, one lookup table is shared by 4 BCH decoders. In total we need  $90\text{K} \cdot 391/4 \approx 8.7\text{M}$  ROM. In this step, we will check the first 190 bits in a codeword. As 4 decoders shares one lookup table, we need  $190 \cdot 4 = 760$  clock cycles. The required flip-flops of shift registers are  $190 \cdot 391 \approx 76\text{K}$ . The result is forwarded to an interleaver of  $391 \cdot 391 \approx 0.15\text{M}$  bits. In total the ROM and flip-flops in this step is  $\sim 8.7\text{M}$  and  $\sim 0.225\text{M}$ . Column decoding is similar to row decoding. The first iteration will cost  $\sim 17.5\text{M}$  ROM and  $\sim 0.45\text{M}$  flip flops. The same process is repeated in the second iteration except that we check the last 190 bits when decoding each component codeword. The third iteration will repeat the process of first iteration and so forth. As most errors are corrected in the first 5 iterations, the major circuit required will be  $\sim 17.5\text{M} \cdot 5 = 87.5\text{M}$  ROM and  $\sim 0.45\text{M} \cdot 5 = 2.25\text{M}$  flip flops. The last 5 iterations only correct errors for a few codewords and the added redundancy is limited. It is feasible to take this implementation out in several state-of-the-art FPGAs.

Each step takes around 760 clock cycles as mentioned above. This equals to 1520 ns in case that FPGA implementation works under 500 MHz system clock frequency. To receive a frame on a 100G interface takes  $391 \cdot 391 \cdot 10 \text{ ps} \approx 1529 \text{ ns}$ . So the implementation is fast enough to work for 100G systems.

#### 5. Conclusion

We proposed a product code with shortened BCH component code for high speed optical communication systems. The code provides potentially more than 10 dB NCG at post-FEC BER of  $10^{-15}$ . The hardware implementation is also investigated and the FPGA verification is feasible.

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