

# Sequence Detection and Equalization for Pulse-Position Modulation

John R. Barry

School of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, Georgia, 30332-0250

## ABSTRACT

We propose several strategies for detecting digital pulse-position modulation (PPM) in the presence of intersymbol interference and additive white Gaussian noise. We develop an equivalent vector channel by viewing PPM as a binary block code, and use this vector channel to derive the ML sequence detector. We also propose three sub-optimal block-by-block detectors, all of which use block decision-feedback equalization (DFE) to mitigate inter-block interference, but differ in how they mitigate intra-block interference: the ML-BDFE accounts for it in an optimal way, the comparator-BDFE uses linear equalization, and the correcting-scalar-DFE uses DFE. We illustrate low-complexity implementations of these equalizers, and compare their performance to the ML detector using Monte-Carlo simulations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Digital pulse-position modulation (PPM) is widely used in intensity-modulation optical communication systems, such as fiber-optic [1] and satellite systems [2], primarily because of its high average-power efficiency [3][4]. The abundance of bandwidth in these applications makes the poor bandwidth efficiency of PPM of little concern. In contrast, the bandwidth of indoor wireless infrared channels is severely constrained due to multipath optical propagation [5][6]. The objective of this work is to develop detection strategies for mitigating intersymbol-interference (ISI) so as to extend the usefulness of PPM to channels with severe ISI.

PPM can be viewed as a simple nonlinear block code; specifically, the rate  $\log_2 L/L$  block code consisting of the set of  $L$  binary  $L$ -tuples with unity Hamming weight. Therefore, equalizers designed for general block codes, such as the recent work reported in [7]—[10], can be applied to PPM. On the other hand, because the only feature of PPM exploited in this paper is that PPM is a block code, our results apply directly to all binary and non-binary block codes, including multidimensional-constellation codes.

In the next section we describe an equivalent vector (or multiple-input/multiple-output; MIMO) channel model for PPM over ISI channels; it results by first viewing the PPM signal as a cyclostationary binary PAM signal, employing a whitened-matched filter front end, and then grouping the coded bits into blocks of length  $L$ . Assuming the channel has finite memory, the vector channel output becomes a noisy observation of a finite-state machine driven by a white symbol sequence, allowing

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application of the Viterbi algorithm to determine the maximum likelihood (ML) solution, as described in Sect. III.

In Sect. IV we propose sub-optimal equalization structures that are less complex than the ML sequence detector. Building on the theory of MIMO equalization developed elsewhere [7]—[14], we first examine the block DFE (BDFE) [8]—[11], which operate on the vector channel, thus requiring matrix multiplications. We then show how the BDFE can be implemented via a simple modification of a scalar equalizer. We also propose other scalar equalization structures, and compare their performance with that of the ML sequence detector.

## II. EQUIVALENT VECTOR CHANNEL

A model for  $L$ -PPM transmission over channels with ISI is shown in Fig. 1. At the transmitter, a parallel-to-serial convertor converts a sequence of PPM vector blocks  $\{\mathbf{x}_k\}$  with block rate  $1/T$  into a single scalar “chip” sequence  $\{x_j\}$  with chip rate  $L/T$ , where  $\mathbf{x}_k = (x_{kL}, \dots, x_{kL+L-1})'$ . For each  $k$ , only one of the components of  $\mathbf{x}_k$  is unity, and the other  $L-1$  are zero. The chip sequence drives a transmit filter with pulse shape  $p(t)$ , so that the transmitted signal is given by:

$$x(t) = \sum_{j=-\infty}^{\infty} x_j p(t - jT/L). \quad (1)$$

The received signal  $y(t)$  is then given by:

$$y(t) = \sum_{j=-\infty}^{\infty} x_j g(t - jT/L) + n(t), \quad (2)$$

where  $g(t)$  is the convolution of  $p(t)$  with the channel impulse response  $b(t)$ , and  $n(t)$  is additive white Gaussian noise with two-sided power spectral density (PSD)  $N_0$ . Signals of the form (2) may be filtered by Forney's whitened-matched filter and then sampled at the chip rate  $L/T$  without compromising receiver performance [15]. The resulting equivalent discrete-time channel is described by:

$$y_j = \sum_{m=-\infty}^{\infty} h_m x_{j-m} + n_j, \quad (3)$$

where the discrete-time impulse response  $h_j$  is causal, monic ( $h_0 = 1$ ), and minimum phase, and where the noise sequence  $n_j$  is white and Gaussian with PSD  $\sigma^2 \equiv N_0/\gamma$ , where  $\gamma$  is the geometric mean of the folded spectrum:

$$\gamma = \exp \left\{ \frac{T}{L} \int_{-L/2T}^{L/2T} \log \left( \frac{L}{T} \sum_{k=-\infty}^{\infty} |G(f - kL/T)|^2 \right) df \right\}. \quad (4)$$



#### IV-A. Block Equalizers

Since the channel of Fig. 1-b is a linearly filtered vector (MIMO) communication channel with AWGN, we may apply principles of MIMO equalization [7]–[14], referred to here as block equalization. The block equalization structure is shown in Fig. 2-a. It has the same form as a conventional scalar DFE. The received signal is passed through a forward filter with transfer function  $\mathbf{C}(z) = \sum_k \mathbf{C}_k z^{-k}$ . Decisions  $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_k$  are fed through a feedback filter  $\mathbf{D}(z)$ , and the result is subtracted from the input of a vector slicer. The block linear equalizer results when  $\mathbf{D}(z) = \mathbf{0}$ .

The optimal zero-forcing BDFE filters may be derived as in the scalar case [7][18]. Specifically, if we limit consideration to filters that completely eliminate ISI, so that  $\mathbf{w}_k$  equals  $\mathbf{x}_k$  when the noise is zero, and then choose  $\mathbf{C}(z)$  and  $\mathbf{D}(z)$  to minimize the MSE =  $E\|\mathbf{w}_k - \mathbf{x}_k\|^2$  under the assumption that  $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_k = \mathbf{x}_k$ , the results are:

$$\mathbf{C}(z) = \mathbf{H}_0^{-1} \quad (10)$$

$$\mathbf{D}(z) = \mathbf{H}_0^{-1} \mathbf{H}(z) - \mathbf{I} \quad (11)$$

$$MSE_{BDFE} = \sigma^2 \text{trace}(\mathbf{H}_0 \mathbf{H}_0')^{-1}, \quad (12)$$

where a prime denotes conjugate transpose. Assuming correct decisions,  $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_k = \mathbf{x}_k$ , the slicer input is then  $\mathbf{w}_k = \mathbf{x}_k + \mathbf{H}_0^{-1} \mathbf{n}_k$ . In this case, it is easy to show that the optimal (maximum-likelihood) slicer chooses  $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_k$  so as to minimize  $\|\mathbf{H}_0(\mathbf{w}_k - \hat{\mathbf{x}}_k)\|^2$ . If we define  $\mathbf{H}_0(\mathbf{w}_k - \hat{\mathbf{x}}_k)$  as the error for the ML slicer, then its mean-squared value is  $MSE_{ML-BDFE} = L\sigma^2 \leq MSE_{BDFE}$ .

The optimal minimum-MSE BDFE can be derived in a similar way [7][12][14], and it would outperform the zero-forcing BDFE at low SNR. We shall not pursue it here, however, because our focus is on equalizers that are easily implemented.

#### IV-B. Scalar Equalizers

The block equalizers of the previous section, although reduced in complexity as compared to the MLSE, still appear quite complex. This motivates the investigation of chip-by-chip, scalar, or “random-phase” [7] equalizers.

The scalar zero-forcing linear equalizer (LE) is the most straight forward. The WMF samples  $y_j$  are passed through a scalar filter with transfer function  $C(z) = 1/H(z)$ , before the serial to parallel conversion, as illustrated in Fig. 3-a. Note that this scalar LE is equivalent to a block LE, which results when  $\mathbf{C}(z) = \mathbf{H}(z)^{-1}$  and  $\mathbf{D}(z) = \mathbf{0}$  in Fig. 2. The LE does not exist when  $H(z)$  has poles on the unit circle.

A scalar zero-forcing DFE (SDFE) feeds back tentative “chip decisions” to cancel intra-block as well as inter-block interference, as illustrated in Fig. 3-b. Assuming that these chip decisions are correct, the MSE is given by:

$$MSE_{SDFE} = L\sigma^2. \quad (13)$$

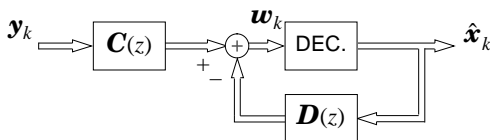


Fig. 2. The Block Decision-Feedback Equalizer (BDFE).

Comparing with (12), we might conclude that the SDFE outperforms the BDFE with naive slicer, equaling the performance of the BDFE with ML slicer. However, the chip-decisions are highly unreliable, and the resulting error propagation can reduce performance significantly. The true MSE of the SDFE will always exceed  $L\sigma^2$ , as illustrated by example in Sect. V.

#### IV-C. Correcting Scalar Equalizers

We next modify the scalar equalizers in a natural way to improve performance, yielding the so-called “correcting” scalar equalizers. The correcting scalar-LE turns out to be precisely equivalent to the vector BDFE, thus providing valuable insight into the BDFE’s function, as well as suggesting a simple implementation.

##### The Correcting SLE: An Alternative View of the BDFE

The scalar zero-forcing linear equalizer of Fig. 3-a has transfer function  $C(z) = 1/H(z)$ . Since  $H(z)$  is monic and causal,  $C(z)$  can be implemented using linear feedback, as illustrated in Fig. 4 (ignoring the outer feedback loop for the moment), where the strictly causal feedback filter has transfer function  $H(z) - 1$ .

The contents of the memory elements in the delay line at time  $j$  are  $\{w_{j-1}, w_{j-2}, \dots, w_{j-M}\}$ , where  $M$  is the length of the scalar channel impulse-response tail. It is well known that, since  $w_j$  represents a noisy estimate of the actual chip sequence  $x_j$ , the performance would improve if we fed back the true chip

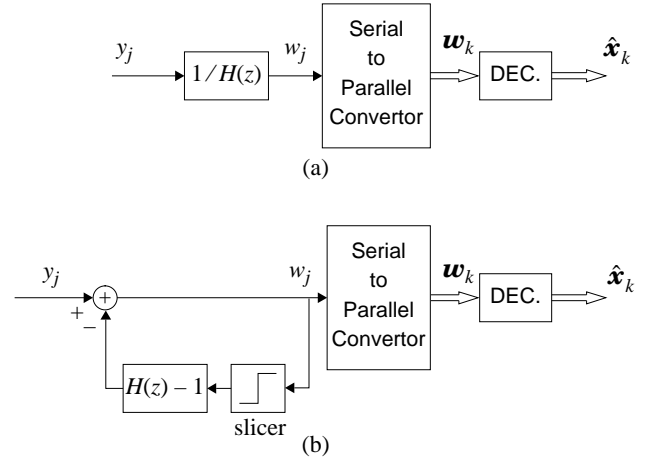


Fig. 3. Scalar Equalizers: (a) SLE, and (b) SDFE.

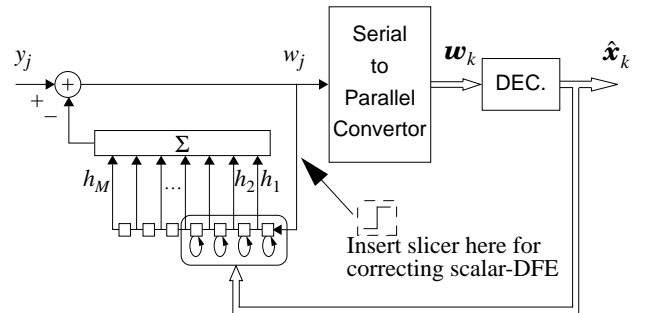


Fig. 4. The correcting scalar-LE, which implements the block DFE. Inserting a slicer as shown results in the correcting scalar-DFE.

sequence  $x_j$  rather than its noisy estimate  $w_j$ . (In other words, ideal decision-feedback equalizers outperform linear equalizers.) Unfortunately, there is a decoding delay (inherent in the serial-to-parallel convertor) of anywhere from one to  $L$  chips, preventing immediate decision feedback. Specifically, the decoding delay for the  $l$ -th chip in a block is  $L - l$ , where  $l \in \{0, \dots, L - 1\}$ .

We can still achieve some of the decision-feedback advantage, however, by feeding back the noisy estimates  $w_j$  when decisions are unavailable, and then “correcting” the delay line once a decision has been made. That is, when  $j$  is a multiple of  $L$ , the decisions about the previous  $L$  chips are known, and so the values stored in the first  $L$  delays may then be “corrected.” In Fig. 4, the outer feedback path (between the decision device and the delay line) and the  $L$  circular arrows (assuming  $L = 4$ ) are meant to represent this correction operation: a fraction of a chip<sup>1</sup> before time  $j$  is a multiple of  $L$ , the first  $L$  memory elements of the delay line  $\{w_{j-1}, w_{j-2}, \dots, w_{j-L}\}$  are replaced by  $\{\hat{x}_{j-1}, \hat{x}_{j-2}, \dots, \hat{x}_{j-L}\}$ .

A closer look at the above-described correcting scalar-LE reveals that it implements precisely the vector BDFE of Sect. IV-A. The proof is omitted due to lack of space.

### The Correcting Scalar-DFE

As in the LE case, it is also beneficial to correct the delay line for the scalar DFE. This leads to the correcting SDFE, as shown in Fig. 4 (with the slicer inserted as indicated). Intuitively, the only difference between the correcting SDFE and the BDFE is the way it mitigates intra-block interference; both mitigate inter-block interference using block decisions, but the correcting SDFE uses tentative chip-by-chip decisions to mitigate intra-block interference, whereas the BDFE uses linear equalization.

Although the correcting equalizers always outperform their non-correcting counterparts, comparisons between the BDFE (i.e., the correcting scalar-LE) and correcting scalar-DFE must be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the channel and the slicer. This is illustrated further in the next section.

## V. NUMERICAL RESULTS

As an example, consider the transmission of  $L = 2$  PPM over a scalar channel with transfer function  $H(z) = 1 - z^{-1} + z^{-2}$ . The ISI in this channel is particularly severe, and cannot be overcome by an increase in signal power; even at infinite SNR, the error rate is  $1/4$ . From (9) we find that  $d_{min} = \sqrt{10}$ , and (8) approximates the error performance of the ML sequence detector. The dashed curve in Fig. 5 plots this estimate versus  $\text{SNR} \equiv 1/\sigma^2$ . Simulation results for the ML sequence detector are represented in the figure by open circles, and were based upon  $10^6$  blocks ( $2 \times 10^6$  chips).

Fig. 5 also illustrates the performance of several equalization structures. (Since  $H(z)$  has zeros on the unit circle, the zero-forcing LE does not exist.) The best performance is achieved by the BDFE with an ML slicer; it is about 3 dB from the ML sequence detector, and outperforms the BDFE with a comparator slicer by about 1 dB. These numbers agree with theory; neglecting error propagation, the slicer error at time  $k$  is:

$$\mathbf{H}_0^{-1} \mathbf{n}_k = [n_{kL}, (n_{kL} + n_{kL+1})]^T. \quad (14)$$

The probability of error is then easily shown to be  $Q(\sqrt{5}/2\sigma)$  and  $Q(1/\sigma)$  for the BDFE with ML slicer and comparator slicer, respectively, so that the expected penalties are 3 and 4 dB, respectively.

Also included in Fig. 5 are simulation results for the scalar-DFEs, with and without correction. A significant gain of about 2.2 dB is achieved by the correcting scalar-DFE over its non-correcting counterpart. This implies that error propagation from the chip-by-chip slicer is significant. Although the BDFE with comparator slicer outperforms the correcting-DFE here, this is not always the case, as illustrated in the next example.

We now consider the same channel, but with  $L = 8$  rather than  $L = 2$ . Simulation results are presented in Fig. 6. The dashed curve approximates the performance of the ML sequence detector from (8), using  $d_{min} = 2$  as calculated from (9). (The approximation is poor at low SNR because there are 5 five pairs of sequences separated by a distance of  $d_{min}$ .) The other curves are the result of simulating  $10^6$  blocks. Unlike the previous example, here  $L$  is relatively large compared to the channel memory. Therefore, most of the ISI is confined to a single block, and the effects of inter-block interference are diminished. Since the BDFE with ML slicer mitigates intra-block interference in an optimal way, its performance is very close to that of the optimal ML sequence detector. On the other hand, the BDFE with comparator slicer essentially ignores the effects of intra-block interference, thus explaining its poor performance. The correcting SDFE is only negligibly better than its non-correcting counterpart; this is because the variable decoding delay usually exceeds the channel memory, so that most of the corrections have no effect.

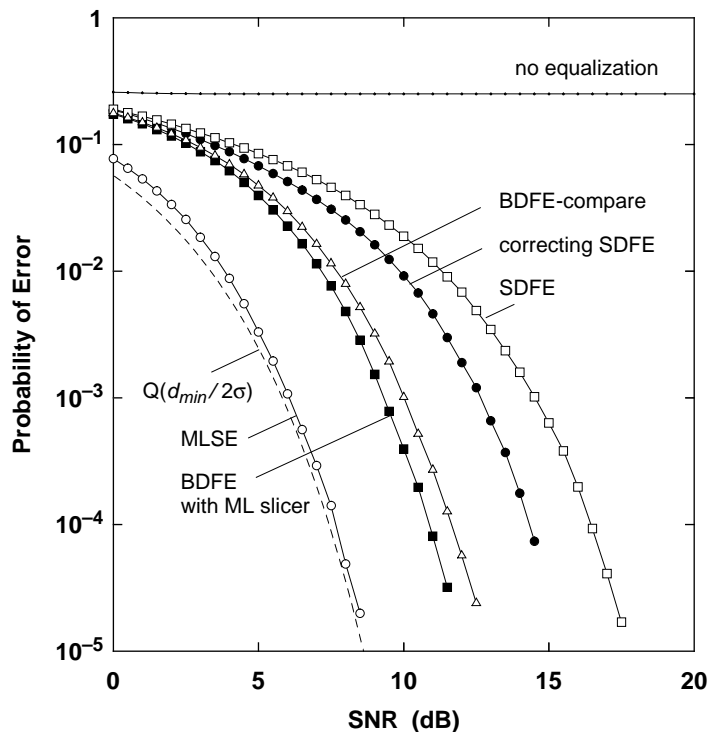


Fig. 5. Performance for  $L = 2$  PPM with  $H(z) = 1 - z^{-1} + z^{-2}$ .

1. The corrections are made asynchronously, after chip number  $kL - 1$  and before chip number  $kL$ , for every integer  $k$ .

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

With the aid of an equivalent vector channel model, the maximum likelihood sequence detector for any block code subject to intersymbol interference and additive white Gaussian noise may be implemented using the Viterbi algorithm in a straight forward manner. The complexity of the ML sequence detector is high, however, and so reduced-complexity detectors are desirable. We examined the performance of several block-by-block equalization schemes, some of which required no matrix multiplications. These equalizers were effective at mitigating ISI, although for some channels there remained a significant gap between their performance and that of the ML sequence detector. Future research should examine the effectiveness of reduced-complexity detectors at closing this gap.

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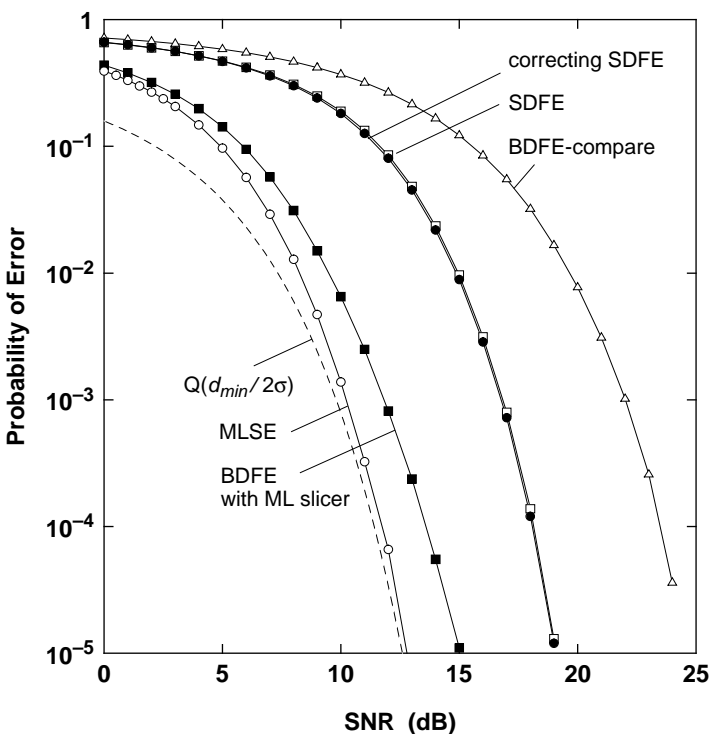


Fig. 6. Performance for  $L = 8$  PPM with  $H(z) = 1 - z^{-1} + z^{-2}$ .

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