Machine Learning for Real-Time Processing of ATLAS Liquid Argon Calorimeter Signals with FPGAs

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Within the Phase-II upgrade of the LHC, the readout electronics of the ATLAS LAr Calorimeters is prepared for high luminosity operation expecting a pile-up of up to 200 simultaneous pp interactions. Real-time processing of digitized pulses sampled at 40 MHz is thus performed using FPGAs.

To cope with the signal pile-up, new machine learning approaches are explored that outperform the optimal signal filter currently used, both in assignment of the reconstructed energy to the correct bunch crossing and in energy resolution.

Latest performance results and experience with prototype implementations will be reported.

Summary (500 words)

The Phase-II upgrade of the LHC will increase its instantaneous luminosity by a factor of 7 leading to the High Luminosity LHC (HL-LHC). At the HL-LHC, the number of proton-proton collisions in one bunch crossing (called pileup) increases significantly, putting more stringent requirements on the LHC detectors electronics and real-time data processing capabilities.

The ATLAS Liquid Argon (LAr) calorimeter measures the energy of particles produced in LHC collisions. This calorimeter has also trigger capabilities to identify interesting events. In order to enhance the ATLAS detector physics discovery potential, in the blurred environment created by the pileup, an excellent resolution of the deposited energy and an accurate detection of the deposited time is crucial.

The computation of the deposited energy is performed in real-time using dedicated data acquisition electronic boards based on FPGAs. FPGAs are chosen for their capacity to treat large amount of data with very low latency. The computation of the deposited energy is currently done using optimal filtering algorithms that assume a nominal pulse shape of the electronic signal. These filter algorithms are adapted to the ideal situation with very limited pileup and no timing overlap of the electronic pulses in the detector. However, with the increased luminosity and pileup, the performance of the filter algorithms decreases significantly and no further extension nor tuning of these algorithms could recover the lost performance.

The back-end electronic boards for the Phase-II upgrade of the LAr calorimeter will use the next high-end generation of INTEL FPGAs with increased processing power and memory. This is a unique opportunity to develop the necessary tools, enabling the use of more complex algorithms on these boards. We developed several neural networks (NNs) with significant performance improvements with respect to the optimal filtering algorithms. The main challenge is to efficiently implement these NNs into the dedicated data acquisition electronics. Special effort was dedicated to minimising the needed computational power while optimising the NNs architectures.

Five NN algorithms based on CNN, RNN, and LSTM architectures will be presented. The improvement of the energy resolution and the accuracy on the deposited time compared to the legacy filter algorithms, especially for overlapping pulses, will be discussed. The implementation of these networks in firmware will be shown. Two implementation categories in VHDL and Quartus HLS code are considered. The implementation results on Stratix 10 INTEL FPGAs, including the resource usage, the latency, and operation frequency will be reported. Approximations for the firmware implementations, including the use of fixed-point precision arithmetic and lookup tables for activation functions, will be discussed. Implementations including time multiplexing to reduce resource usage will be presented. We will show that two of these NNs implementations are viable solutions that fit the stringent data processing requirements on the latency (O(100ns)) and bandwidth (O(1Tb/s) per FPGA) needed for the ATLAS detector operation.

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