Journal of Artificial Intelligence General Science (JAIGS)

ISSN: 3006-4023 (Online), Volume 6, Issue 1, 2024 DOI: 10.60087

Home page https://ojs.boulibrary.com/index.php/JAIGS

AI-Powered Neural Network Verification: System Verilog Methodologies for Machine Learning in Hardware

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on verifying neural network models using System Verilog, with two primary applications: visual edge detection and neuron behavior modeling. In modern chip design, hardware verification plays a crucial role in ensuring that complex neural models perform as expected. A neuron model based on Hubel and Wiesel's feed-forward network architecture was proposed and tested using integrator and threshold modules implemented in Verilog. The proposed verification methodology employs self-checking test benches, supported by functional coverage and simulation, for comprehensive validation. The results demonstrate efficient verification with high coverage, paving the way for future advancements in hardware neural networks.

Keywords: Neural networks, System Verilog, hardware verification, edge detection, neuron model.

ARTICLE INFO: *Received: 20.08.2024 Accepted: 30.08.2024 Published: 16.09.2024*

1. Introduction

Large numbers of neural networks are being developed based on human brains and are also being used in fields such as image processing, artificial intelligence, or embedded systems. In recent years, the importance of neural networks has been realized, leading to increased focus on them due to advancements in integrated circuit technology. The challenge is verifying the correctness of neural network models at the hardware level. Verification consumes the lion's share when chip designs are becoming increasingly complex, with estimates ranging between 60% to 75% of the total design time.

2. Methodology

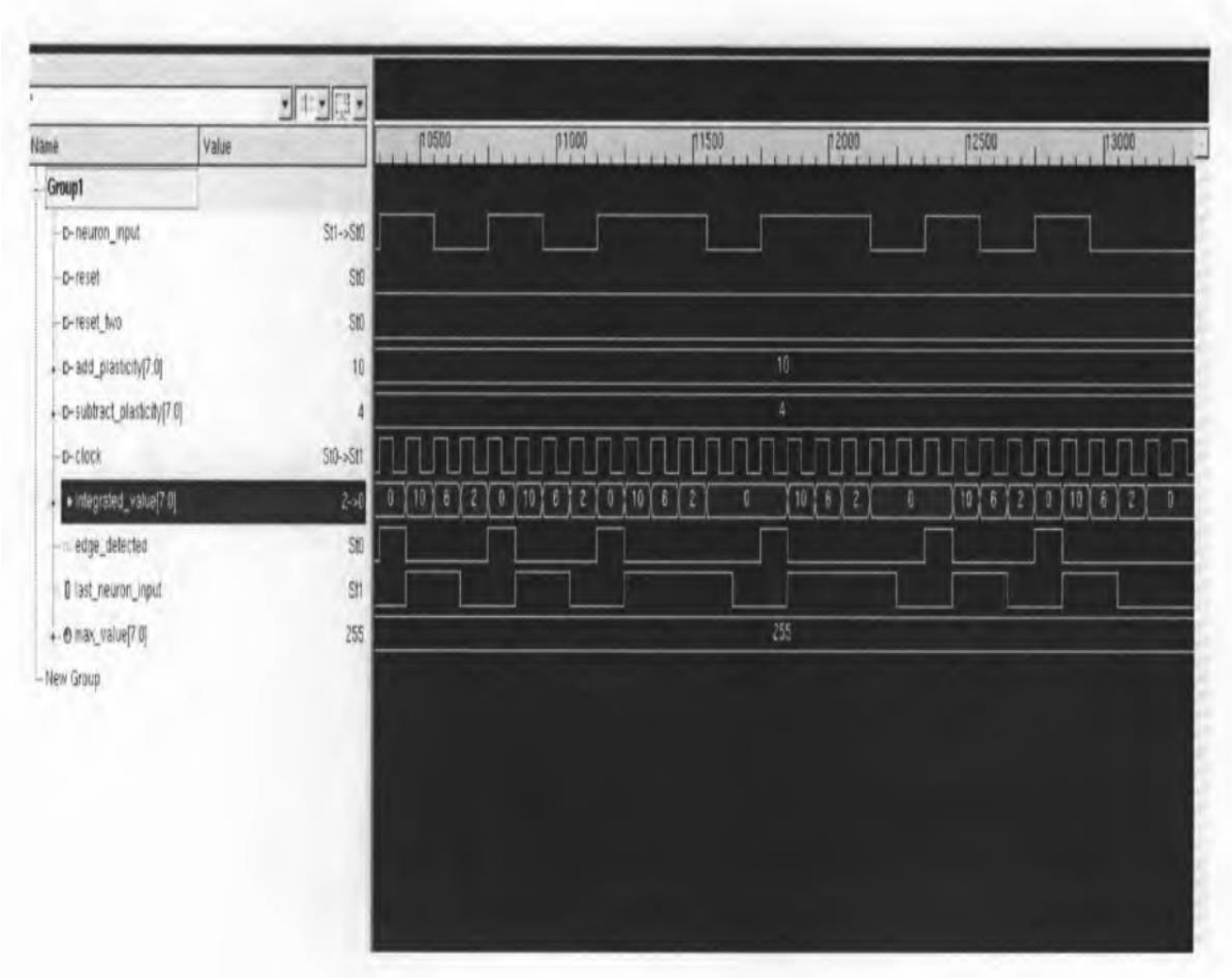
2.1 Neuron Model Design

In this research, we've designed a neuron model inspired by the feed-forward networks proposed by Hubel and Wiesel, aiming to emulate the behavior of biological neurons involved in visual edge detection. The neuron model comprises three key components:

1. **Integrator Module**: This module simulates how a biological neuron accumulates incoming signals over time. As shown in Figure 1

Figure 1: Integrator waveform displaying integrated values

2. **Sum Threshold Module**: After the integrator accumulates input, this module compares it to a preset threshold.



3. **Ganglion Cell Model**: Mimics **off-center ganglion cells**, detecting light-dark contrasts across visual fields. Figure

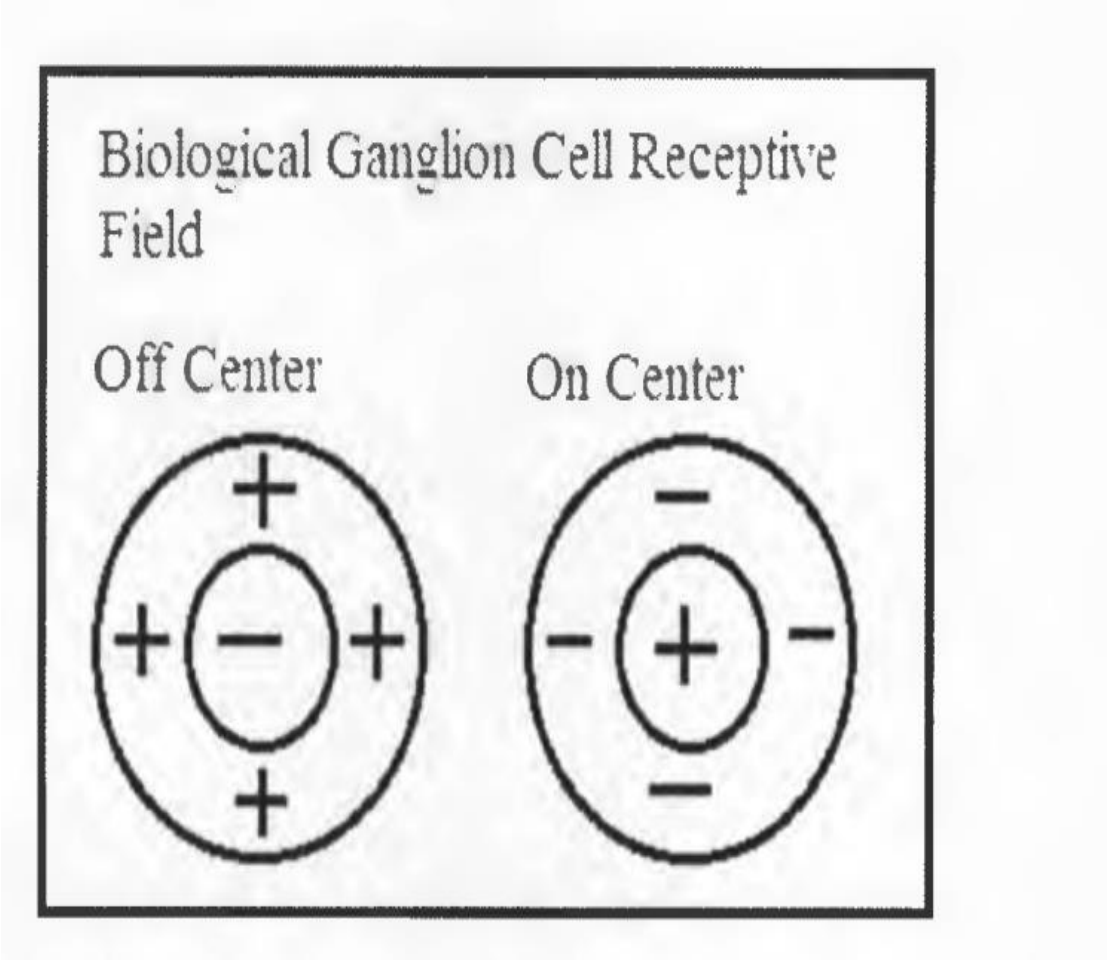


Figure 2: Receptive Field of a Pixelated Ganglion/Concentric Circle Cell

2.2 Verification Using System Verilog

To ensure the reliability of our neuron model, we employed System Verilog due to its robust features supporting digital design and test bench development. The verification process included:

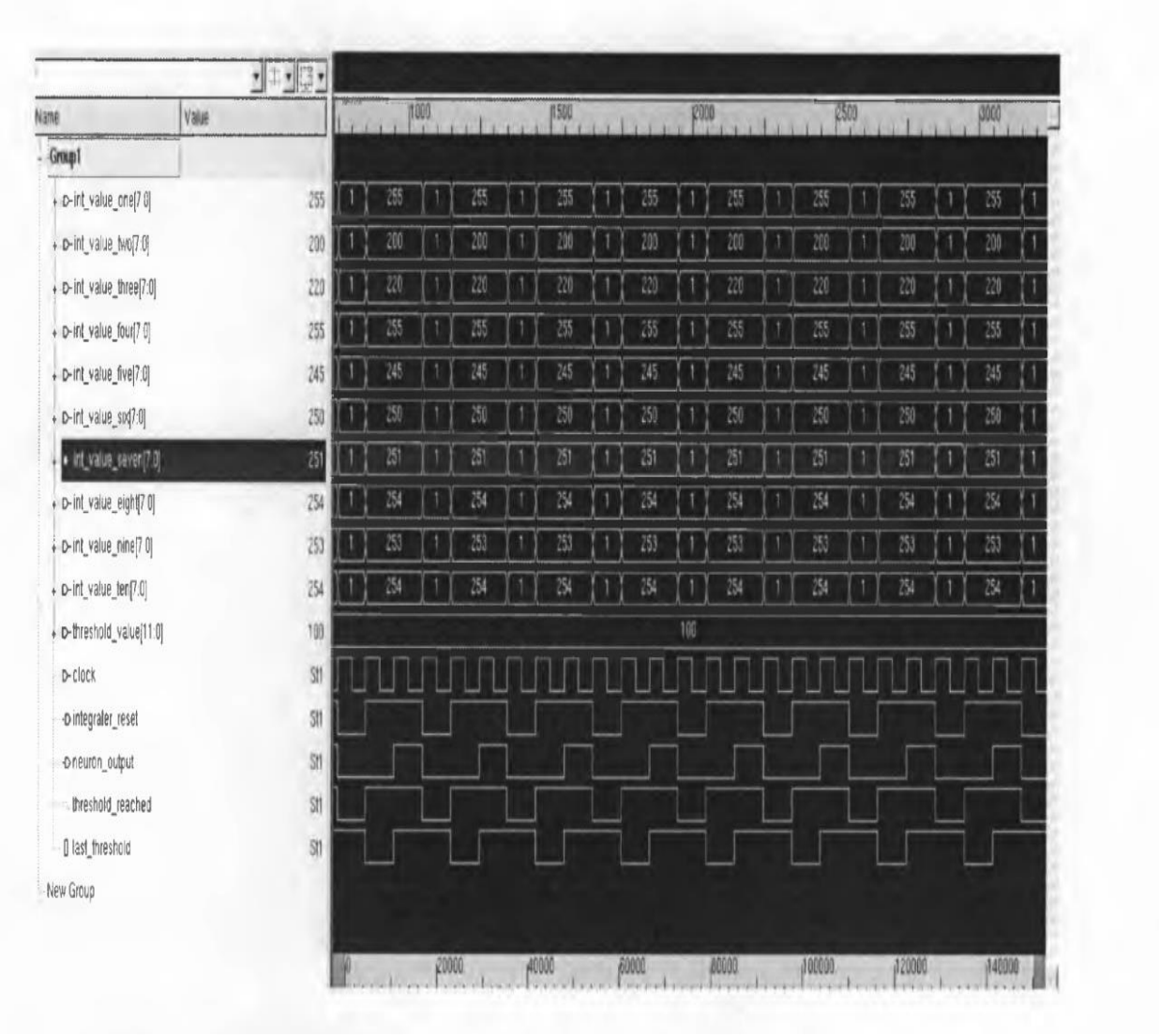
- **Test bench Design**: Self-checking test benches were designed to compare simulation outputs with expected results.
- **Randomized Input Generation**: Inputs such as synaptic weights and grayscale values were randomized to test diverse scenarios.
- **Functional Coverage**: Coverage tools in System Verilog were used to measure how extensively the design was tested.

2.3 Simulation Setup

The neural network was implemented in Verilog and verified using **ModelSim** for simulation and **Xilinx ISE** for synthesis. Initial simulations of the **Integrator** and **Sum Threshold** modules confirmed correct behavior before testing the complete neuron model for visual edge detection.

3. Results

3.1 Simulation Results



- **Integrator Module**: The simulation results show that the integrator module successfully accumulated digital pulse inputs, representing synaptic signals, over time. The waveform in Figure 3 confirms that the integrator correctly processed variable inputs, with output values increasing as expected with each pulse.

  Figure 3: Neuron Model simulation waveform

- **Sum Threshold Module**: As observed in Figure 4, the neuron fired accurately when the input signal exceeded the predetermined threshold. This behavior confirms the correct functionality of the threshold logic, which is essential for simulating realistic neuron firing patterns in response to varying input strengths.

Figure 4: Sum Threshold Logic

3.2 Functional Coverage

The use of randomized input vectors, such as variable synaptic weights and grayscale values, allowed the model to cover a wide range of edge cases and potential failure scenarios. The comprehensive simulation runs resulted in full functional coverage in critical areas, ensuring robust verification of the neural network's behavior.

3.3 Device Utilization

Synthesis on the VIRTEX-2 Pro FPGA indicated a significant utilization of hardware resources, particularly the multipliers, which operated at 85% capacity. This highlights a potential area for future optimization to reduce hardware overhead while maintaining performance.

4. Conclusion and Future Work

4.1 Conclusion

This research successfully demonstrated the verification of a neural network model for visual edge detection using System Verilog, covering neuron model validation and performance. Simulation results confirmed model accuracy, and the design was synthesized onto an FPGA for real-world testing. However, optimization is needed for scaling.

4.2 Future Work

1. **Adaptive Learning**: Dynamic updates to synaptic weights could improve real-time performance.
2. **Hardware Optimization**: Resource consumption, particularly multipliers, can be reduced through multiplexing or pipelining.
3. **Scaling to Larger Networks**: Expanding the model to tackle more complex tasks.
4. **Incorporating Deep Learning**: Applying this verification methodology to more complex neural architectures.

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