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(54) **EQUALIZATION FOR MULTICHANNEL
RECEIVING NODE**

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H03K 5/159

(52) U.S. Cl. **375/229**; 375/232; 375/233

(58) Field of Search 375/229, 232,
375/233, 316

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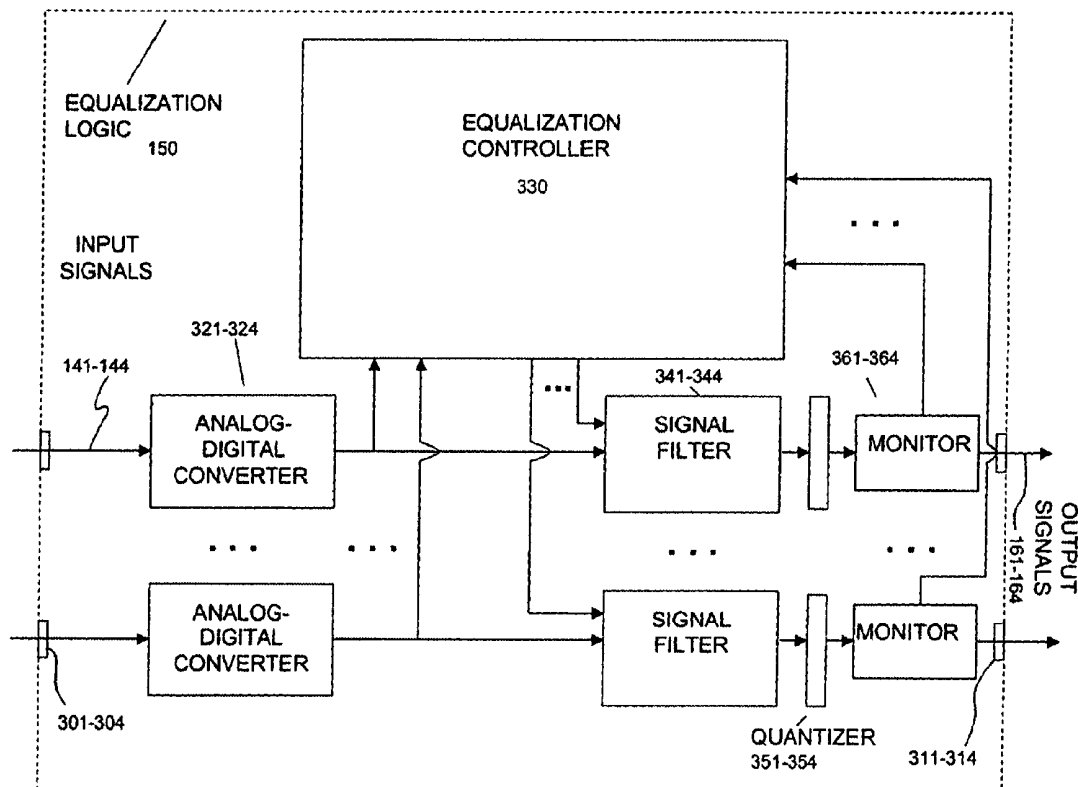
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An equalization method and apparatus for equalizing a
plurality of input signals received on a multichannel link
leverages shared equalization resources to generate dedi-
cated tap coefficients for application to the signals and
updates the dedicated tap coefficients upon measured deg-
radation in the quality of the signals. The equalization
method and apparatus achieves acceptable bit error rates
with relatively low overhead.

11 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



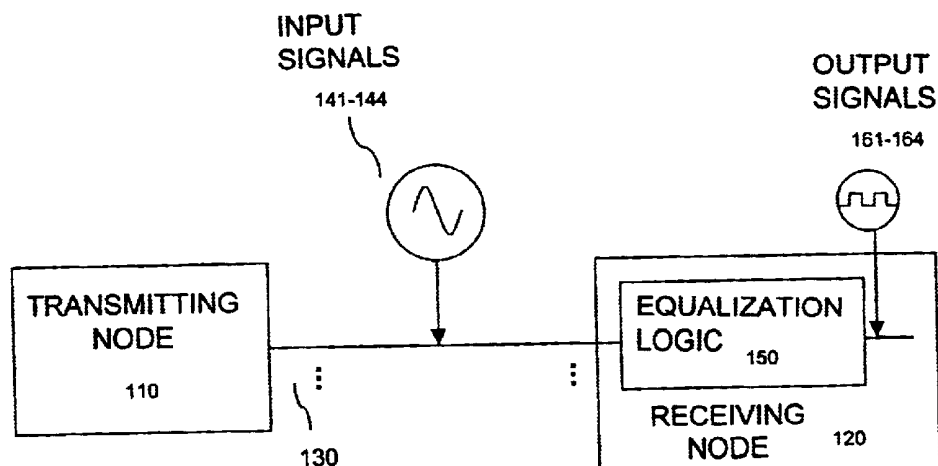


Figure 1

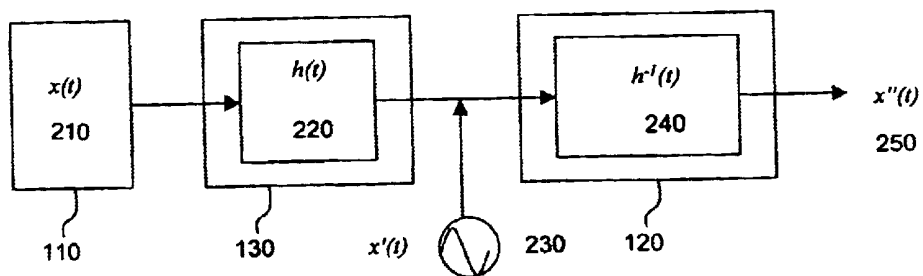


Figure 2

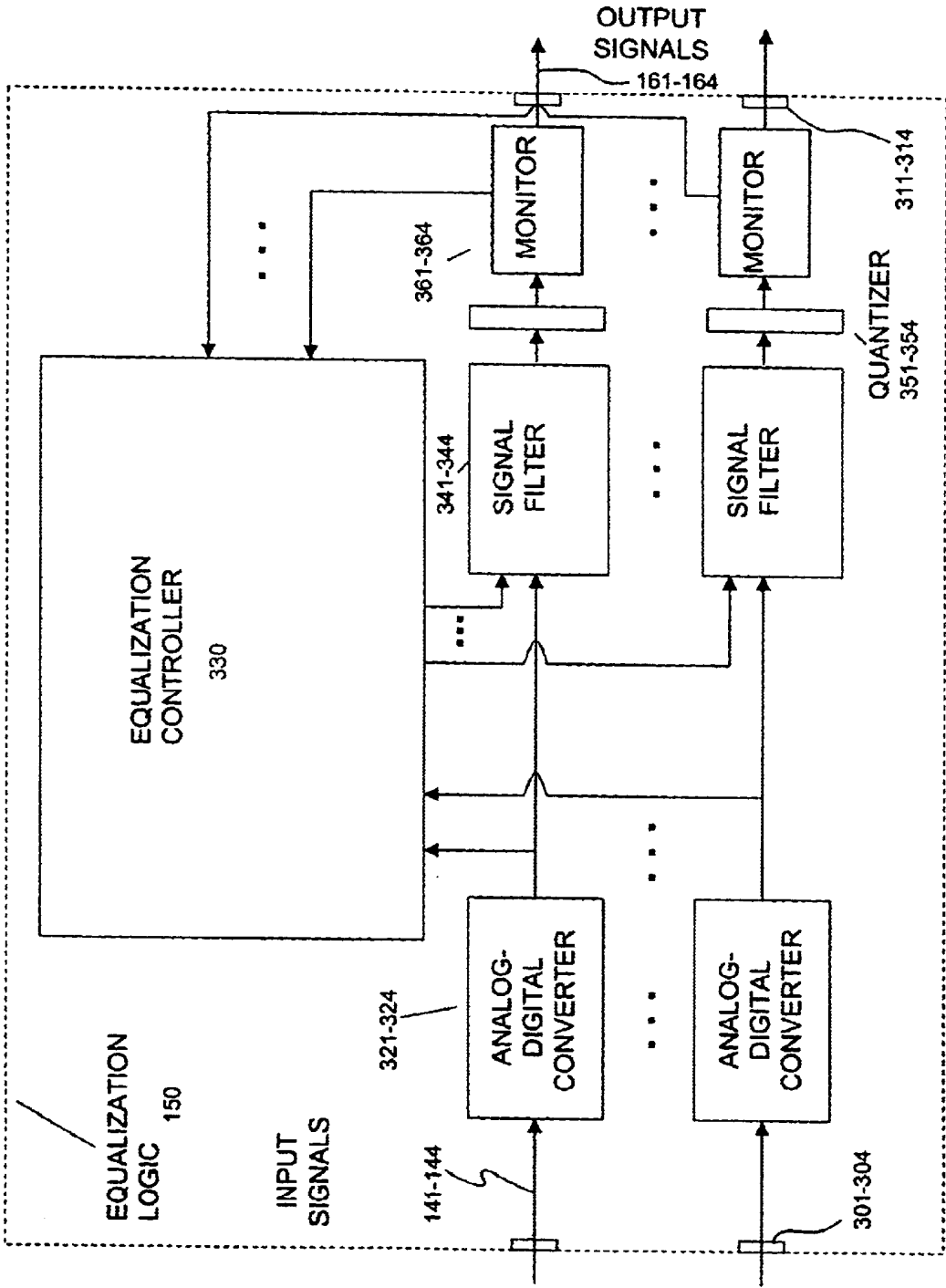


Figure 3

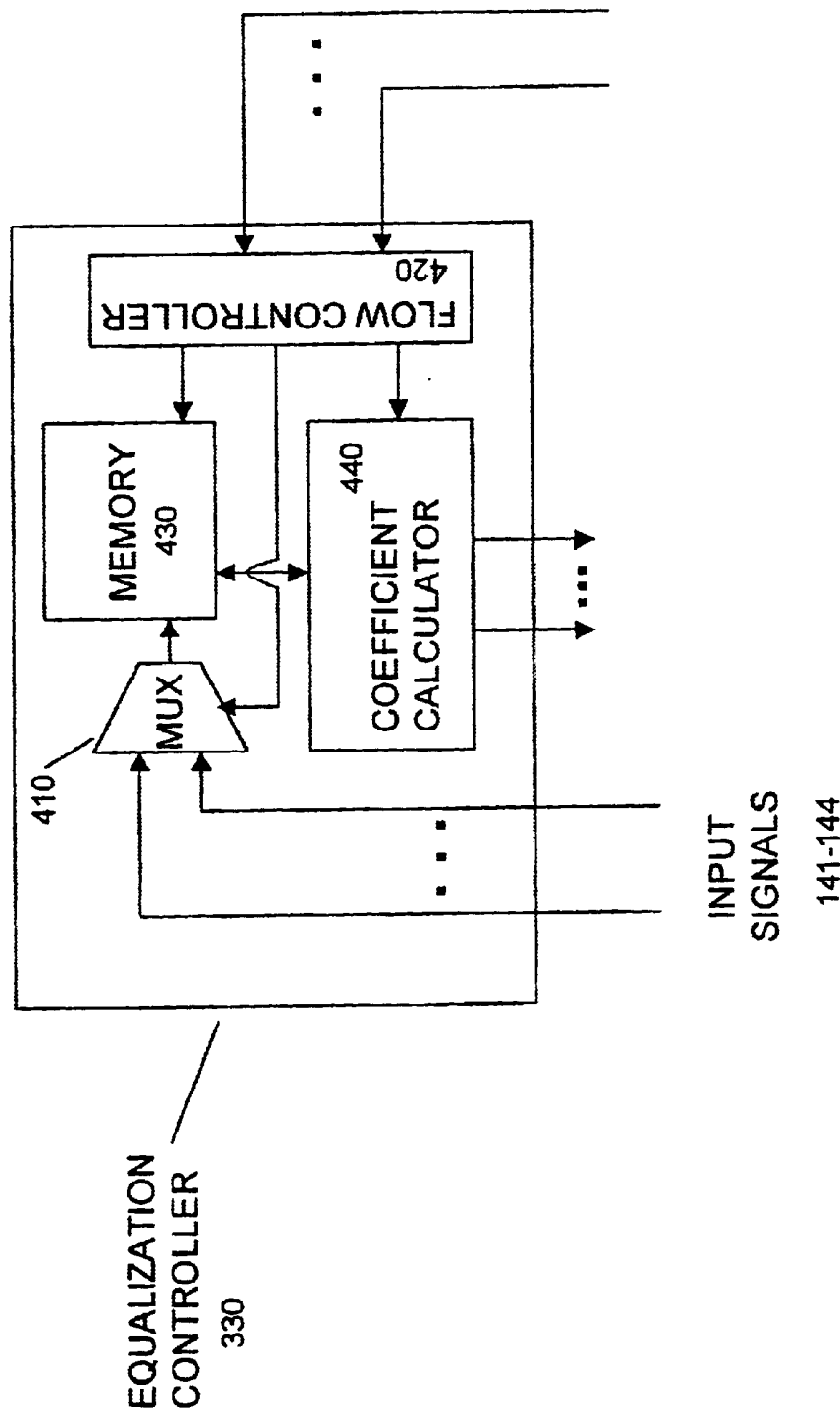


Figure 4

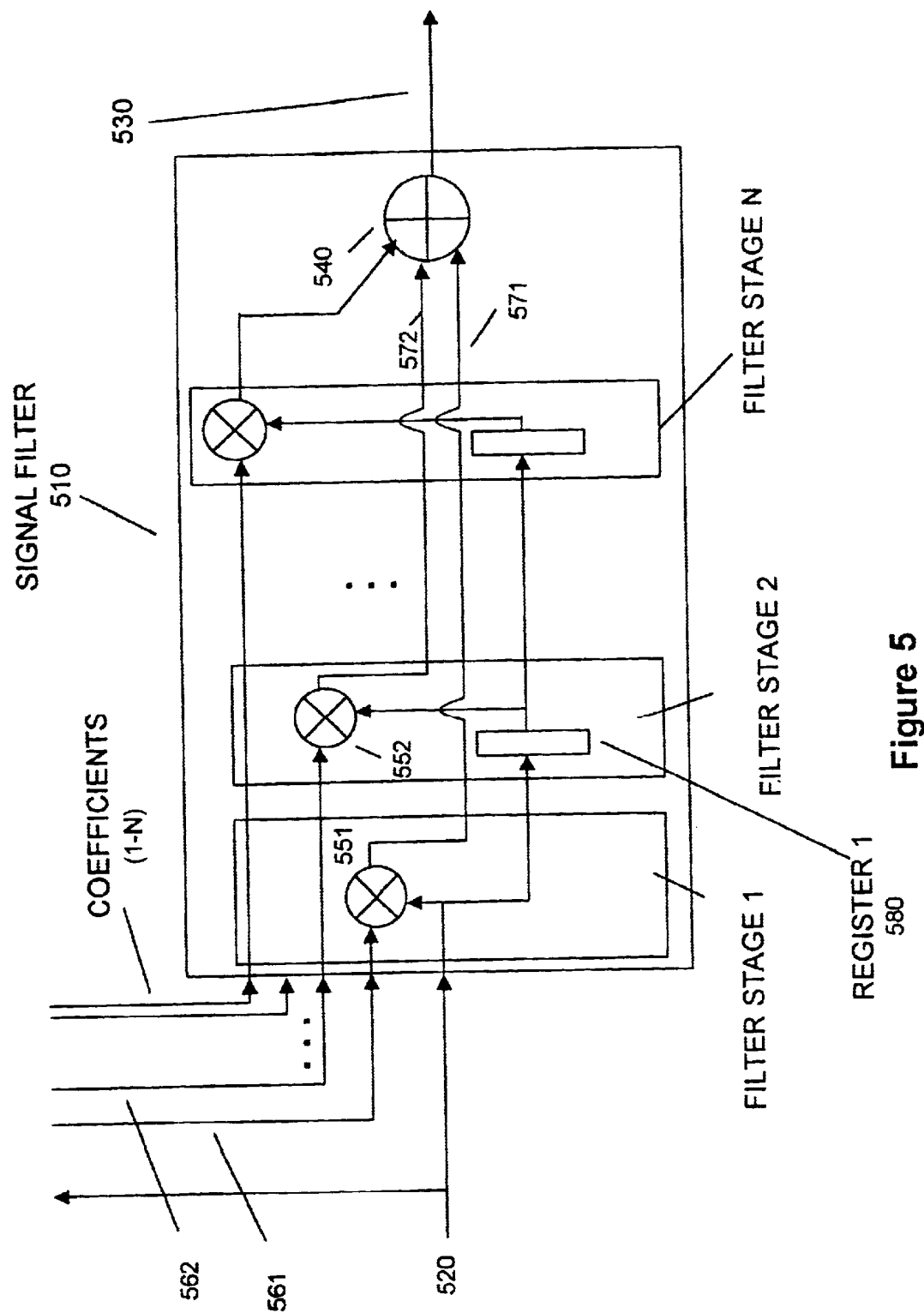


Figure 5

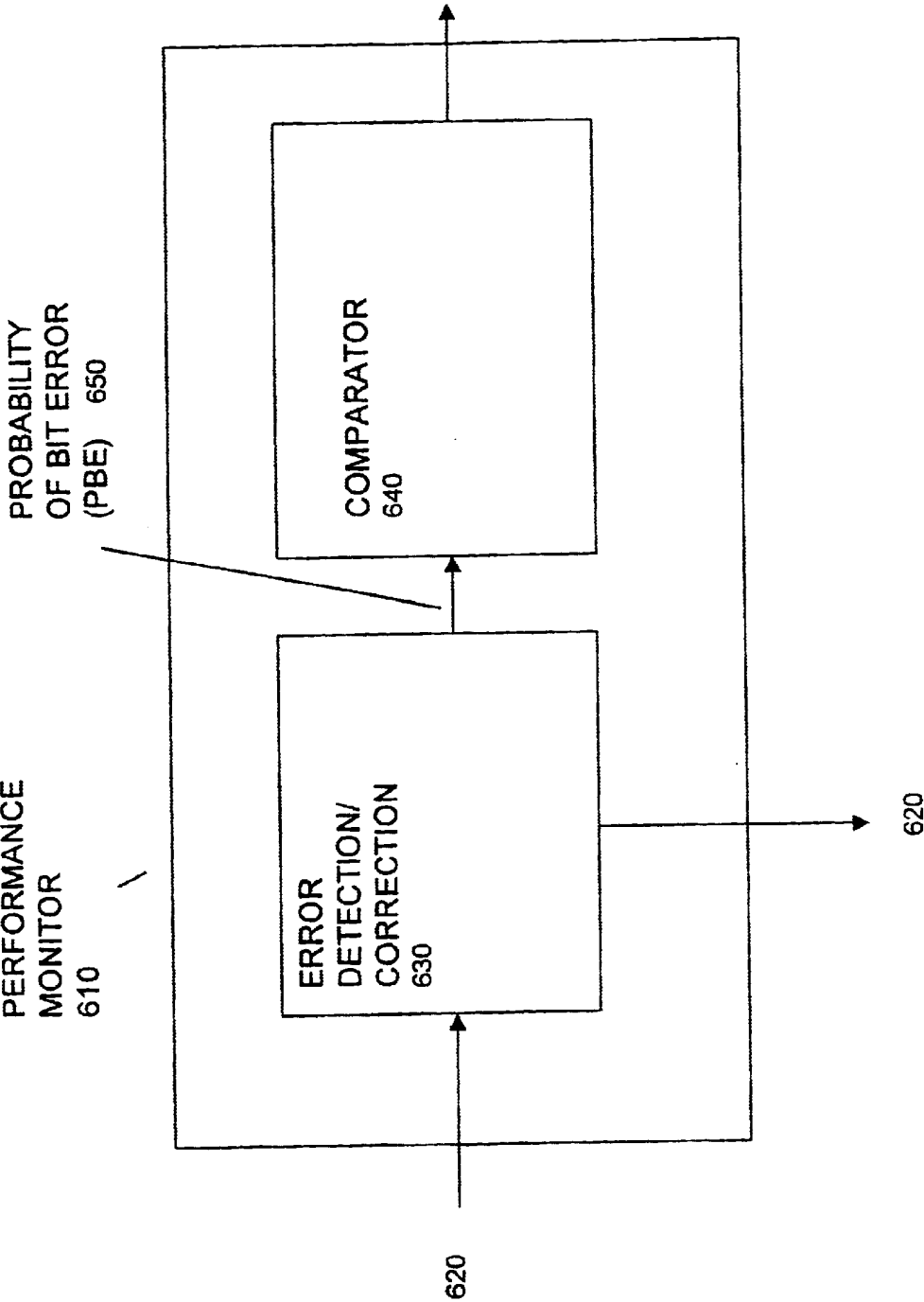


Figure 6

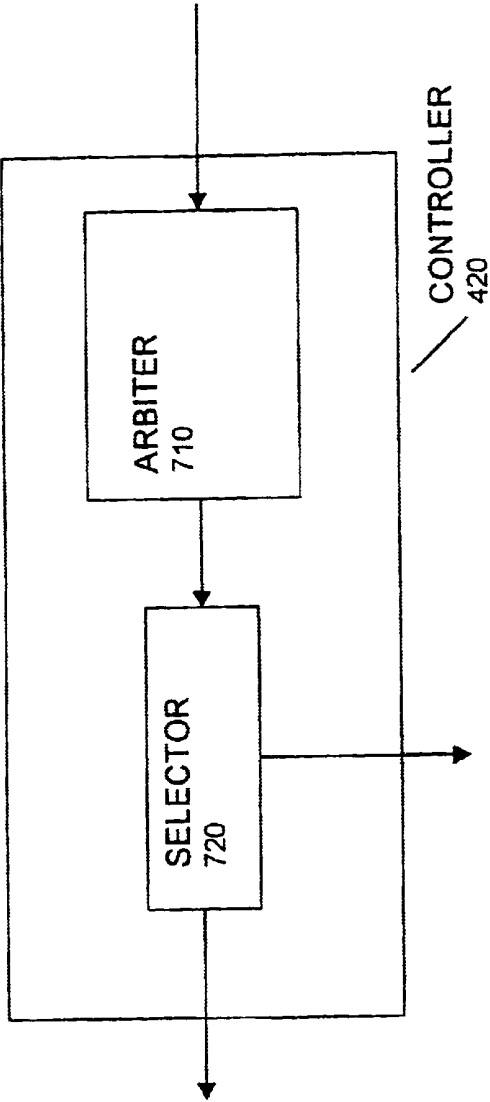


Figure 7

EQUALIZATION FOR MULTICHANNEL RECEIVING NODE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to devices for improving the quality of data signals and, more particularly, to devices for improving the quality of data signals distorted during transmission over a link.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In data communication networks, network nodes communicate by transmitting analog signals over links, such as a Category-5 cable. The receiving node is responsible for recovering digital data bits from the analog signal. Because distortion is introduced during transmission over the link, the receiving node must generally improve the quality of the signal prior to attempting data recovery. Signal quality is typically improved through a process known as equalization which, generally speaking, compensates for distortion introduced on a link and reshapes the signal closer to its original waveform. Without adequate equalization, distortion might cause either a total inability to recover the transmitted data, or recovery of data with an unacceptably high incidence of bit errors.

Equalization presents technical challenges because the nature and extent of distortion varies from network-to-network and link-to-link. The nature of distortion may be affected by numerous factors, such as channel length, transmission frequency, impedance mismatch, electromagnetic interference, and, to a generally lesser extent, impediments in connectors and coupling transformers, manufacturing variations and environmental factors such as temperature. Additional complications may arise from the dependence of some distortion-causing variables on others, such as the frequency dependency of signal attenuation for a given channel length.

Due to the often complex mix of factors causing distortion on real-world links, adaptive equalization has generally been favored over static equalization to compensate for such distortion. Static equalization applies a fixed corrective response, or "tap", to a signal. Static equalization is therefore not well suited to compensating for distortion that is unpredictable and time-variant. Conventional adaptive equalization, on the other hand, applies a dynamic corrective response to a signal, which response is updated in real-time based on continuous sampling of the signal, and is therefore better able to compensate for unpredictable and time-dependent distortion. Better signal quality and lower bit error rates result.

However, conventional adaptive equalization is not without its shortcomings. Conventional adaptive equalization has generally required substantial overhead, i.e. large gate count, which has translated into high chip costs. For links where distortion is relatively predictable and varies slowly with time, such adaptive equalization may therefore be "overkill". It has been found, for instance, that distortion introduced on multichannel Gigabit Ethernet links over Category-5 cable is primarily caused by impedance mismatch producing reflections within a channel and crosstalk between the channels, and does not change very rapidly. For such multichannel links, a receiving node implementing a novel equalization that leverages shared equalization resources to improve the quality of multiple signals, and updates the corrective responses applied to such signals only when necessary (i.e. not in real-time), may achieve accept-

able bit error rates with far less overhead than would be required by conventional adaptive equalization.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a basic feature, the present invention provides a novel equalization apparatus and method therefor for improving the quality of signals received over a multichannel link. The method generates dedicated tap coefficients for a plurality of input signals received over the link including sampling the input signals and applying the samples in a shared tap coefficient algorithm, which tap coefficients are applied to the input signals to which they are dedicated to generate output signals and are updated based upon degradation in the quality of the output signals corresponding to the input signals to which the tap coefficients are applied. Degradation in the quality of output signals is measured by comparing the bit error rate of the output signals with a predetermined threshold.

The apparatus includes an equalization controller shared among a plurality of input signals and arranged to generate a dedicated tap coefficient for each input signal including sampling the input signal in a first instance and applying the first sample as an input to a tap coefficient algorithm, and arranged to update the dedicated tap coefficient for the input signal including sampling the input signal in a second instance in accordance with feedback received by a performance monitor and applying the second sample as an input to the tap coefficient algorithm.

The apparatus further includes a signal filter dedicated to each input signal and arranged to generate an output signal including receiving the input signal and applying the input signal as a first input to a plurality of multiply functions, each multiply function having as a second input a different coefficient within a dedicated coefficient set received from the equalization controller to generate a plurality of products, and applying the plurality of products to an accumulate function.

The apparatus further includes a performance monitor dedicated to each output signal and arranged to apply feedback to an equalization controller including comparing the bit error rate of the output signal with a predetermined threshold and generating a feedback signal upon the output signal exceeding a predetermined threshold.

These and other aspects of the invention can be understood by reference to the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which are briefly described below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a generalized block diagram illustrating a transmitting node transmitting a data signal to a receiving node over a link;

FIG. 2 is a generalized block diagram representing equalization of a signal transmitted according to FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a more detailed block diagram of equalization logic illustrated in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a more detailed block diagram of the equalization controller illustrated in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a more detailed block diagram of a signal filter illustrated in FIG. 3;

FIG. 6 is a more detailed block diagram of a performance monitor illustrated in FIG. 3; and

FIG. 7 is a more detailed block diagram of a flow controller illustrated in FIG. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Turning now to the drawings, and first to FIG. 1, transmitting node **110** and receiving node **120** in a data communication network are interconnected by a link **130**, such as a Category-5 cable. Transmitting node **110** communicates with receiving node **120** by transmitting channelized data signals over link **130** in a data communication protocol, such as Gigabit Ethernet. Nodes **110**, **120** are data communication networking elements, such as switches, bridges, hubs, repeaters, servers, workstations or personal computers, or a combination thereof. Receiving node **120** receives input signals **141–144**, equalizes input signals **141–144** at equalization logic **150** and transmits output signals **161–164**. It will be appreciated that transmitting node **110** may include receiving node capabilities, and receiving node **120** may include transmitting node capabilities, such that nodes **110**, **120** may engage in bidirectional communication.

The present invention is directed primarily to a novel equalization capability at receiving node **120**, and more particularly at equalization logic **150**, for improving the quality of input signals **141–144**. Referring to FIG. 2, a highly generalized mathematical representation of equalization is shown by reference to a signal $x(t)$ **210**. Signal $x(t)$ **210** at transmitting node **110** is transmitted on link **130** where signal $x(t)$ **210** is subjected to a channel impulse response $h(t)$ **220** resulting in distorted signal $x'(t)$ **230**. Distorted signal $x'(t)$ **230** is received at receiving node **120** where signal $x'(t)$ **230** is subjected to a corrective impulse response approximating $h^{-1}(t)$ **240** resulting in equalized signal $x''(t)$ **250** which approximates signal $x(t)$ **210**.

Referring now to FIG. 3, equalization logic **150** is shown in a preferred embodiment. Logic **150** receives input signals **141–144** at inputs **301–304** and transmits output signals **161–164** at outputs **311–314**. Logic **150** includes analog-digital converters **321–324**. Converters **321–324** are simple, fixed elements for converting input signals **141–144** from analog into digital format. There are four converters **321–324** shown, for converting four input signals **141–144** comprising a Gigabit Ethernet signal, each input signal transmitting data over link **130** at a bit rate of two hundred fifty megabits per second (Mbps), although the number of input signals and converters will vary with network requirements. Input signals **141–144** are transmitted to equalization controller **330** and signal filters **341–344**. Signal filters **341–344** modify input signals **141–144** and, in conjunction with coefficients supplied by equalization controller **330**, generate output signals **161–164**. Output signals **161–164** are applied to quantizers **351–354**, which “force” output signals **161–164** to binary representations of data bits, e.g., ones and zeroes, and transmit output signals **161–164** to performance monitors **361–364** prior to transmission from logic **150** via outputs **311–314**.

Referring to FIG. 4, equalization controller **330** is shown in more detail. Equalization controller **330** is shared among input signals **141–144** for generating coefficients for application in signal filters **341–344**. Equalization controller **330** includes multiplexor **410**, flow controller **420**, memory **430** and coefficient calculator **440**. Multiplexor **410** is a four-to-one multiplexor arranged to sample input signals **141–144** individually and release the samples to memory **430**. Input signals **141–144** are preferably sampled at link start-up and thereafter in response to degradation of the quality of corresponding output signals **161–164**. Flow controller **420** controls flows within equalization controller **330**, including selection of input signals **141–144** for sampling thereof via

multiplexor **410**, storing of samples in memory **430**, application of samples to coefficient calculator **440** and application of coefficients calculated in coefficient calculator **440** to signal filters **341–344**. Coefficient calculator **440** is a shared element which calculates dedicated coefficients for input signals **141–144** by individually subjecting samples of input signals **141–144** stored in memory **430** to the same tap coefficient algorithm. The tap coefficient algorithm preferably implements the wellknown Least Mean Square (LMS) Algorithm to calculate dedicated tap coefficients for input signals **141–144**, see, e.g., Haykin, Adaptive Filter Theory (1995); Widrow & Stearns, Adaptive Signal Processing (1985), although other tap coefficient algorithms may be employed. Tap coefficients are “dedicated” in that coefficients are generated based on samples taken from particular ones of input signals **141–144** and are applied to particular ones of signal filters **341–344** which receive the particular ones of input signals **141–144** as inputs. Thus, for instance, coefficients generated from sampling input signal **141** are applied to signal filter **341**, coefficients generated from sampling input signal **142** are applied to signal filter **342**, and so on. N tap coefficients are preferably generated for each input signal. The value of N in a given implementation of the present invention will generally vary in relation to the desired input signal sampling length. By way of example, for a Gigabit Ethernet signal transmitted over Category-5 cable, N may be five hundred twelve. Memory **430** is preferably implemented in random access memory (RAM), and samples from different input signals **141–144** are stored in different locations within memory **430**.

Referring to FIG. 5, signal filters **341–344** are shown in greater detail by reference to a representative signal filter **510**. Filter **510** “taps” a representative input signal **520** in accordance with the most recent N coefficients received by filter **510** from equalization controller **310** to generate a representative output signal **530**. Filter **510** includes N filter stages in which the N coefficients are applied. At each filter stage, a multiplier is applied to input signal **520** and a different one of the N coefficients to obtain a product which is applied to accumulator **540**. Thus, for example, at filter stage one, multiplier **551** is applied to input signal **520** and coefficient **561** to obtain product **571** which is applied to accumulator **540**. At filter stage two, multiplier **552** is applied to input signal **520** (via register **580**) and coefficient **562** to obtain product **572** which is applied to accumulator **540**, and so on. Accumulator **540** sums products **571**, **572**, and so on, to generate output signal **530** for transmission. It will be appreciated that as a result of the “tap” applied in filter **510** in the aforescribed manner, distortion present on input signal **520** may be advantageously reduced on output signal **530**. Further, as a consequence of using a shared equalization controller to generate dedicated coefficients for application in the “taps” applied in different signal filters, distortion may be advantageously reduced with relatively low equalization overhead.

Referring to FIG. 6, performance monitors **361–364** are shown in greater detail by reference to a representative performance monitor **610**. Monitor **610** monitors a representative output signal **620** and notifies equalization controller **310** when the bit error rate of output signal **620** has exceeded a tolerable limit. Monitor **610** includes error detector **630** and comparator **640**. Error detector **630** is preferably a Viterbi error detection/correction circuit that generates a probability of bit error rate (PBE) value **650** and applies PBE value **650** as an input to comparator **640**. PBE value **650** is an estimated bit error rate for output signal **620**. Comparator **640** is preferably a comparator circuit that

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compares PBE value **650** against a tolerable bit error rate stored on comparator **640**. By way of example, for a Gigabit Ethernet signal transmitted over Category-5 cable, the tolerable bit error rate stored on comparator **620** may be 1×10^{-6} bits per error. If PBE value **650** is greater than the tolerable bit error rate, comparator **620** transmits a coefficient update request to equalization controller **310**, which results in eventual recalculation of the dedicated coefficients for the input signal corresponding to output signal **620**. In a preferred embodiment, the request includes a multibit value specifying a priority level determined by comparator **640** in relation to the magnitude by which output signal **620** has exceeded the tolerable bit error rate. It will be appreciated, however, that in other embodiments the request may simply be a single bit flag.

Referring now to FIG. 7, flow controller **420**, first shown in FIG. 4, is shown in more detail. Flow controller **420** includes arbiter **710** and selector **720**. Arbiter **710** receives coefficient update requests from performance monitors **361–364**, arbitrates among received requests, and notifies selector **720** of the “winning” request. If a single request is pending, arbiter **710** selects that request. If multiple requests having different priority levels are pending, arbiter **710** selects the highest priority request among them. If multiple requests all having the same priority are pending, or the pending requests are not prioritized, a round-robin selection may be made. Based on information received from arbiter **710** regarding the “winning” request, selector **720** selects the corresponding one of input signals **141–144** for sampling via multiplexor **410**, storing of samples in memory **430**, application of samples to coefficient calculator **440** and application of the dedicated coefficients generated in coefficient calculator **440** to the corresponding one of filters **341–344**.

It will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the invention can be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential character hereof. The present description is therefore considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is indicated by the appended claims, and all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalents thereof are intended to be embraced therein.

I claim:

1. An equalization apparatus, comprising:

a plurality of inputs for receiving respective input signals; an equalization controller coupled to the inputs for receiving the respective input signals and generating respective tap coefficients therefrom;

a plurality of signal filters coupled to respective inputs and the equalization controller, for receiving the respective input signals and the respective tap coefficients and generating respective output signals therefrom; and

a plurality of performance monitors coupled to respective signal filters and the equalization controller, for receiving the respective output signals and applying feedback to the equalization controller upon determining that the bit error rates for the respective output signals exceeds a predetermined threshold,

wherein said feedback comprises a priority level determined in relation to a magnitude by which the respective output signals has exceeded the predetermined threshold.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the equalization controller is further operative for updating the respective tap coefficients upon receiving said feedback from respective performance monitors.

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3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of tap coefficients are generated from each input signal.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein each signal filter includes means for applying an input signal as a first input to a plurality of multiply functions, each multiply function having as a second input a different one of the tap coefficients generated therefrom to generate a plurality of products, and applying the plurality of products to an accumulate function to generate an output signal.

5. An equalization method for improving the quality of signals received over a multichannel link using a shared tap coefficient function, comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of input signals;

sampling the input signals individually;

applying the samples individually to the tap coefficient function to generate coefficients; and

applying the coefficients to the input signals from which the coefficients were generated to generate a plurality of output signals;

transmitting the output signals;

determining the bit error rate of the output signals individually; and

repeating the sampling, applying, applying and transmitting steps for an output signal upon determining the bit error rate for the output signal exceeds a predetermined threshold.

6. Apparatus including an equalization controller shared among a plurality of input signals for generating a dedicated tap coefficient for each input signal including, for each input signal, sampling the input signal in a first instance and applying the first sample as an input to a tap coefficient algorithm, and for updating the dedicated tap coefficient for each input signal including, for each input signal, sampling the input signal in a second instance in accordance with feedback and applying the second sample as an input to the tap coefficient algorithm.

7. Apparatus according to claim 6 wherein a plurality of tap coefficients are generated for each input signal in each instance.

8. Apparatus according to claim 7 further comprising a configurable filter for receiving one of the input signals and for generating an output signal therefrom, including applying the input signal as a first input to a plurality of multiply functions, each multiply function having as a second input a different tap coefficient from within the plurality of tap coefficients generated for the input signal and received from the equalization controller to generate a plurality of products, and applying the plurality of products to an accumulate function.

9. Apparatus according to claim 6 further comprising a performance monitor for receiving an output signal generated from one of the input signals and the dedicated tap coefficient for the input signal, comparing the bit error rate of the output signal with a predetermined threshold and applying a feedback signal to the equalization controller if the output signal exceeds the predetermined threshold.

10. Apparatus according to claim 9 wherein the feedback signal includes a priority level.

11. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the equalization controller updates the tap coefficients based on the priority level of the respective feedback.