A Flexible Microwave De-Embedding Method for On-Wafer Noise Parameter Characterization of MOSFETs

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SUMMARY A flexible noise de-embedding method for on-wafer microwave measurements of silicon MOSFETs is presented in this study. We use the open, short, and thru dummy structures to subtract the parasitic effects from the probe pads and interconnects of a fixtured MOS transistor. The thru standard are used to extract the interconnect parameters for subtracting the interconnect parasitics in gate, drain, and source terminals of the MOSFET. The parasitics of the dangling leg in the source terminal are also modeled and taken into account in the noise de-embedding procedure. The MOS transistors and de-embedding dummy structures were fabricated in a standard CMOS process and characterized up to 20 GHz. Compared with the conventional de-embedding methods, the proposed technique is accurate and area-efficient.

key words: de-embedding, microwave, MOSFETs, noise, RF, silicon

1. Introduction

Wafer-level device characterization is extremely important for the design of high-performance RF/microwave integrated circuits. Since reliable device models require accurate on-wafer measurements, modeling test keys should be carefully designed to reproduce and remove the external parasitics surrounding the fixtured devices. To extract the intrinsic device characteristics from microwave measurements, much research effort has been devoted to this subject and several methods for parasitic de-embedding have been reported over the past years. The open-short de-embedding method [1] was developed to subtract the shunt admittance and series impedance of the probe pads and interconnects by employing an open and a short structure. Although there are many other methods for eliminating the unwanted parasitics [2]–[4], the open-short de-embedding procedure is still the current industry standard. The physics-based de-embedding methods mentioned above utilize lumped-circuit assumptions to model the parasitic networks. However, as the device is operated at microwave frequencies and/or its interconnect length is considerable, these lumped-circuit models may be invalid due to the distributed nature of silicon-based test fixtures. Recently, a noise de-embedding method based on cascade configuration [5] was presented. It uses open and thru dummies to subtract the pad admittance and interconnect parasitics and does not require any lumped-circuit representation. A cascade-based scalable noise de-embedding method [6] was also developed to reduce the chip area consumption for test structures. Although the cascade de-embedding schemes are more suitable for application in the microwave/millimeter-wave regime, the parasitic effects of the dangling leg between the MOSFET and ground plane are neglected in these cascade methods [7]. In this study, we propose a scalable noise de-embedding method by further taking into account the series impedance of the probe pads and the parasitic effects of dangling leg. To validate the proposed method, the MOS transistors and de-embedding standards were fabricated using a standard 0.25 μm CMOS technology, and the noise and S-parameter measurements were taken up to 18 GHz and 20 GHz, respectively.

2. Proposed Noise De-Embedding Procedure

As illustrated in Fig. 1(a), an open, short, and thru are employed in this proposed method. Here we also apply the...
shielding technique [8] to improve the port-to-port isolation. The bulk-shielded open and short structures can be used to eliminate the shunt admittance and series impedance of the probe pads, respectively. The scalable interconnect parameters extracted from the thru structure can be used to efficiently subtract the parasitic effects of interconnects and dangling legs of the DUTs with different device geometries and interconnect lengths. Therefore, the proposed method is area-efficient and suitable for the automatic testing process in a mass-production line. Figure 1(b) is the systematic parasitic model for the fixture MOSFET.

Figure 2 exhibits the semi-distributed model for the DUT and de-embedding structures. The \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices of the probe pads are

\[
\begin{align*}
[A^\text{PAD1}] &= \begin{bmatrix} Y^\text{PAD} & -Z^\text{PAD} \\ Z^\text{PAD} & 1 + Y^\text{PAD}Z^\text{PAD} \end{bmatrix}, \\
[A^\text{PAD2}] &= \begin{bmatrix} 1 + Y^\text{PAD}Z^\text{PAD} & Z^\text{PAD} \\ Y^\text{PAD} & 1 \end{bmatrix}.
\end{align*}
\]

(1) and (2)

It should be noted that \( Y^\text{PAD} = Y^\text{OPEN} \) and \( Z^\text{PAD} = Z^\text{SHORTD} \)

where \( Z^\text{SHORTD} = (Y^\text{SHORT} - Y^\text{OPEN})^{-1} \), and \( Y^\text{OPEN} \) and \( Y^\text{SHORT} \) are the Y-parameters of the open and short converted from the S-parameter measurements. The thru dummy can be modeled as the probe pads and interconnect in cascade connection and its pad parasitics can be de-embedded using \( [A^\text{INT}] = [A^\text{PAD1}]^{-1}[A^\text{THRU}] [A^\text{PAD2}]^{-1} \), where the superscript “−1” denotes the inverse of the matrix, and \( [A^\text{INT}] \) and \( [A^\text{THRU}] \) are the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices of the intrinsic interconnect and thru dummy, respectively. Consequently, the scalable interconnect parameters, such as characteristic impedance \( Z_c \) and propagation constant \( \gamma \), can be evaluated as in [9]. Based on the above results, the parasitic effects of the input/output interconnects and dangling leg with arbitrary line length \( (l_1, l_2, \text{and } l_3) \) of a fixtured MOSFET can be efficiently reproduced from the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices of a lossy transmission line

\[
\begin{align*}
[A^\text{INT}] &= \begin{bmatrix} \cosh\gamma_{l_i} & Z_c \sinh\gamma_{l_i} \\ \frac{1}{Z_c} \sinh\gamma_{l_i} & \cosh\gamma_{l_i} \end{bmatrix}, i = 1, 2, g. \tag{3}
\end{align*}
\]

As referred to Fig. 1(b), the proposed noise de-embedding procedure is detailed as follows.

1) Measure the \( S \)-parameters \([S^\text{DUT}], [S^\text{OPEN}], [S^\text{SHORT}], \) and \([S^\text{THRU}] \) of the DUT, open, short, and thru, respectively.

2) Measure the noise parameters \([N^\text{OUT}][R^n_\text{OUT}], \) and \([Y^\text{OUT}] \) of the DUT and calculate the correlation matrix \([C _A^\text{OUT}] \) as in [10].

3) Convert \([S^\text{OPEN}] \) and \([S^\text{SHORT}] \) to their Y-matrices \([Y^\text{OPEN}] \) and \([Y^\text{SHORT}] \), respectively, and calculate the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices \([A^\text{PAD1}] \) and \([A^\text{PAD2}] \) of RF pads from (1) and (2).

4) Extract the intrinsic interconnect parameters using \([A^{\text{INT}}] = [A^\text{PAD1}]^{-1}[A^\text{THRU}][A^\text{PAD2}]^{-1} \) and calculate the interconnect characteristic impedance \( Z_c \) and propagation constant \( \gamma \) as in [9].

5) Calculate the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices \([A^{\text{INT1}}], [A^{\text{INT2}}], \) and \([A^{\text{INT}}] \) of the interconnects and dangling leg as in (3).

6) Calculate the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrices \([A^\text{IN}] \) and \([A^\text{OUT}] \) which are respectively the parasitic networks at input and output ports, from \([A^\text{IN}] = [A^\text{PAD1}][A^{\text{INT1}}]\) and \([A^\text{OUT}] = [A^{\text{INT2}}][A^\text{PAD2}]\).

7) Convert \([S^\text{DUT}] \) to its \( \text{ABCD} \) matrix \([A^\text{DUT}] \) and calculate the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrix \([A^\text{D}] \) of the MOSFET with dangling leg using \([A^\text{D}] = [A^{\text{INT}}]^{-1}[A^\text{OUT}]^{-1} \).

8) Convert \([A^\text{D}] \) and \([A^{\text{INT}}] \) to Z-matrix \([Z^\text{D}] \) and Y-matrix \([Y^\text{INT}] \), respectively.

9) Calculate the Z-matrix \([Z^\text{MOS}] \) of the MOSFET without dangling leg from \([Z^\text{MOS}] = [Z^\text{D}] - [Z^\text{LEG}] \), where \([Z^\text{LEG}] \) is

\[
[Z^\text{LEG}] = \begin{bmatrix} 1/Y^\text{INTg}_{11} & 1/Y^\text{INTg}_{11} \\ 1/Y^\text{INTg}_{11} & 1/Y^\text{INTg}_{11} \end{bmatrix}.
\]

(4)

10) Convert \([Z^\text{MOS}] \) to \([Z^\text{MOS}] \), where \([Z^\text{MOS}] \) is the \( \text{ABCD} \) matrix of the intrinsic MOSFET.

11) Convert \([A^\text{IN}] \) and \([A^\text{OUT}] \) to their impedance matrices \([Z^\text{IN}] \) and \([Z^\text{OUT}] \), respectively.

12) Calculate the noise correlation matrices \([C^\text{IN}], [C^\text{OUT}], \) and \([C^\text{LEG}] \) from \([C^\text{IN}] = 2kT\text{Re}(Z^\text{IN})], [C^\text{OUT}] = 2kT\text{Re}(Z^\text{OUT})], \) and \([C^\text{LEG}] = 2kT\text{Re}(Z^\text{LEG})] \).

13) Convert \([C^\text{IN}] \) and \([C^\text{OUT}] \) to their chain matrices \([C^\text{IN}] \) and \([C^\text{OUT}] \) using \([C^\text{IN}} = [T^\text{IN}][C^\text{IN}] [T^\text{IN}]^H \) and \([C^\text{OUT}] = [T^\text{OUT}][C^\text{OUT}][T^\text{OUT}]^H \), where the superscript “H” denotes the Hermitian conjugate of the matrix, and \([T^\text{IN}] \)
and \([T^{\text{OUT}}]\) are the transformation matrices \([10]\).

14) Calculate the correlation matrix \([C^D_A]\) of the MOS-
FET with dangling leg as \([C^D_A] = (A^{\text{IN}})^{-1}(C^D_A - [A^D]([A^{\text{IN}}]^H)^{-1} - [A^D][C^D_A][A^D]^H)^{-1}\) \([5]\).

15) Convert \([C^D_A]\) to its impedance representation \([C^Z_Z]\) using
\([C^Z_Z] = [T^D][C^D_A][T^D]^H\), where \([T^D]\) is the transformation
matrix \([10]\).

16) Calculate the correlation matrix \([C^\text{MOS}_Z]\) of the MOSFET
without dangling leg as \([C^\text{MOS}_Z] = [C^D_Z] - [C^\text{LEG}_Z]\).

17) Convert \([C^\text{MOS}_Z]\) to its chain matrix \([C^\text{MOS}_A]\) using \([C^\text{MOS}_A] = [T^\text{MOS}][C^\text{MOS}_Z][T^\text{MOS}]^H\), where \([T^\text{MOS}]\) is the transformation
matrix \([10]\).

18) Calculate the intrinsic noise parameters \(N_{\text{Fmin}}, R_n, \text{and} \ Y_{\text{opt}}\) from the noise correlation matrix \([C^\text{MOS}_A]\) using

\[
N_{\text{Fmin}} = 1 + \frac{1}{kT} \left[ \text{Re}(C^\text{MOS}_{12}) \right. \\
+ \left. \sqrt{C^\text{MOS}_{11}C^\text{MOS}_{22} - (\text{Im}(C^\text{MOS}_{12}))^2} \right] \\
R_n = \frac{C^\text{MOS}_{11}}{2kT} \tag{6}
\]

and

\[
Y_{\text{opt}} = \frac{\sqrt{C^\text{MOS}_{11}C^\text{MOS}_{22} - (\text{Im}(C^\text{MOS}_{12}))^2} + j\text{Im}(C^\text{MOS}_{12})}{C^\text{MOS}_{11}} \tag{7}
\]

3. Results and Discussion

To verify the proposed de-embedding theory, the DUT and

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{: Open-Short method} [1] \\
\text{: Cascade method} [6] \\
\text{: Proposed method}
\end{array}\]

Fig. 3 Layout of the on-wafer MOSFET test key and de-embedding
structures for the open-short method [1], cascade method [6], and proposed
method.

Fig. 4 Shunt admittance \((Y_{\text{PAD}})\) and series impedance \((Z_{\text{PAD}})\) of the feeding network, which com-
prises probe pads and interconnects except the dangling leg, estimated by conventional de-embedding
methods, and proposed method. (a) Real part of \(Y_{\text{PAD}}\). (b) Imaginary part of \(Y_{\text{PAD}}\). (c) Real part of
\(Z_{\text{PAD}}\). (d) Imaginary part of \(Z_{\text{PAD}}\).
de-embedding structures were fabricated using a 0.25-μm five-metal-layer CMOS process. The NMOS transistor with the dimensions of channel length ($L_g = 0.24\ \mu m$) and channel width ($W_g = 160\ \mu m$) was connected in a commonsource configuration. The lengths of the 10-μm wide interconnects and dangling leg are $l_1 = l_2 = 50\ \mu m$ and $l_g = 42\ \mu m$. The on-wafer noise and S-parameter measurements were accomplished with the ATN NP5B Noise Parameter Measurement System. Before measuring S-parameters, the measurement system was calibrated using the short-open-load-thru (SOLT) calibration procedure and the reference planes were shifted to the probing planes, i.e. the probe tips. In this work, the pad parasitics were removed by using an open and short dummy, and the interconnect parasitics were removed by using a thru dummy. Since here we adopt the $ABCD$ matrices of a lossy transmission line to model the interconnect parasitics, both the interconnect parasitics of signal trace and ground return would be properly estimated and removed. In addition, the short dummy in the proposed method has been carefully designed to minimize the de-embedding error [11]. For example, the probe pads are shielded and the pad-to-interconnect junctions are tapered to reduce the parasitic effects. Low impedance ground return of the short dummy is also achieved by a wide, smooth ground connection. Figure 3 illustrates the layout of the fabricated test keys and dummy structures for the open-short method [1], cascade method [6], and proposed method. Figure 4 shows the parasitic effects of the feeding network, which comprises probe pads and interconnects except the dangling leg, estimated by conventional de-embedding methods, and proposed method. As we can see, the proposed method can predict the pad and interconnect parasitics more accurately than the cascade method [6] do. The cascade method [6] employs only an open and thru dummy, and thus does not take the series impedance of probe pads into account. A slight difference between the open-short method [1] and proposed method is observed, and it might be caused by the additional metal connection of a short dummy used in [1]. Figure 5 displays the measured and de-embedded reflection coefficients ($S_{11}$ and $S_{22}$) and transmission coefficients ($S_{12}$ and $S_{21}$) of the fixture RF MOSFET. It is shown that there are considerable differences between the proposed method and cascade method [6]. This is mainly because the parasitic effects of the dangling leg are ignored in the cascade de-embedding procedures [5], [6]. The proposed method further consider the series impedance of probe pads and dangling-leg parasitics, and therefore the results obtained from the proposed method.
and the open-short method [1] are in excellent agreement over the entire frequency range. These results indicate that the intrinsic noise parameters obtained from the proposed method also agree well with those from the open-short method. They also demonstrate the parasitics of the dangling leg can affect the noise characteristics of a MOS transistor, especially for equivalent noise resistance ($R_n$) and optimized input reflection coefficient ($\Gamma_{\text{opt}}$) at higher frequencies. Based on the above results, we can substantiate our argument that the proposed method is accurate (as compared to the industry-standard open-short method [1]) and efficient. Since typically the conventional de-embedding methods need more than two dummy structures for each DUT, and thus, the chip area for modeling test keys would be considerable. The proposed method can reduce the chip area and characterization time in a mass-production line to about one-third of the conventional ones since only three dummy structures are needed for all DUTs on a wafer. In addition, the proposed method also can be applied to characterize various devices, such as varactor, resistor, BJT, MIM capacitor, etc.

4. Conclusions

In this study, a flexible noise de-embedding method suitable for on-wafer MOSFET characterization has been presented and verified. The bulk-shielded open and short structures are used to subtract the pad parasitics and the thru standard is used to remove the interconnect parasitics in gate, drain, and source terminals of the MOSFET. The de-embedding accuracy is validated up to 20 GHz and results show that the proposed method is accurate and efficient for characterizing the silicon-based active devices.

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References


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