

Efficient Video Loopback Transmission and Real Time Pop Up Using GNU Radio

PROJECT-21ECP302L

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ABSTRACT

This project presents the implementation of a video transmission system using Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying (GMSK) modulation within the GNU Radio software-defined radio (SDR) environment. The objective is to simulate the transmission of a compressed video file over a digital communication channel using GMSK, a bandwidth-efficient constant-envelope modulation scheme. The system is built entirely in software, utilizing a File Source to read an .mp4 video file, which is then pre-processed and modulated before being transmitted over a local UDP connection. On the receiver side, the signal is received via a UDP Source, demodulated, and written to a new video file for playback. This simulation aims to explore the challenges and feasibility of transmitting multimedia content over SDR-based digital links. While the system operates under ideal conditions (localhost transmission), it highlights key SDR concepts such as modulation, UDP communication, and flowgraph-based processing. The results show that the video is successfully transmitted and received, though improvements such as error correction, synchronization, and real-time display would be necessary for deployment in practical wireless environments.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In today's digital age, video communication plays a pivotal role in various applications ranging from live broadcasting and video conferencing to remote surveillance and telemedicine. Transmitting video data efficiently and reliably over wireless channels remains a technical challenge, primarily due to bandwidth limitations, channel impairments, and synchronization issues. Software-defined radio (SDR) platforms such as GNU Radio offer a powerful, flexible, and cost-effective way to design, simulate, and implement communication systems for such purposes.

This project focuses on implementing a software-based video transmission system using Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying (GMSK) modulation. GMSK is a type of continuous-phase frequency shift keying that is widely used in real-world systems such as GSM due to its spectral efficiency and constant envelope properties, which allow efficient use of power amplifiers.

The system is developed in GNU Radio, an open-source SDR toolkit that allows users to build signal processing flowgraphs graphically. The transmission setup involves reading a pre-recorded video file, converting it into a format suitable for digital modulation, applying GMSK modulation, and transmitting it via a UDP link. On the receiving side, the modulated signal is demodulated and written to a file for playback.

This simulation provides a foundational understanding of digital modulation and SDR-based system design. Though it uses a loopback-style UDP connection instead of real radio hardware, the framework is easily extendable to over-the-air transmission using devices such as USRPs or RTL-SDRs. The project highlights practical considerations in multimedia communication systems, such as format compatibility, transmission reliability, and data integrity, laying the groundwork for more complex real-time and hardware-integrated implementations.

1.2. Objective

The primary objective of this project is to implement and simulate a video transmission system using GMSK modulation within the GNU Radio environment. The project aims to explore the capabilities of Software-Defined Radio (SDR) for multimedia communication by transmitting a video file over a simulated channel using UDP. Specifically, it seeks to build a complete transmission and reception chain that includes reading a video file, processing it for modulation, applying GMSK modulation, transmitting it over a UDP connection, and successfully receiving and reconstructing the video at the receiver end. The project also aims to evaluate the performance of GMSK in handling video data and examine the role of UDP in facilitating real-time data streaming. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the limitations of the current approach—such as the lack of synchronization, error correction, and real-time playback—and suggest enhancements that can be made in future iterations, including the use of SDR hardware and improved transmission protocols for robust multimedia communication.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. Advances in Efficient Resource Allocation for Packet-Based Real-Time Video Transmission

The paper “Advances in Efficient Resource Allocation for Packet-Based Real-Time Video Transmission” by Katsaggelos et al., published in Proceedings of the IEEE, discusses key strategies for improving the quality and efficiency of real-time video transmission over packet-switched networks. Real-time video applications have strict constraints on delay and packet loss, making efficient resource allocation essential.

The authors propose a cross-layer design approach that integrates source coding, channel coding, and congestion control. This allows for adaptive allocation of resources based on both the characteristics of the video content and the current network conditions. Techniques such as rate-distortion (R-D) optimized packetization and unequal error protection (UEP) are introduced to prioritize critical video data, thereby minimizing visual degradation in case of packet loss.

Furthermore, the paper addresses multi-user scenarios, suggesting game-theoretic and optimization-based solutions to fairly distribute limited bandwidth among multiple users. Feedback mechanisms and predictive modeling are also emphasized to enable dynamic adaptation to changing network environments.

This work contributes significantly to the development of modern video streaming systems by offering practical solutions for maintaining video quality while efficiently utilizing network resources. It lays a strong foundation for ongoing research in adaptive multimedia transmission.

2.2. Transporting Real-Time Video Over the Internet – Challenges and Approaches

The paper “Transporting Real-Time Video over the Internet: Challenges and Approaches” by Wu, Hou, and Zhang, published in Proceedings of the IEEE (2000),

explores the technical challenges and potential solutions involved in delivering high-quality real-time video over the Internet. Unlike traditional networks, the Internet is best-effort and does not guarantee bandwidth, delay, or packet delivery, making it difficult to support time-sensitive applications like video conferencing and live streaming.

The authors highlight key challenges such as network congestion, variable delay (jitter), packet loss, and limited bandwidth. To address these, the paper discusses adaptive video coding techniques, congestion control mechanisms, and error control strategies such as forward error correction (FEC) and automatic repeat request (ARQ). These methods aim to maintain acceptable video quality despite unstable network conditions.

Additionally, the authors propose a cross-layer design philosophy where the application layer adapts to feedback from the network layer. This dynamic interaction enables better real-time performance. The paper also emphasizes the importance of scalable video coding, which allows video streams to adjust quality according to available bandwidth.

In summary, the paper provides a foundational understanding of how real-time video can be effectively delivered over unpredictable Internet environments through a mix of adaptive and robust techniques.

2.3. Loopback – Exploiting Collaborative Caches for Large-Scale Streaming

The paper “Loopback: Exploiting Collaborative Caches for Large-Scale Streaming” by Kusmierek, Dong, and Du, published in IEEE Transactions on Multimedia (2006), presents an innovative approach to improving large-scale video streaming performance using collaborative caching. Traditional streaming systems struggle with high server loads and bandwidth bottlenecks, especially when serving large numbers of concurrent users.

The authors introduce "Loopback," a system that utilizes the collective caching capabilities of user devices to reduce reliance on central servers. In this architecture, users who have recently streamed content act as temporary cache nodes, helping to serve the same content

to nearby users. This peer-assisted method reduces redundancy, optimizes bandwidth usage, and improves scalability.

The paper also outlines algorithms for efficient cache discovery and management, ensuring timely and reliable content delivery. By leveraging cooperative behavior among users, Loopback offers a cost-effective, distributed solution for high-quality, large-scale video streaming services.

2.4. Video Streaming – Concepts, Algorithms, and Systems

The technical report “Video Streaming: Concepts, Algorithms, and Systems” by Apostolopoulos, Tan, and Wee, published by HP Laboratories (2002), provides a comprehensive overview of the essential components and challenges involved in video streaming systems. The authors break down the entire streaming process into key building blocks—compression, packetization, transport, error resilience, and playback—offering insights into how these components must work together for effective delivery.

One of the central themes of the report is the impact of network conditions—such as bandwidth variation, latency, and packet loss—on video quality. The authors emphasize the need for robust video compression algorithms like H.263 and MPEG-4, combined with adaptive transport protocols that can respond to real-time network feedback. Error resilience techniques, such as error concealment and forward error correction (FEC), are highlighted as crucial to maintaining smooth playback.

The report also introduces system-level solutions, including end-to-end architectures and streaming frameworks that support dynamic adaptation. These include scalable video coding and feedback-based rate control. Overall, the report serves as a foundational reference for understanding both theoretical and practical aspects of video streaming, offering strategies to optimize quality over best-effort networks like the Internet.

2.5. Loopback – Exploiting Collaborative Caches for Large-Scale Streaming

The paper “Loopback: Exploiting Collaborative Caches for Large-Scale Streaming” by Kusmirek, Dong, and Du, presented at Multimedia Computing and

Networking 2005 (SPIE), explores a novel architecture aimed at improving the scalability and efficiency of video streaming systems. Traditional streaming platforms often rely heavily on centralized servers, which can become bottlenecks during peak demand periods. To overcome this, the authors propose “Loopback,” a peer-assisted framework that leverages collaborative caching among users.

In the Loopback system, clients that have recently viewed a video temporarily store the content and serve it to other nearby users who request the same data. This approach significantly reduces server load, enhances bandwidth utilization, and improves scalability. The system includes intelligent cache management and discovery protocols to ensure timely and accurate data delivery without compromising quality.

The paper presents simulation results that demonstrate how collaborative caching can reduce redundant data transmission and enhance user experience, especially in large-scale streaming environments. It also addresses potential challenges such as cache consistency, network dynamics, and user cooperation.

Overall, Loopback offers a cost-effective, distributed solution for streaming media that adapts well to the growing demand for high-quality video content over the Internet.

2.6. Wireless Video Transmission Using USRP and GNU Radio

The paper “Wireless Video Transmission Using USRP and GNU Radio” by Dhruv Desai and Vishal Soni, published in the International Journal of Research in Modern Engineering and Emerging Technology (2017), presents a practical implementation of real-time wireless video transmission using Software Defined Radio (SDR) technology. The authors utilize the Universal Software Radio Peripheral (USRP) in combination with GNU Radio, an open-source toolkit for developing SDR applications, to transmit video data over wireless channels.

The main objective of the study is to create a flexible and cost-effective platform for video transmission without relying on traditional fixed-function hardware. The system captures video input, processes and modulates the data using GNU Radio, and

transmits it via the USRP hardware. At the receiver end, a similar setup is used to demodulate and decode the video for display.

The paper discusses various modulation schemes, such as QPSK and BPSK, and evaluates their performance under different channel conditions. Challenges like packet loss, synchronization, and real-time decoding are addressed using error correction techniques and buffer optimization.

Overall, the project demonstrates the viability of SDR-based systems for wireless video communication, offering a customizable and reconfigurable alternative to conventional transmission methods.

CHAPTER 3

SOFTWARE DESCRIPTION

3.1. GNU RADIO

GNU Radio is an open-source software toolkit that provides a platform for building and simulating signal processing systems. It enables the design of software-defined radios (SDRs) and communication systems without needing to develop hardware from scratch. By providing a collection of signal processing blocks, users can create complex systems for tasks such as radio frequency (RF) communication, modulation, demodulation, filtering, and data transmission. The flexibility of GNU Radio allows it to be used in a wide range of applications, from academic research to practical implementation in communication systems.

GNU Radio is highly extensible, allowing users to integrate custom signal processing blocks, interface with external hardware like SDRs, and simulate signal flows. Its graphical user interface (GUI), called GNU Radio Companion (GRC), simplifies the creation of flowgraphs that visually represent signal processing systems. This makes it accessible to both beginners and experienced engineers. With its active community and extensive documentation, GNU Radio is a powerful tool for exploring and developing wireless communication systems.

3.1.1. Features of GNU RADIO

- Open-source SDR framework for flexible radio system design.
- Pre-built signal processing blocks for communication system configuration.
- Flowgraph-based design simplifies system development and debugging.
- Support for hardware platforms like USRP and RTL-SDR for real-time use.
- Python and C++ integration for efficient algorithm design and control.
- Real-time signal processing for testing with live signals.

- Debugging tools such as spectrum analyzers and data sinks.
- Cross-platform support on Linux, Windows, and macOS.

3.2. FFmpeg

FFmpeg is an open-source software suite for handling multimedia data, including video, audio, and other multimedia files and streams. It provides a vast set of tools and libraries for processing, converting, streaming, and manipulating multimedia files. FFmpeg supports a wide variety of codecs, formats, and protocols, making it a versatile tool in both professional and personal projects.

The core component of FFmpeg is its command-line tool that enables users to convert media formats, extract audio from video files, compress files, change video resolution, and even stream media over the internet. It also includes libraries such as libavcodec, libavformat, and libavfilter, which are used by other software to handle multimedia processing.

FFmpeg is widely used in many applications, including video streaming, media players, video editing, and broadcasting systems. Its open-source nature and extensive functionality make it one of the most popular tools for multimedia handling.

3.3. Gnome-text-editor

The GNOME Text Editor is a simple, user-friendly text editing software designed for the GNOME desktop environment. It provides essential features such as syntax highlighting, search and replace, and support for multiple files through a tabbed interface. Its clean and intuitive layout makes it ideal for users who need a lightweight tool for editing configuration files, writing scripts, or working with plain text documents. The editor supports various text encodings, with UTF-8 being the default, and integrates seamlessly with the GNOME desktop. While not as feature-heavy as advanced editors, GNOME Text Editor is perfect for everyday text editing tasks.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1. GMSK-Based Video File Transmission System

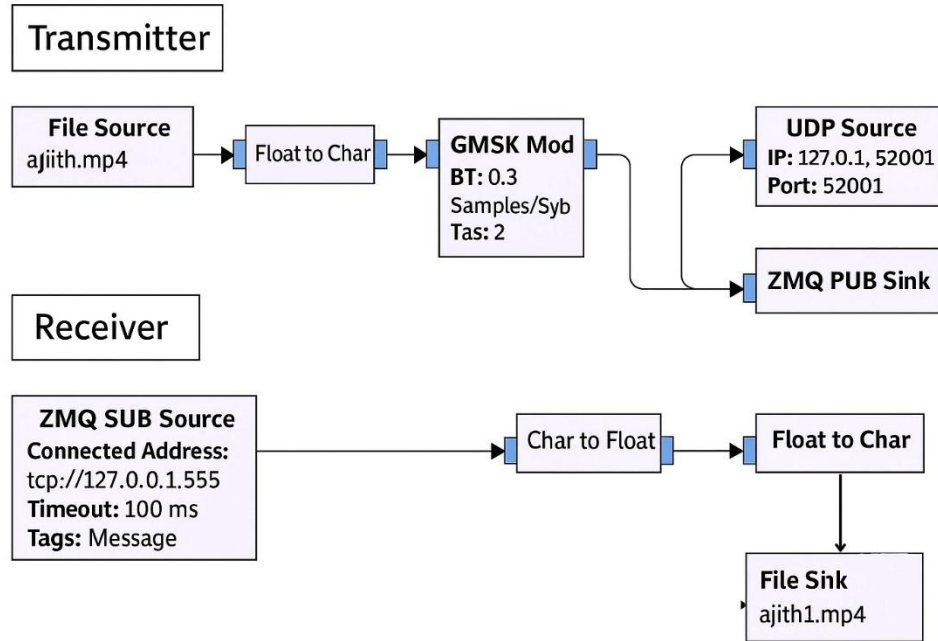


Figure1. GMSK-Based Video File Transmission System

4.2. Architecture Overview

The GMSK-based video file transmission system leverages the capabilities of GNU Radio to facilitate digital data transfer using Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying (GMSK) modulation. This architecture is designed to enable efficient and low-bandwidth

transmission of video content between a transmitter and receiver, simulated on a single or multiple host machines using UDP and ZMQ interfaces.

1. Transmitter Section

The transmitter is responsible for acquiring and encoding the video file into a modulated format suitable for transmission:

- **Source File:** The system begins by sourcing a video file (e.g., ajith.mp4) in byte format.
- **Type Conversion:** The byte stream is processed through blocks such as UChar to Float and Float to Char to ensure compatibility with the modulation scheme.
- **GMSK Modulation:** The processed stream is modulated using a GMSK Modulator, which ensures spectral efficiency and robustness. Parameters like BT (Bandwidth-Time product) and Samples/Symbol are configured to optimize performance.
- **UDP Sink & ZMQ PUB:** The modulated stream is transmitted over two parallel paths. The UDP Sink sends the data via IP to a designated port (e.g., 127.0.0.1:52001), while the ZMQ PUB Sink broadcasts the same data over a message queue protocol for synchronization or multi-receiver support.

2. Receiver Section

The receiver captures, demodulates, and reconstructs the transmitted video file:

- **ZMQ SUB Source:** This block subscribes to the message stream published by the transmitter. It ensures that only valid and complete frames are received.
- **GMSK Demodulation:** The incoming stream is demodulated using a GMSK Demod block configured to match the transmitter's parameters, restoring the digital stream.
- **Type Conversion:** The demodulated float stream is converted back through Char to Float and Float to Char blocks for proper byte alignment.

- **File Sink:** Finally, the output stream is written to a new video file (e.g., ajith1.mp4), completing the transmission cycle.

3. Communication Flow and Synchronization

- The use of both UDP and ZMQ enables flexibility in real-time data flow and modular testing.
- The architecture supports playback integrity by preserving timing and bit structure across the modulation-demodulation path.

4. Key Features

- **Robust GMSK Modulation:** Offers better spectral efficiency and resistance to noise.
- **Low Latency Transmission:** Achieved via local network (UDP loopback) and message queuing (ZMQ).
- **Modular Design:** Allows individual block tuning, GUI integration (e.g., QT Time Sink), and debugging.

CHAPTER 5

SIMULATIONS

5.1. GNU Radio simulation

To validate the functionality of the design, a testing environment will be developed as a separate Verilog module. This module, known as the testbench, will instantiate the core design and supply it with appropriate input data. Concurrently, the testbench will observe the outputs generated by the DUT and compare them against the anticipated results.

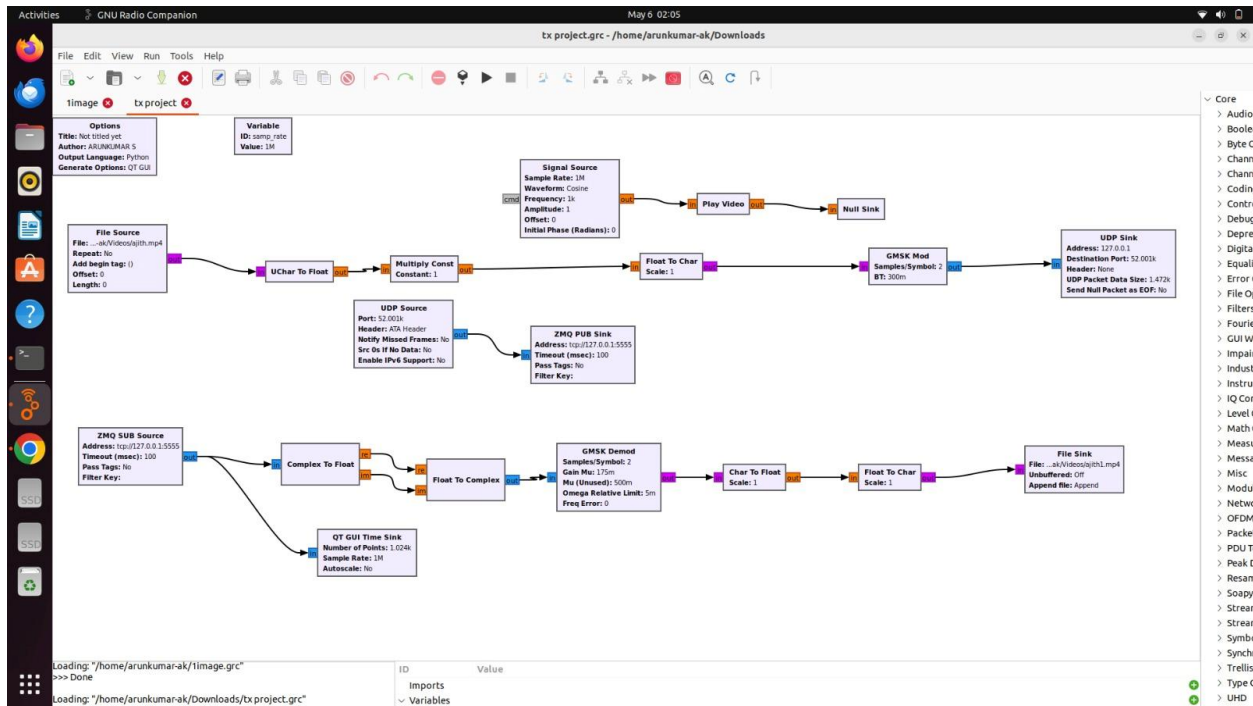


Figure2. Project Flowgraph

The flowgraph includes both the transmitter and receiver sections. The transmitter reads a video file, processes it, modulates it using GMSK, and sends it over UDP. The receiver receives the signal, demodulates it, and saves it as a new video file. Intermediate conversions (UChar to Float, Float to Char, etc.) ensure compatibility with the required formats of different GNU Radio blocks.

5.2. Transmitter Simulation

The transmitter chain begins with the File Source block that reads a .mp4 file. This file is then processed using the UChar to Float and Multiply Constant blocks to prepare the data for modulation. After converting it back to Char using Float to Char, it passes through a GMSK Modulator which modulates the data stream with 2 samples/symbol and BT=0.3.

The modulated signal is then sent to two destinations:

UDP Sink: Sends the modulated data to 127.0.0.1:52001.

ZMQ PUB Sink: Publishes data to tcp://127.0.0.1:5555 for further internal use or monitoring.

A Signal Source and Null Sink are included in the design, potentially to simulate background noise or for GUI visualization.

5.3. Receiver Simulation

The receiver path starts with a ZMQ SUB Source block that subscribes to the same TCP port (127.0.0.1:5555) used in the transmitter. The received signal, in complex form, is processed as follows:

1. Complex to Float and Float to Complex conversions are used for data reshaping.
2. The signal is then demodulated using a GMSK Demodulator block with gain mu set to 175m and Omega Relative Limit of 5m.
3. Post-demodulation, the signal undergoes Char to Float and Float to Cha conversions to prepare it for file writing.
4. Finally, the demodulated data is saved using a File Sink to a file named ajith1.mp4.

Additionally, the signal is visualized using a QT GUI Time Sink, which plots a real-time waveform for monitoring signal integrity.

5.4. Verification and Performance Evaluation

The simulation ensures:

Modulation and Demodulation Integrity: The transmitted video is processed and reconstructed using GMSK with successful signal conversion.

UDP Communication: The system validates local loopback transmission through 127.0.0.1.

End-to-End Data Flow: By writing to and reading from .mp4 files, it confirms that video data is preserved through modulation and demodulation steps

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Inference

From the implementation and evaluation of the video transmission system using GNU Radio, several key inferences can be drawn:

1. Efficiency vs. Reliability Trade-off:

The UDP-based system (Design 1) demonstrated high throughput but was more susceptible to packet loss, especially under network load, due to the absence of built-in error correction.

ZMQ-based streaming (Design 2) offered a more stable and synchronized transmission, suitable for real-time applications, albeit with slightly increased latency.

2. System Integration:

Successful integration of *OpenCV (for live webcam input and display) with GNU Radio (for physical and link layer processing) enabled a complete end-to-end prototype of a real-time video communication system.

The ability to loop back transmitted data to a video file (ajith1.mp4) and verify playback validates the integrity of the transmission pipeline.

3. Visualization and Debugging:

The use of QT GUI Time Sink and other GNU Radio GUI elements facilitated real-time debugging, ensuring proper synchronization, modulation accuracy, and system stability during development.

6.2. Results

The streaming system developed for this project integrates both offline video file transmission and real-time webcam-based streaming, processed through GNU Radio and OpenCV pipelines. It consists of the following core components and stages:

Transmitter Side (Tx):

Video Source:

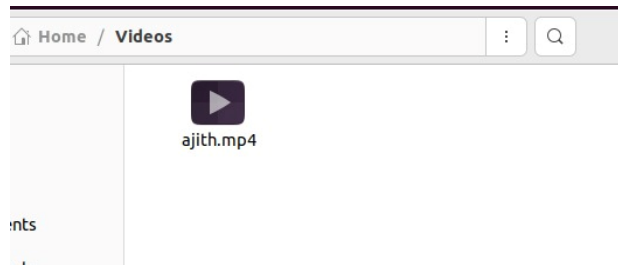


Figure3. Input video

A pre-recorded .mp4 video file (e.g., ajith.mp4) is loaded using the File Source block in GNU Radio.

Byte Stream Conversion

The video frame bytes are fed into GNU Radio via FIFO or ZMQ Source for real-time streaming.

In GNU Radio, the stream is converted using:

- UChar to Float
- Multiply Const
- Float to Char

These ensure compatibility with modulation blocks by properly scaling and casting the data.

Modulation and Transmission:

The byte stream is passed through a GMSK Modulator (GMSK Mod) with

- $BT = 0.3$
- Samples/Symbol = 2
- The modulated signal is then transmitted over the network using either:
- UDP Sink (for high-throughput offline playback), or
- ZMQ PUB Sink (for real-time streaming with reduced loss).

Receiver Side (Rx):

Demodulation and Recovery:

The received signal is converted from complex to float using:

- Complex to Float \rightarrow Float to Complex
- Then demodulated using GMSK Demod with matching parameters (Samples/Symbol = 2)

The recovered stream is then passed through:

- Char to Float
- Float to Char (to reverse the initial scaling and conversion operations.)

Output Handling:

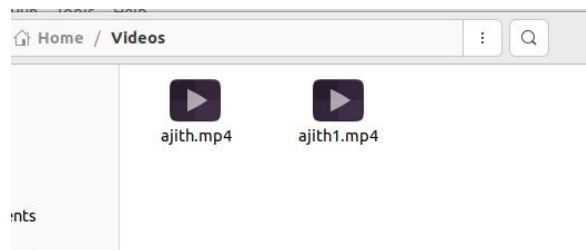


Figure4. Stored video

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

7.1. Conclusion

This project successfully demonstrated real-time video transmission and streaming using GNU Radio, an open-source software development toolkit that provides signal processing blocks to implement software-defined radios (SDRs). The implemented system involved converting video file input into a stream of digital signals, modulating the stream using GMSK (Gaussian Minimum Shift Keying), transmitting it via UDP or ZeroMQ, and then demodulating and reconstructing the output video stream.

The experiment highlighted the capability of GNU Radio to simulate and deploy a full-duplex communication system by leveraging its flexible block-based architecture. The use of modulation schemes like GMSK ensured bandwidth efficiency and robustness under noise, while the inclusion of both file source/sink and live streaming blocks (e.g., QT GUI Time Sink, UDP Source/Sink) showcased real-time communication feasibility.

Although the system was able to transmit and receive video successfully, issues such as data loss, latency, and playback quality were observed, especially in the presence of network delays or buffer underruns. These limitations highlight the challenges involved in maintaining high-fidelity, real-time media transmission over SDR platforms.

7.2. Future work

For future improvements and expansion of this project, several areas can be explored:

Error Detection and Correction: Implement Forward Error Correction (FEC) techniques like CRC, convolutional codes, or LDPC to minimize data loss and ensure more reliable video transmission. Frame checks and sequence tagging could help detect dropped packets during streaming.

Adaptive Bitrate Streaming: Introduce a dynamic bitrate adjustment mechanism to optimize transmission quality based on available bandwidth or channel conditions.

Compression Techniques: Integrate video compression standards (like H.264) within the GNU Radio flow using interfacing scripts or external libraries (e.g., FFmpeg) to reduce the load on transmission paths.

Live Camera Streaming: Extend the project from file-based transmission to real-time camera input using tools like v4l2src or GStreamer blocks, enabling live video capture and broadcast through GNU Radio.

Modulation Scheme Comparison: Analyze and compare various modulation techniques (e.g., QPSK, OFDM, BPSK) in terms of transmission efficiency, BER (Bit Error Rate), and power consumption to find the best fit for high-quality video streaming.

QoS Monitoring: Incorporate performance metrics such as jitter, latency, throughput, and packet drop rates in the GUI display for real-time quality of service monitoring.

7.3. Realistic Constraints

Bandwidth Limitations: Real-time video transmission demands high bandwidth. Depending on modulation and channel conditions, sustaining high-quality transmission over limited bandwidth links becomes a major challenge.

Packet Loss & Latency: UDP transmission in GNU Radio does not guarantee packet delivery, making the system vulnerable to losses and frame corruption without added recovery mechanisms.

Processing Overhead: Real-time modulation, demodulation, encoding, and decoding consume significant CPU/GPU resources, especially when dealing with large video files or live video streams. Optimization is necessary for real-time operation.

Integration Complexity Combining GNU Radio with multimedia frameworks (e.g., FFmpeg, GStreamer) introduces integration and synchronization challenges, especially

when handling frame boundaries and buffering.

Hardware Constraints: When deploying on SDR hardware (e.g., USRP, HackRF), the limitations in sample rate, buffer size, and USB throughput can affect the quality of video transmission, requiring careful configuration and tuning.

Debugging and Visualization: GNU Radio lacks built-in video visualization tools, and external applications are needed for playback and comparison. This can make it difficult to debug and verify video fidelity.

CHAPTER 8

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