

Intermediate report : Energy aware memory allocation in real-time systems

I. INTRODUCTION

The project's goal is to find a new solution for energy aware memory allocation in real-time systems. We already know that memory allocation using Core Coupled Memory (CCM) SRAM helps to increase microcontroller performances [1]. We want to know if this kind of allocation can also reduce energy consumption for the system.

II. OPERATING MODE

A. Materials

For this project we will use two different microcontrollers based on the Arm Cortex-M4 32 bit core. We have a STM32F3 Discovery (STM32F3003VC) and a STM32G4 (STM32G431KB). The intensity during computing is measured with a Nucleo-LPM01A. We will firstly focus on the STM32F3 performances, the STM32G4 has a different memory architecture and can run code at higher frequency. This microcontroller will be used later for comparison with STM32F3.

B. Intensity measurement with Nucleo-LPM01A

For the STM32F3 we have to remove the jumper JP3 to allow the consumption measurement of the board. Then we will branch the STM32F3's VDD pin and GND pin to the LPM01A on the basic connector CN14 at pins 3 and 1. The two boards are power supplied with USB cables connected to the computer. However the processor of the STM32F3 is powered by the LPM01A. So when the code is running we can obtain directly the intensity graph with the STM32 Cube Monitor PWR application. [2]

For the STM32G4 we remove the jumper JP1 and we measure the current with the exact same way.

C. Obtaining results

All the test are done the same way to always have the same graph pattern. We compute the code several times with different memory allocation and frequency. To separate the different executions we put the processor into stop mode (60 uA). So we can see picks corresponding to each execution. The first pick is due to the reset button so we remove it during the data management.

Then The graph can be saved as a .stpm file. This file is an archive containing one or several .csv files divided into two columns, one with the intensity and the other with the time. We made a python code to automatically extract the results

from the .stpm file. Our code will browse all the contained .csv files and will detect all the intensity pics. It will return an excel file where we can find the average intensity of each pic with their duration. To verify the execution times we use timers in the STM32F3 code and transmit the execution time with UART connection. There is a difference of 1 to 2 % between the time we mesure on the intensity graph and the duration obtained with timers, however, the gap between the different measures remains the same with the two procedures. Moreover, for calculating the energy it is more convenient to measure the duration when there is a power consumption.

D. Compilation

Cube IDE gives a wide range of optimization levels for compilation. We used the default optimization for release mode. This level of optimization helps to reduce the space used in memory.

III. BENCHMARK

To verify the microcontroller behavior and have a set of data we used five benchmarks from "Memory allocation for low-power real-time embedded microcontroller" [1] work and add three from TACle benchmarks [3]. We specify code inputs and read only data-size.

- Pointer Chase, code: 62B, no inputs, read only : 3.91 KB.
- Bubble Sort, code : 1.28 KB, inputs : 3.91 KB, no read only data.
- Fast Fourier Transform, code 1 KB, inputs : 4 KB, no read only data.
- RSA-Encryption and Decryption, code : 145 and 172 B, inputs : 0.5 KB and 4 KB, no read only data.
- Kalman Filter, code : 1.62 KB, inputs : 4 KB, no read only data.
- Matrix Product, code : 198 B, inputs : 4.68 KB, no read only data.
- Sine Lookup Table, code 228 B, inputs : 6.84 KB ,read only : 5.6 KB.
- Dijkstra, code : 532 B, inputs : 6.25 KB, others : 16.26 KB, no read only data.
- Fibonacci Recursive : code : 128 B, inputs : 8 B, no read only data.

IV. MOVING INSTRUCTIONS IN CCM

For this part we will analyze the impact of moving instructions in the CCM instead of Flash memory.

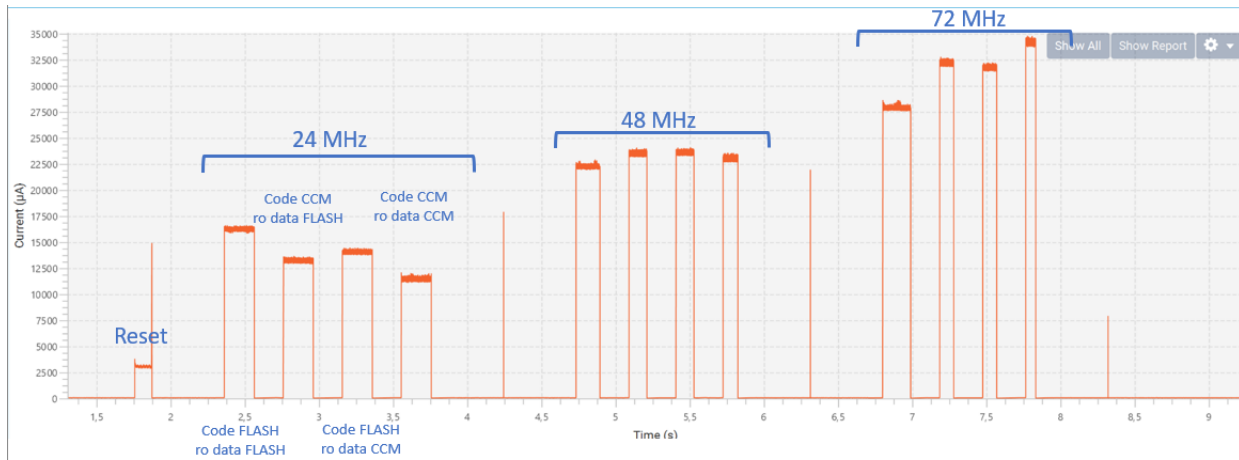


Fig. 1. Intensity consumption graph for differents pointer chase executions

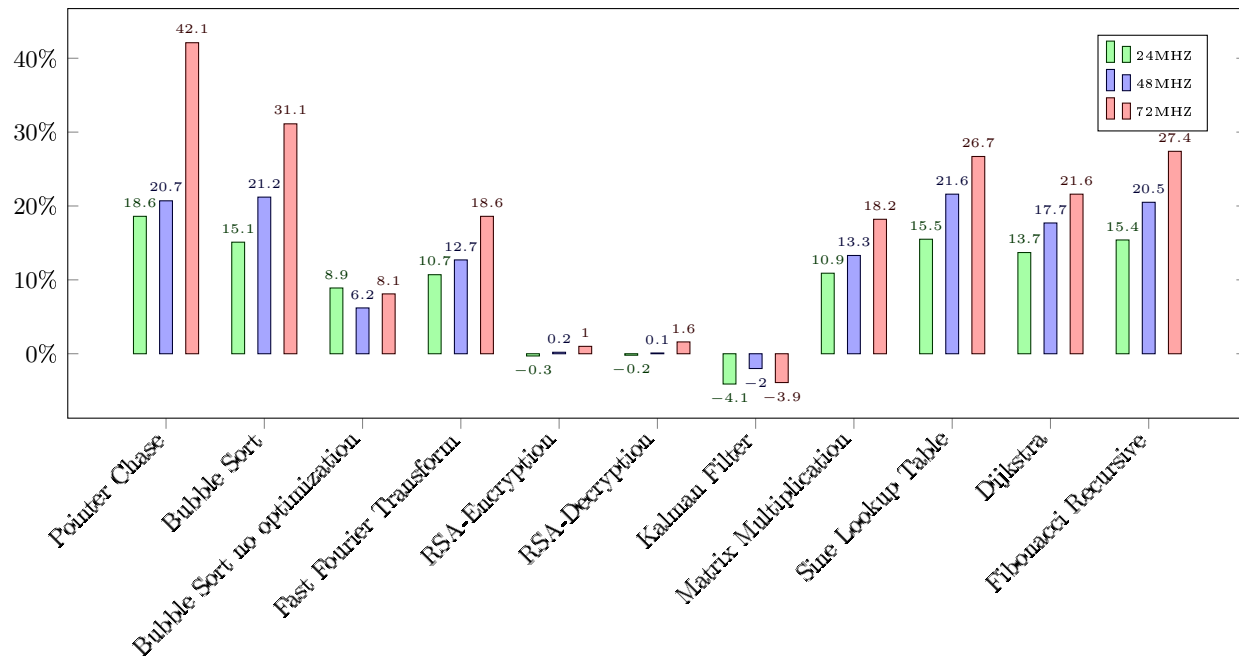


Fig. 2. Energy consumption decrease by moving instructions from *Flash* to the *CCM-RAM*

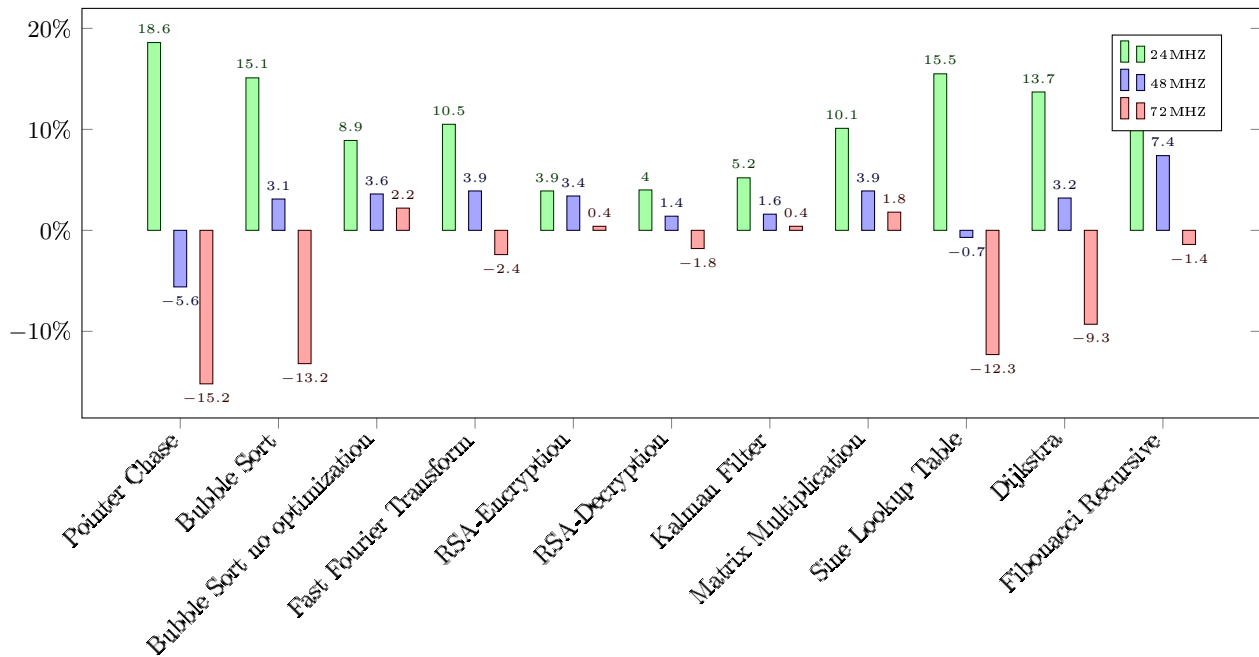


Fig. 3. Average execution intensity decrease over frequency by moving instructions from *Flash* to the *CCM-RAM*

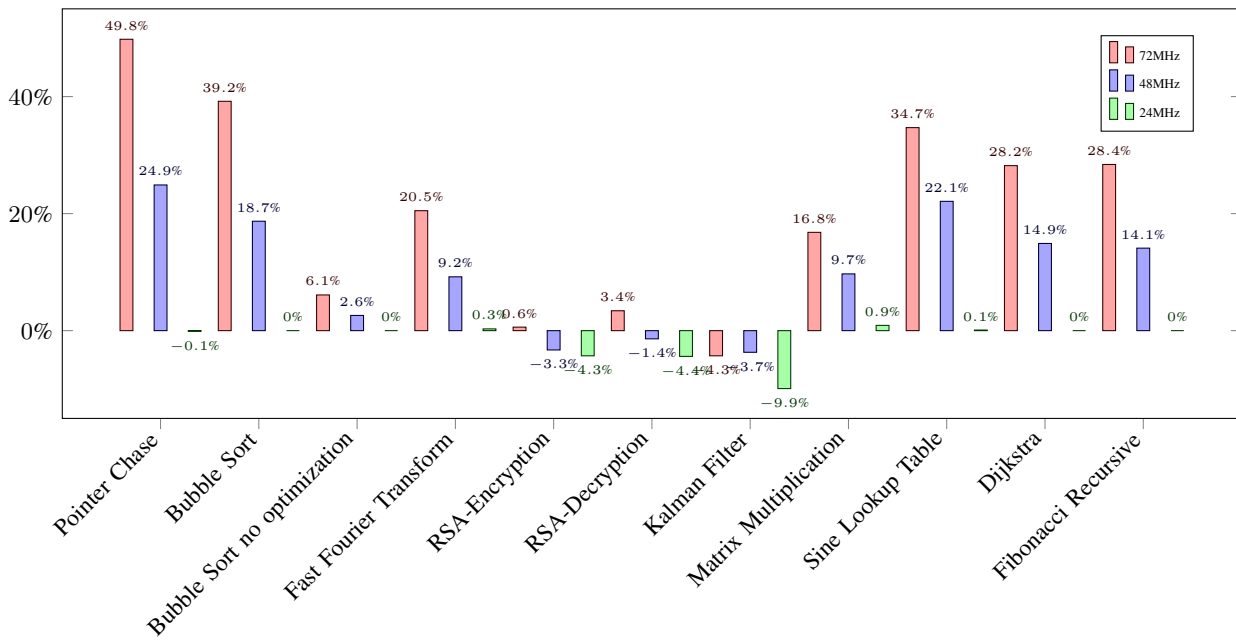


Fig. 4. Execution time decrease over frequency by moving instructions from *Flash* to the *CCM-RAM*

We measure the energy consumption of a task by integrating the average intensity during the execution over the execution time. Energy consumption decrease (2) would be a result of a runtime decrease and an intensity decrease. In low frequency CCM allows an intensity decrease (4) and as no impact on runtime [1]. Then it can explain easily the energy consumption amelioration. However we can observe that the average intensity increases at high frequencies when moving code in CCM. In high frequency the FLASH runs more slowly than the processor. FLASH memory maximum frequency is 24 MHz on the STM32F3 and the processor can run at 72MHz. This difference imply some wait states if the cpu ask instruction when the FLASH is not ready. It explains why runtime is lower in high frequency (with CCM SRAM there are no wait states). We think that these wait states also lower the average intensity, because the processor does not

consume energy during these moments. Even if, there is no intensity reduction with CCM in High frequency (or even an augmentation) the runtime decrease compensate this. Then we still have an energy consumption decrease by moving code in CCM.

As comparaisn we compiled the bubble sort algorithm with another optimization level. It is the same used in the previous article ([1]). It is one of the lowest level of optimization. It can be used for debugging process. Optimizing the code have a big impact on our measure. With optimization the difference between FLASH and CCM is more flagrant.

V. IMPACT ON ABSOLUTE ENERGY

Algorithm	24MHz	48MHz	72MHz
Pointer Chase	10.826	11.852	17.320
Bubble Sort	13.300	13.907	15.832
Bubble Sort no opti	47.238	45.317	45.361
RSA decrypt	5.229	5.170	5.560
Kalman	2.210	2.310	2.566
Dijkstra	42.077	42.741	44.415

TABLE I
ABSOLUTE ENERGY (MJ) WITH INSTRUCTION IN FLASH

Algorithm	24MHz	48MHz	72MHz
Pointer Chase	8.815	9.402	10.026
Bubble Sort	11.294	10.962	10.893
Bubble Sort no opti	43.017	42.524	41.669
RSA decrypt	5.239	5.166	5.469
Kalman	2.301	2.357	2.665
Dijkstra	36.318	35.189	34.828

TABLE II
ABSOLUTE ENERGY (MJ) WITH INSTRUCTION IN CCM SRAM

When instructions are in the FLASH memory the energy increase with the frequency. However, when the code is running from CCM SRAM, the energy remain constant and can even be lowered in high frequency. This observation can be counter-intuitive, but it is shown that high frequency execution can reduce energy consumption [4]. This is not true in the case of FLASH execution because the wait states imply an overhead consumption. Because the energy is the product between intensity, runtime and voltage we can conclude that, wait states increase execution time more than they reduce the intensity (voltage remain constant).

$$\Delta E = \frac{I_1 \frac{n_1}{f_1} - I_2 \frac{n_2}{f_2}}{I_1 \frac{n_2}{f_1}}$$

In the case of no wait states $n_1 == n_2$

$$\Rightarrow \Delta E = 1 - \frac{f_1}{f_2} \frac{I_2}{I_1}$$

With n the amount of clock cycles to execute the task.

The variation of energy is null if the intensity grows proportionally with the frequency. In our case the intensity follows: $I(f) = a + b.f^\alpha$ with $\alpha \in]0, 1[$. When code is running from CCM there is no wait states so n remains constant over the frequency. Then, the above formula is true. However, when code runs from FLASH :

$$\Delta E = 1 - \frac{I_2}{I_1} \frac{n_2}{n_1} \frac{f_1}{f_2}$$

$$n_2 = n_1 + n_1 \cdot w = n_1(1 + w)$$

with w the wait state ratio $w \geq 0$

$$\Delta E = 1 - (1 + w) \frac{I_2}{I_1} \frac{f_1}{f_2}$$

With the $(1 + w)$ factor the intensity growth has to be even more small between frequencies. With $f_2 = 72MHz$, $f_1 = 24MHz$ and $w = 0.4$ the intensity ratio has to be inferior to 2.14 to do not have energy increase. With no wait states it would be 3.

REFERENCES

- [1] Zhishen Zhang, Yuwen Shen, Binqi Sun, Tomasz Kloda, and Marco Caccamo. Memory allocation for low-power real-time embedded microcontroller: a case study. In *2022 IEEE 27th International Conference on Emerging Technologies and Factory Automation (ETFA)*, pages 1–4, 2022.
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