Logotipo

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UNIVERSITÁ DI PISA

ENGEGNERIA DELL’INFORMAZIONE

**Project Report**

**UART Receiver**

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# **1. Introduction**

The project presented in this document is the implementation of the Receiver part of a Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter (UART) peripheral. The UART is a simple protocol for bi-directional serial data transmission, generally used for microcontroller applications. The peripheral device provides a hardware interface for fast serial-to-parallel data conversion from external devices sending to the CPU, and for parallel-to-serial data conversion when receiving from the CPU. The main portion of the UART hardware interface consists in two data lines, *tx* and *rx*:

Texto

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Figure 1 – UART hardware interface

For the transmission of data, the UART protocol defines that the data lines must be kept in high (‘1’) to represent the idle state. To start a new transmission, the line must be set to GND (‘0’) for one period, indicating the start bit. After the start of the frame, the word bits are transmitted, followed by a parity bit (optional). To complete the transmission, a defined number of stop bits must be transmitted, keeping the UART lines at high and thus leaving it in the idle state at the end of the frame. An example with different configurations is shown in Figure 2:

Interface gráfica do usuário, Texto, Aplicativo, Tabela, Excel

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Figure 2 – UART protocol formats (Source: Texas Instruments)

A common use of the UART is to provide an interface for character transmission from CPU to peripheral devices, such as sensors in an IoT application, to control and obtain the measurements from the devices. Another possible usage is to connect the CPU to another external serial device, working as a converter, for example, to an USB port connected. By using this implementation, the UART can reduce the process demand from the CPU, as it uses a much-simplified protocol and an easy to build dedicated hardware.

To build a peripheral UART in a microcontroller architecture, the design must implement efficient ways to read and write the data from the serial lines to and to perform the serial-to-parallel and parallel-to-serial operations. A possible way to do so is by using a shift register connected at the input and output ports of the UART, combined with a buffer and a time and control logic. In addition to the data reading, the peripheral must provide error and control signals for the system interrupt control.

An example of hardware implemented UART peripheral by Texas Instruments was studied to guide the final design of the module developed, and to understand the overall behavior of the peripheral. The block diagram presented highlights the receiver part of the UART peripheral found in the TI device:

Diagrama

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Figure 3 – KeyStone UART partial block diagram (Source: Texas Instruments)

By focusing on the key elements of the receiver, this section can be divided in a set of components:

1. **Receiver Timing and Control**: will track the start and end of the transmission according to the settings and protocol specification (will produce a Frame Error in case of transmitter frequency mismatch).
2. **Receiver Shift Register**: connected to the rx data line, will accumulate the word data and parity bit, until it is ready to be moved to the buffer.
3. **Receiver Buffer Register**: buffer for the UART output data.
4. **Receiver FIFO**: alternative mode for receiving the frames. It implements a fifo type buffer (memory array) used to store multiple frames received (The FIFO mode will not be present in the hardware developed for the project)

Considering the project requirements, some adaptations will be necessary for this overall scheme of the UART receiver developed. A specific validation signal must be produced at the output of the module; therefore, a custom control block must be used, checking for error conditions during the reception. The signal is then asserted for one UART clock cycle, informing that the data at the buffer is ok to be read.

A simplified diagram of the initial idea for the UART receiver is shown in Figure 4. On the Architecture description section, the final implementation will be discussed.

**Interface gráfica do usuário, Aplicativo

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Figure 4 – UART receiver initial concept

# **2. Architecture description**

With the UART peripheral example studied, aligned with the project requirements, a model was developed to perform the necessary operation of the protocol. The required settings for this receiver were:

1. Word size (W) = 7 bits
2. Baud rate (B) = 112500
3. Parity (P): even
4. Number of Stop bits (S) = 2
5. Oversampling rate (OS\_RATE) = 8

Within this UART module, three main components were designed to handle the protocol operation, as well as an addition independent block, used for a particular situation of the protocol (break condition). The modules will be detailed in the next sections, and the overall UART peripheral structure and internal connection were defined as:

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Figure 5 – UART receiver internal signals block diagram (implemented)

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Figure 6 – UART receiver block diagram

## **2.1 Synchronization component (rx\_synch)**

The main function of the synchronization component is to read and accumulate the data from the serial line and to provide the frame synchronization signals for the UART protocol status control.

For the data reception, an internal counter based on the UART internal clock will be used to synchronize the bits at the receiver. From the design specifications, the UART clock is eight times faster than the Baud rate of the UART transmitter, therefore, the rx line value will be read at the 4th cycle of every bit and copied to the component output. The expected behavior in time for this process is as shown:

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Figure 7 – UART rx data reading and accumulation

A second counter (bit count) based on the number of bits read will then be used to identify the end of the word (including the parity bit) and the stop bits.

This method of handling the input data resembles more the operation of a demultiplexing device, rather than a proper shift register, by accumulating the data and then issuing a ready signal once the final bit of the word is received. A dedicated demux component was not introduced in the synchronizer, but process used on the VHDL code will work similarly as one. As a reference, the demux block diagram would be like the diagram presented:

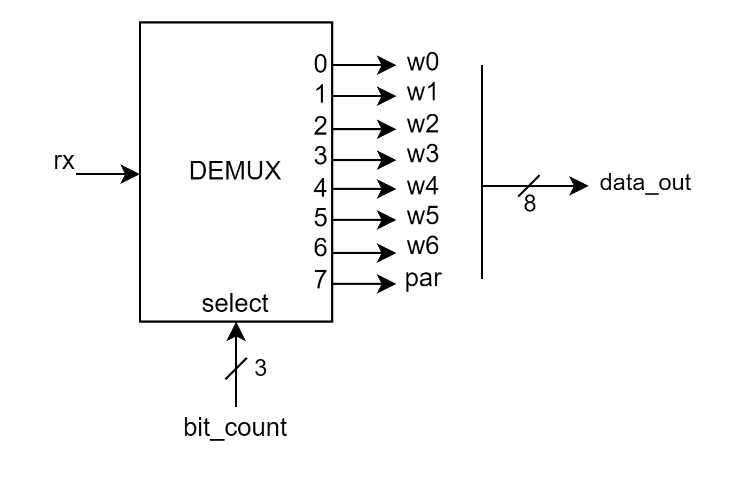


Figure 8 – Demux block diagram

This design choice is then an alternative way of getting the transmitted bits from the serial line to a parallel output, instead of the shift register approach used on the Texas Instruments device shown.

No performance benefit was observed when implementing this component as the serial-to-parallel converter. However, a noticeable difference that can be discussed is that the individual outputs of this block are kept constant during the reception of the word (after the first bit is set to the demux output, that value is no longer altered during the frame transmission, and so on for the other bits).

To complete the serial-to-parallel operation, a data ready signal then is raised once the bit counter reaches the word size plus parity bit, allowing the connected buffer to read the data output values from the component.

In addition to the data ready signal, the synchronizer component will also generate three external control signals, informing the UART control component the current state of the protocol transaction or the occurrence of a frame error. Those signals are:

1. **frame\_start**: indicates the start of a frame, it is set to ‘1’ after the rx line goes down, and is kept at ‘0’ after 4 cycles (oversampling rate/2).
2. **frame\_stop**: indicates when the last stop bit is detected.
3. **frame\_error**: indicates when the start or stop conditions of the UART protocol are violated (usually frame errors occurs when there is a mismatch between transmitter and receiver baud rate values).

To set the established status signals a Finite State Machine was developed for the synchronization component, by using a total of 8 states, shown in the FSM diagram and block diagram:

Diagrama

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Figure 9 – Synchronizer FSM

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Figure 10 – Synchronizer block diagram

## **2.2 Buffer component (rx\_buff)**

As the synchronizer component converts the serial data from the tx line to a parallel output, a buffer was implemented to hold the word data as the frame is transmitted. The buffer then reads the output data of the synch block, and performs the parity check on the received word. After the data is copied, the buffer can be read from the CPU (output ‘y’ of the UART receiver peripheral).

To inform the buffer that new data can be obtained (completing the cycle for one transmitted frame), the component was design to respond to a clear signal issued by the control module. This signal returns the buffer to a standby state, waiting for a new data ready signal from the synch block. The internal states described of the buffer component are illustrated in the FSM diagram:

Uma imagem contendo eletrônico, cd

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Figure 11 – Buffer FSM diagram

The envelope for this component is then represented by the block diagram:

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Figure 12 – Buffer block diagram

Considering that this component then must provide the parity check, a dedicated xor logic port was implemented inside this module. This auxiliary component was configured for the settings configured on this UART receiver, and has a total size of 8 bits of input (W = 7 + 1 parity). The buffer component will raise a parity error flag if the result for the xor operation does not match the even parity UART configuration (the result must be ‘0’). The block diagram for this component is:

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Figure 13 – 8 bit xor port block diagram

## **2.3 Control component (rx\_control)**

To handle the state changes and to provide the frame validation signal, a dedicated control block was implemented in the UART receiver peripheral. This component then obtains the status and error signals from the synchronizer and buffer components. Once the conditions, defined by the UART settings (matching baud rate, word size, parity, and number of stop bits) are satisfied on the received frame, the control component will set the ‘y\_valid’ signal to represent that the data at the buffer is OK to be read.

Also, this control module can directly reset the internal components when an error situation occurs.

An important mention on the implemented architecture is that the control operations could also be implemented as a Hardware Abstraction Layer, when combining the peripheral to a microcontroller platform. However, for this type of external control the UART module must expose a set of error signals (as well as extra communication control signals such as Ready to Send and Clear to Send, in a master slave operation) to the external hardware. On the Appendix section, the schematics for the complete UART peripheral implementation from TI are included for reference.

For the current project requirements, the only external control signal defined was the data validation, and so the modules were developed accordingly, keeping the error and status signals internal to the UART receiver block. The implemented FSM for the described state control and the component block diagram are as following:

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Figure 14 – Control FSM

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Figure 15 – Control block diagram

Noticeably, a break condition is also managed by the control module, however this state currently has no effect on the behavior of the UART receiver. More details on the break counter component will be discussed in the next session.

## **2.4 Break counter (break\_counter)**

The UART break is a special condition defined in the protocol suite, used to trigger a specific response on the peripheral, and could be used to start a new communication or reset the slave UART peripheral. Considering the project requirements, this component was introduced in the design to complement the available functions.

In spite of being added to the control FSM, the break condition does not have an impact on the current component behavior, and it is only to represent and identify the reception of the break character, which is defined by: “A Break character consists of all zeros and must persist for a minimum of 11 bit times before the next character is received.” (Source: Microchip).

The break counter, used to identify the described condition was implemented in a dedicated component, and follows a similar behavior of the synchronizer used in this UART receiver. The internal counter then performs a bit count respecting the oversampling rate defined (8 UART clock cycles for each bit) and will trigger once the 11 consecutive zero is detected. If a logic ‘1’ bit is detected, then the counter is automatically sent back to the IDLE state.

If the break condition is met, then the component will raise a break error signal, informing the control block, and it will automatically reset its internal counters (handled In the AUTO\_RESET state). The FSM for this module and its block diagram is defined as:

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Figure 16 – Break counter FSM

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Figure 17 – Break counter block diagram

# **3. Testing and verification**

To test and verify the components correct behavior, a testbench VHDL component was designed for each block, as well as for the complete UART receiver. In this section, the results from the Modelsim simulations of the modules will be used to demonstrate the proper operation and state change on every module. With this demonstration, it will be possible to confirm the configurated settings and design specifications used to develop the peripheral.

The testbench configurations will also provide scenarios for the error handling situations, demonstrating the detection and responses for each error condition. Those conditions, followed the UART protocol definitions, and were classified as:

1. **Frame error**: inconsistency detected at the start of end of the frame (issued by the synch block).
2. **Parity error**: the parity of the transmitted word is not even (issued by the buffer block).
3. **Break error**: special condition detected and issued by the break counter, when a total of 11 zeros are sent in the rx line.

## **3.1 Synchronizer testbench (tb\_rx\_synch)**

The testbench for the synchronizer component will be used to demonstrate three main conditions and transition. The first test shown (label: Simulation 1) shows when the start bit is sent, initiating the frame transmission. The simulated rx line then goes from high to low, triggering the FSM of the synch module to start the internal counter. After the 4th cycle, the input is checked again and if a zero is still detected, the state is changed to RECEIVE\_DATA. At this stage, the component will start to set its output, according to the values detected at the input at every 8 counts.

The second demonstration (label: Simulation 2) shows the end of the transmitted word and the stop bit counting. In the test, after the bit count reaches W + 1, the synchronizer rises the data\_ready signal, and start the stop bit detection. When the last bit is detected, the FSM return to IDLE state.

The third test (label: Simulation 3) will then show a scenario where the rx line goes to zero at the end of the frame, resulting in a Frame error condition. At this point the FSM of the synch block is locked in the FRAME\_ERROR state until a reset is performed.

# **4. Synthesis and implementation**

maximum clock frequency (critical path), elements used (slice, LUT, etc.) and estimated power consumption. Comment on any warning messages.

# **5.** **Conclusions**

# **Appendix**

**Functional Block Diagram**

Diagrama, Esquemático

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**Relationships Between Data Bit, BCLK, and UART Input Clock**

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**Autoflow Control –** Request to Send (RTS) and Clear to Send (CTS) signals:

Interface gráfica do usuário

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**UART Interrupt Request Enable Paths -** Complete error handling interrupt signaling:

Diagrama

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Synchronization block behavior at the beginning of a new UART transmission (Start bit detection).

Interface gráfica do usuário

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