

# Efficient Deep Learning for Massive MIMO Channel State Estimation

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April 27, 2021

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# 1 Introduction

Section 1.1 provides an overview of the MIMO channel and relevant notation. Section 1.2 introduces the channel simulation used in this work, the COST2100 model. Section 1.4.1 provides an overview of recent works in deep learning for CSI estimation in MIMO networks.

## 1.1 MIMO Channel Overview

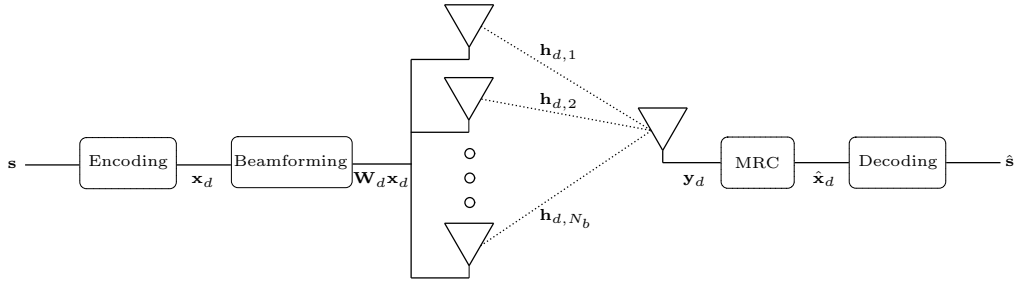


Figure 1: Example multi-antenna transmitter (BS, gNB) and single-antenna user equipment (UE) and relevant system values.

In this work, we consider a MIMO channel with a multiple antennas ( $n_B \gg 1$ ) at the transmitter (gNodeB or gNB) servicing a single user equipment (UE) with a single antenna. Under orthogonal frequency division multiplexing (OFDM) with  $N_f$  subcarriers, the received symbols on the  $m$ -th subcarrier for the downlink and the uplink at the receiver are given as

$$y_{d,m} = \mathbf{h}_{d,m}^H \mathbf{w}_{t,m} x_{d,m} + n_{d,m},$$

$$y_{u,m} = \mathbf{w}_{r,m}^H \mathbf{h}_{u,m} x_{u,m} + \mathbf{w}_{r,m}^H \mathbf{n}_{u,m},$$

where the individual system values are defined in Table 1, and a representative system model is viewable in Figure 1. The resulting downlink and uplink channel state information (CSI)

Table 1: MIMO system variables considered in this work.

Symbol	Dimension	Description
$y_{d,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Received downlink symbol on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{h}_{d,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_b \times 1}$	Downlink channel on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{H}_d$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_f \times N_b}$	Downlink impulse response on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{w}_{t,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_b \times 1}$	Transmitter precoding vector for $m$ -th subcarrier
$x_{d,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Trasmitted symbol on $m$ -th subcarrier
$n_{d,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Downlink noise on $m$ -th subcarrier
$y_{u,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Received uplink symbol on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{h}_{u,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_b \times 1}$	Uplink channel on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{H}_u$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_f \times N_b}$	Downlink impulse response on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{w}_{r,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^{N_b \times 1}$	Received precoding vector for $m$ -th subcarrier
$x_{u,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Received symbol on $m$ -th subcarrier
$\mathbf{n}_{u,m}$	$\mathbb{C}^1$	Uplink noise on $m$ -th subcarrier

matrices are given as

$$\bar{\mathbf{H}}_d = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{h}_{d,1} & \dots & \mathbf{h}_{d,N_f} \end{bmatrix}^H \in \mathbb{C}^{N_f \times N_b},$$

$$\bar{\mathbf{H}}_u = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{h}_{u,1} & \dots & \mathbf{h}_{u,N_f} \end{bmatrix}^H \in \mathbb{C}^{N_f \times N_b}.$$

To achieve near-capacity transmission rates, the transmitter needs access to an appropriate estimate of  $\bar{\mathbf{H}}_d$  [1]. Such estimates enable the use of linear precoding techniques (e.g., conjugate beamforming or zero-forcing beamforming) to realize appreciable spectral and power efficiency gains [2]. Downlink CSI estimation can be performed in time division duplex (TDD) by using uplink pilots due to channel reciprocity [3–5]. In contrast, frequency domain duplex (FDD) does not admit channel reciprocity due to frequency-selective channels, and CSI estimates must be acquired using feedback.

Given their dimensionality, feeding back entire CSI matrices is impractical. Instead, we seek a compressed representation of a sparse transformation. The sparse representation we consider is the angular-delay representation of CSI matrices [6]. Denote the unitary DFT (inverse DFT) matrix  $\mathbf{F} \in \mathbb{C}^{N_f \times N_f}$  ( $\mathbf{F}^H \in \mathbb{C}^{N_b \times N_b}$ ), and denote the spatial-frequency CSI

matrix as  $\bar{\mathbf{H}}$ . The angular-delay domain representation  $\mathbf{H}$  is given as

$$\mathbf{H} = \mathbf{F}^H \bar{\mathbf{H}} \mathbf{F}.$$

The delay spread of the resulting  $\mathbf{H}$  can typically be captured with a small number of delay elements, so we restrict our attention to the first  $R_d$  elements of  $\mathbf{H}$ , resulting in a truncated angular-delay matrix which we denote as  $\mathbf{H}_d \in \mathbb{C}^{(R_d \times N_b)}$  ( $\mathbf{H}_u \in \mathbb{C}^{(R_d \times N_b)}$ ) for the downlink (uplink).

## 1.2 Channel Model

For all CSI tests, we mainly rely on the COST2100 MIMO channel model [7]. We use two datasets with a single base station (gNB) and a single user equipment (UE) in the following scenarios:

1. **Indoor** channels using a 5.3GHz downlink at 0.001 m/s UE velocity, served by a gNB at center of a 20m×20m coverage area.
2. **Outdoor** channels using a 300MHz downlink at 0.9 m/s UE velocity served by a gNB at center of a 400m×400m coverage area.

In both scenarios, we use the parameters listed in Table 2.

## 1.3 Classical CSI Estimation

Works in compressive feedback for CSI estimation in MIMO networks can be placed in three broad categories. The first category includes works which use direct quantization of continuous CSI elements to discrete levels. The quantized CSI are encoded and fed

Table 2: Parameters used for COST2100 simulations for both Indoor and Outdoor datasets.

Symbol	Value	Description
$N_b$	32	Number of antennas at gNB
$N_f$	1024	Number of subcarriers for OFDM link
$R_d$	32	Number of delay elements kept after truncation
$N$	$10^6$	Total number of samples per dataset
$T$	10	Number of timeslots
$\delta$	40ms, 80ms	Feedback delay interval between consecutive CSI timeslots

back to the transmitter [8, 9]. The second category includes works which use compressed sensing, a technique which applying a random measurement matrix at the transmitter and the receiver [10, 11]. Compressed sensing assumes matrices to be encoded and fed back meet certain sparsity requirements, and compressed sensing algorithms require iterative solvers [12] for decoding, resulting in undesired latency.

The last category of work in compressive CSI feedback uses deep learning (DL), neural networks with numerous layers which are trained on large datasets using backpropagation. Before describing these works, we first describe a few pertinent concepts from deep learning.

## 1.4 Deep Learning

This section provides a brief overview of relevant deep learning concepts employed in this work, including convolutional neural networks (CNNs), autoencoders, and unsupervised learning.

**Deep learning (DL)** is a subset of machine learning (ML), a broad class of algorithms which use data to “fit” models for prediction or classification tasks. The three predominant learning frameworks are supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning. In the works proposed, we focus on *unsupervised learning*, which seeks to find a compressed representation of the data without labels (see Chapter 14 of [13] for an overview).

**Convolutional Neural Networks:** A neural network is a machine learning algorithm with multiple *layers* of parameterized linear functions followed nonlinear functions (typically referred to as ‘activation’ functions). The parameters for these layers can be updated via a stochastic optimizer (e.g., [14]), and given enough layers, such networks can achieve arbitrarily accurate functional approximation [15]. In recent years, neural networks with convolutional layers have established state-of-the-art performance in computer vision tasks such as image classification [16] and segmentation [17].

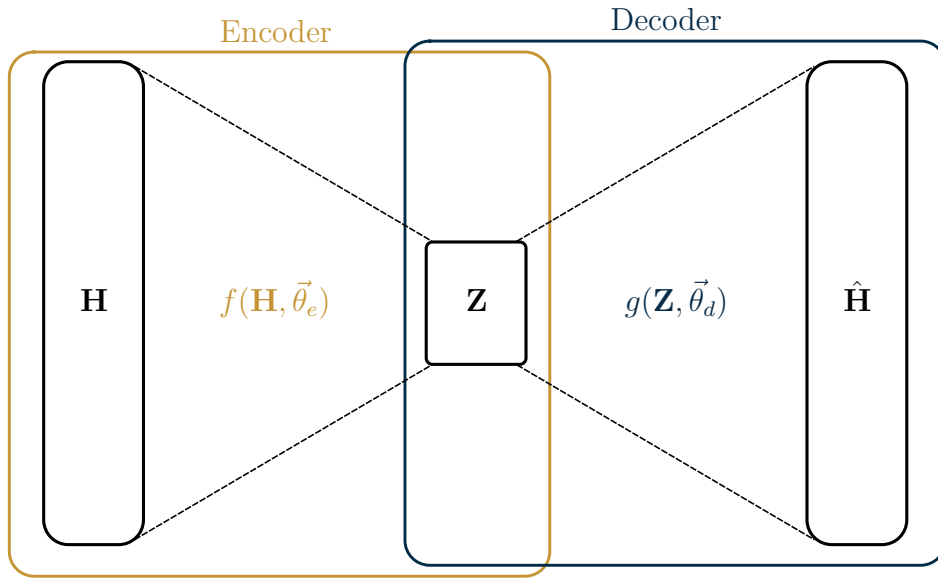


Figure 2: Abstract schematic for an autoencoder operating on CSI matrices  $\mathbf{H}$ . The encoder learns a latent representation,  $\mathbf{Z}$ , while the decoder learns to reconstruct estimates  $\hat{\mathbf{H}}$ .

A common architecture for deep unsupervised learning is the *autoencoder* (see Fig. 2 for a generic example). Trained end-to-end on input data, an autoencoder is comprised of an encoder and a decoder which jointly learn a compressed latent representation ( $\mathbf{Z}$ ) and an estimate of the input ( $\hat{\mathbf{H}}$ ). By choosing  $\mathbf{Z}$  to have lower dimension than the input, the network is forced to learn a “useful” summary of the input data. The typical objective function for such a network is the mean squared error,

$$\operatorname{argmin}_{\theta_e, \theta_d} \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \|\mathbf{H}_i - g(f(\mathbf{H}_i, \theta_e), \theta_d)\|^2.$$



We optimize network parameters  $\vec{\theta}_e, \vec{\theta}_d$  by backpropagation and a stochastic optimization algorithm (e.g., stochastic gradient descent, ADAM).

### 1.4.1 CNNs for CSI Estimation

Successful efforts in DL for CSI estimation have typically utilized convolutional neural networks (CNNs) in an autoencoder structure [18]. Variations on the CNN-based autoencoder have investigated different network architectures [19], variational training frameworks [20], and denoising modules [21]. Other works have exploited physical channel characteristics such as downlink/uplink reciprocity [22] and temporal coherence [23]. To make CNNs practical for actual feedback transmission, authors have experimented with networks using entropy encoding for bit stream feedback [24] and networks with complex latent elements for IQ symbol feedback [25].

## 2 Spherical Normalization

Most work in deep learning for CSI estimation focuses on different neural network architectures, training frameworks, or hyperparameter tuning. Such works treat the real and imaginary elements of  $\mathbf{H}$  as separate channels similar to color channels in images. The normalization method used in these works is typically the same – the extrema (i.e., the minimum and the maximum) of the real and imaginary channels are used to perform minmax scaling over the entire dataset,

$$\mathbf{H}_{k,\text{minmax}}(i, j) = \frac{\mathbf{H}_k(i, j) - \mathbf{H}_{\min}}{\mathbf{H}_{\max} - \mathbf{H}_{\min}},$$

for  $n \in [1, \dots, N]$  given a dataset of  $N$  samples and  $i, j$  indexing the rows/columns of the CSI matrices. The resulting samples are cast to the range  $[0, 1]$ .

For image data, minmax normalization results in each image’s color channels scaled to the range  $[0, 1]$ . The resulting distribution for each color channel is typically satisfactory for image tasks, as the variance is not much smaller than the range of the normalized data (see Fig. 3).

However, for CSI matrices, minmax normalization is applied to the real and imaginary channels of each element. For typical channel models and parameters, the distribution of channel elements (see Fig. 4) tends to have much lower variance than that of ImageNet. This smaller variance can be explained by the difference in the datasets’ ranges – while the channels in image data (e.g., ImageNet) assume integer values between  $[0, 255]$ , the channels in CSI data (e.g., COST2100) assume floating point values smaller than  $10^{-3}$ .

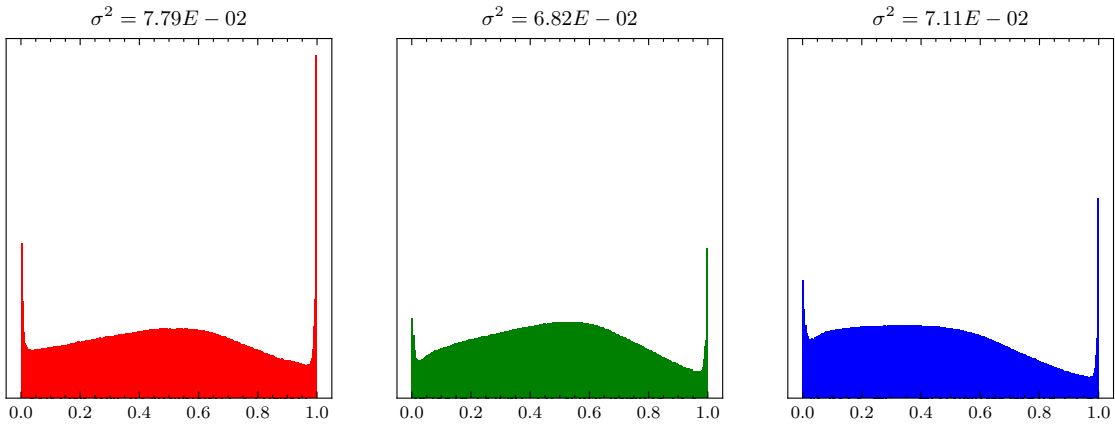


Figure 3: Distribution and variance of minmax-normalized ImageNet color channels ( $N = 50000$ ) images.

## 2.1 Related Work

Several works have investigated normalization techniques for deep learning such as batch normalization [26], instance normalization [27], layer normalization [28], and group normalization [29]. These normalization techniques scale the outputs of latent layers in neural networks, which helps to solve the problem of covariate shift [26] where the mean and vari-

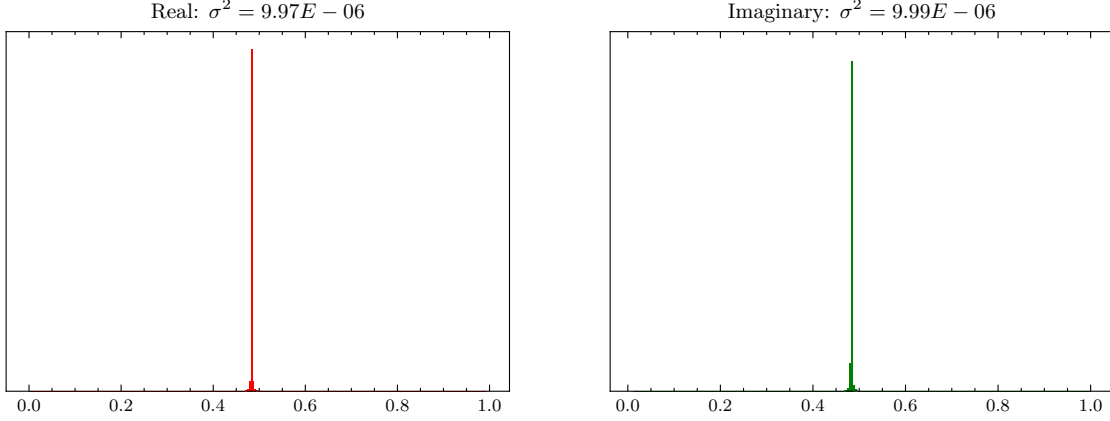


Figure 4: Distribution and variance of minmax-normalized COST2100 real/imaginary channels ( $N = 99000$ ) images.

ance of changes between subsequent layers of the network.

Other works have studied normalization of the network’s inputs. A number of works have investigated adaptive normalization techniques for time series estimation tasks [30–32]. In [33], the authors proposed a trainable input network which learns to shift, scale, and filter the unnormalized data while training the target network for a time series prediction task.

### 2.1.1 Spherical Normalization

Rather than apply minmax normalization, which is adversely impacted by outliers, we propose spherical normalization. Before describing spherical normalization in detail, consider z-score normalization. Given a random variable,  $x$ , with mean  $\mu$  and standard deviation  $\sigma$ . The z-score normalized version of this random variable is given as

$$z = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma^2}. \quad (1)$$

Assuming  $x$  is normally distributed, the resulting random variable,  $z$ , is a standard normal distribution such that  $z \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$ . Inspired by z-score normalization, we seek a normalization scheme which adjusts the range of each channel sample. Under spherical normalization,

each sample in the dataset is scaled by its power. Denote the  $k$ -th downlink CSI matrix of the dataset as  $\mathbf{H}_d^k$ . The spherically normalized version of the downlink CSI is given as

$$\check{\mathbf{H}}_d^k = \frac{\mathbf{H}_d^k}{\|\mathbf{H}_d^k\|_2}. \quad (2)$$

Observe that (2) is similar to (1) without the mean shift in the numerator<sup>1</sup> and with the power term of each CSI sample rather than the variance of the entire distribution. After applying (2) to each sample, minmax scaling is applied to the entire dataset. The resulting dataset under spherical normalization can exhibit a larger variance than the same dataset under minmax scaling (compare Fig. 5 with Fig. 4).

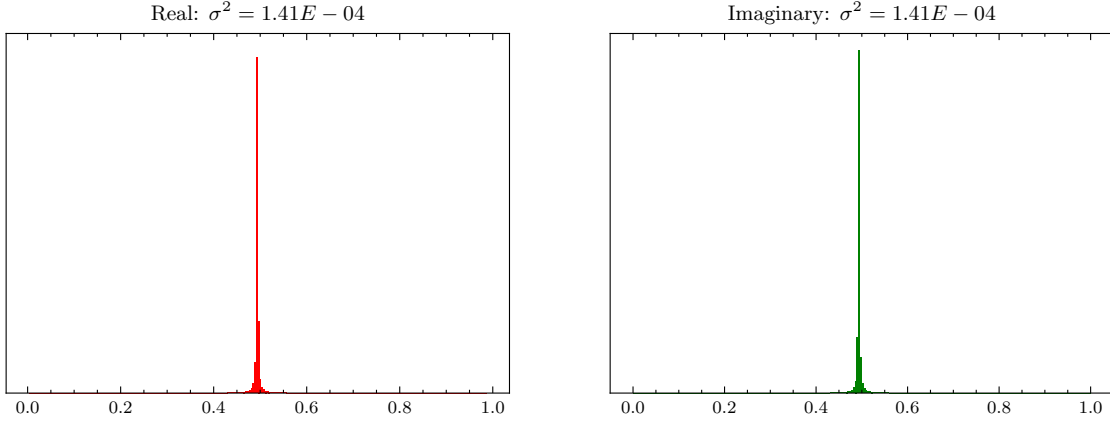


Figure 5: Distribution and variance of COST2100 real/imaginary channels under spherical normalization ( $N = 99000$ ) images.

Beyond desirable properties in the input distribution, spherical normalization also results in an objective function which is better matched with the evaluation criterion. Neural networks for CSI estimation are optimized using the mean-squared error loss,

$$\text{MSE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N \|\mathbf{H}_k - \hat{\mathbf{H}}_k\|^2, \quad (3)$$

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<sup>1</sup>Since the mean of COST2100 data is  $\approx 10^{-10}$ , we can safely ignore this mean shift in spherical normalization.

while channel state reconstruction accuracy is measured in terms of normalized mean-squared error,

$$\text{NMSE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N \frac{\|\mathbf{H}_k - \hat{\mathbf{H}}_k\|^2}{\|\mathbf{H}_k\|^2}. \quad (4)$$

Observe that when the  $\mathbf{H}_k$  ( $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_k$ ) in (3) is replaced with  $\check{\mathbf{H}}_k$  ( $\hat{\check{\mathbf{H}}}_k$ ), we have

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N \|\check{\mathbf{H}}_k - \hat{\check{\mathbf{H}}}_k\|^2 &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N \left\| \frac{\mathbf{H}_k}{\|\mathbf{H}_k\|^2} - \frac{\hat{\mathbf{H}}_k}{\|\mathbf{H}_k\|^2} \right\|^2 \\ &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N \frac{\|\mathbf{H}_k - \hat{\mathbf{H}}_k\|^2}{\|\mathbf{H}_k\|^2}, \end{aligned}$$

which is equivalent to (4). Thus, a neural network optimized with MSE as the loss function and trained using spherically normalized data is in fact being optimized with respect to NMSE of the original data.

## 2.2 Results

Training on spherically normalized data and optimizing with respect to NMSE can yield better accuracy. Fig. 6 demonstrates this improvement for CsiNet and CsiNet Pro on the COST2100 dataset. For both networks, the number of

## 3 MarkovNet: A Deep Learning-based Differential Autoencoder

In this section, we consider methods for exploiting temporal correlation between CSI of subsequent timeslots. Assuming the channel does not change substantially within a certain

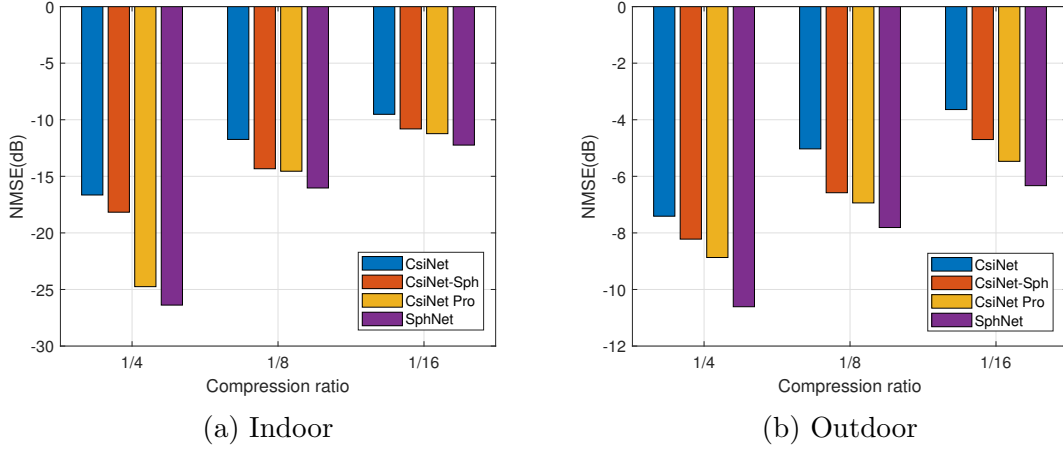


Figure 6: Reconstruction error for CsiNet [18] and CsiNet Pro with and without spherical normalization. SphNet combines CsiNet Pro with spherical normalization [34].

window of time, a reasonably accurate CSI estimate at some time  $t - 1$  can be used to estimate the CSI at time  $t$ . Generically, we can write this estimator as

$$\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = h(\hat{\mathbf{H}}_{t-1}) \quad (5)$$

where  $\mathbf{H}_t$  is the CSI matrix at time  $t$  and  $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t$  is its estimator. The estimation error under  $\hat{H}_t$  is

$$\mathbf{E}_t = \mathbf{H}_t - \hat{\mathbf{H}}_t. \quad (6)$$

### 3.1 Related Work

Prior work in temporal correlation for CSI estimation utilized state-space methods such as the Kalman filter [35–37]. Since it relies on explicit state space and noise models, the Kalman filter’s predictive power in CSI estimation is limited. Furthermore, such work generally does not propose a method for feedback compression, making comparison with the following ML methods difficult.

Recent works have leveraged recurrent neural networks (RNNs) to exploit temporal correlation for CSI estimation [23, 38–41]. RNNs include recurrent layers, such as the long short-term memory (LSTM) cell or the gated recurrent unit (GRU), which are capable of learning long-term dependencies of a given process through backpropagation [42] and can be used to predict future states of the process [43].

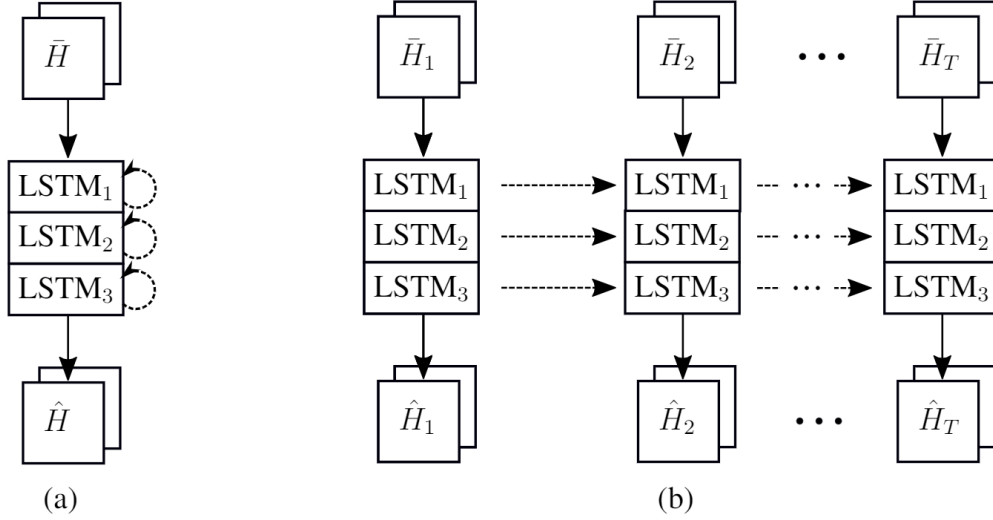


Figure 7: An example of LSTMs used for CSI estimation. (a) “Stacked” LSTM network of depth 3 shown with recurrent connections. (b) Same LSTM network “unrolled” into  $T$  timeslots

RNNs have been used extensively in natural language processing (NLP) for machine translation [44] and sentiment extraction [45]. For such works in NLP, authors have empirically found “stacked” or “deep” RNNs to be effective (e.g., Fig. 7), hypothesizing that having multiple recurrent layers allows the network to extract different semantic timescales [45, 46]. Works in CSI estimation have taken cues from this work in NLP, proposing CSI estimation networks with stacked LSTMs after a sequence of autoencoders [23]. While such work has demonstrated the utility of RNNs, the computational cost of LSTMs can be prohibitively high. For example, the RNN portion of the network proposed in [23] accounts for  $10^8$  additional parameters. Since channel estimation should not place an undue computational burden on the communications system, LSTMs can be problematic.

### 3.2 Methods

Rather than use RNNs to extract temporal dependencies in CSI data, we proposed a lightweight network based on the principle of differential encoding. We trained a network to estimate the error (6) under a linear estimator,

$$\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = \hat{\mathbf{H}}_{t-1} \mathbf{W}$$

where  $\mathbf{W} \in \mathbb{C}^{R_b \times R_b}$  is the minimum mean squared error (MMSE) estimator.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{H}_t &= \mathbf{H}_{t-1} \mathbf{W} + \mathbf{E}_t \\ \mathbf{H}_{t-1}^H \mathbf{H}_t &= \mathbf{H}_{t-1}^H \mathbf{H}_{t-1} \mathbf{W} + \mathbf{H}_{t-1}^H \mathbf{E}_t \end{aligned}$$

Under the principle of orthogonality, the error term  $\mathbf{E}_t$  is orthogonal with the observed data, and the product  $\mathbf{H}_{t-1}^H \mathbf{E}_t$  becomes a zero matrix. Denoting the cross correlation matrix as  $\mathbf{R}_i = \mathbb{E} [\mathbf{H}_{t-i}^H \mathbf{H}_t]$ .

$$\mathbf{W} = \mathbf{R}_0^{-1} \mathbf{R}_1$$

In practice, the population correlation matrices are estimated via finite samples of size  $N$ ,

$$\hat{\mathbf{R}}_i = \frac{1}{N} \sum_j^N \mathbf{H}_{t-i}^H(j) \mathbf{H}_t(j),$$

where  $\mathbf{H}_t(j)$  is the  $j$ -th sample in the training set. The MMSE estimator based on the sample correlation matrices is written as

$$\hat{\mathbf{W}} = \hat{\mathbf{R}}_0^{-1} \hat{\mathbf{R}}_1.$$



We can further simplify this estimator to a scalar,  $\gamma \in \mathbb{R}$ , as

$$\hat{\gamma} = \frac{\sum_k^{R_d} \sum_l^{N_b} \hat{\mathbf{R}}_1(k, l)}{\sum_k^{R_d} \sum_l^{N_b} \hat{\mathbf{R}}_0(k, l)},$$

where  $k$  ( $l$ ) are the row (column) indices of the correlation matrices. Under the estimator  $\gamma$ , we proposed to encode the error,  $\mathbf{E}_t$ , using a convolutional autoencoder,  $f(\mathbf{E}_t)$ ,

$$\hat{\mathbf{E}}_t = g(f(\mathbf{E}_t, \vec{\theta}_e), \vec{\theta}_d),$$

where  $\mathbf{E}_t = \mathbf{H}_t - \gamma \hat{\mathbf{H}}_{t-1}$ . The base station has access to the estimators  $\gamma$  and  $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_{t-1}$ , and the resulting CSI estimate at  $t$  is

$$\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = \hat{\gamma} \hat{\mathbf{H}}_{t-1} + \hat{\mathbf{E}}_t$$

## MarkovNet

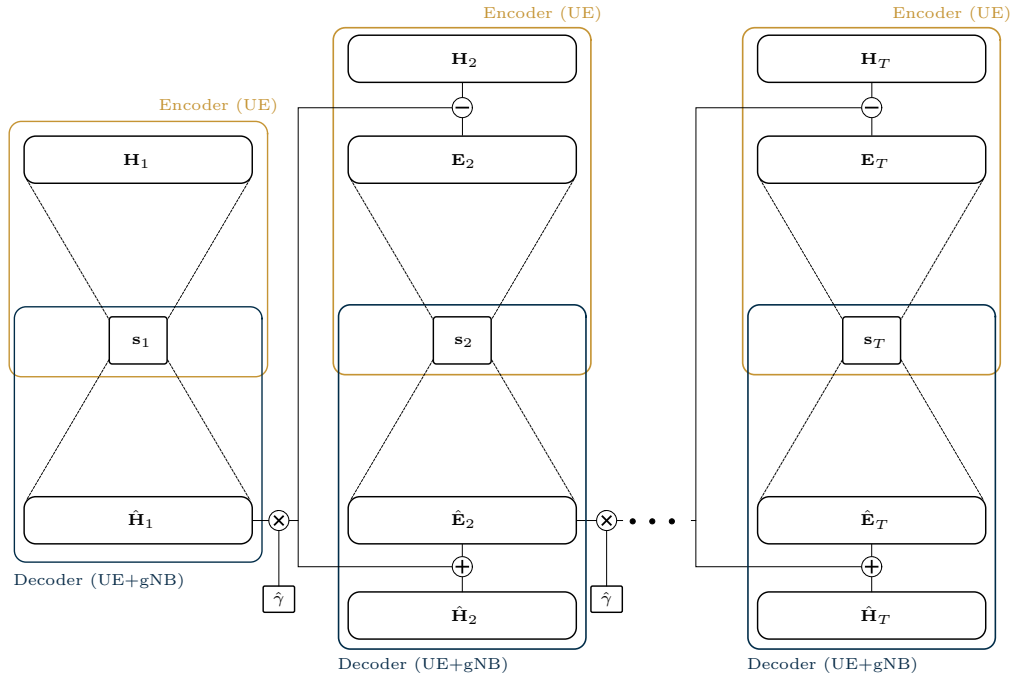


Figure 8: Abstract architecture for MarkovNet. Networks at  $t \geq 2$  are trained to predict the estimation error,  $\mathbf{E}_t$ .

### 3.3 Numerical Results

We compare MarkovNet with CsiNet-LSTM [23] on the indoor and outdoor COST2100 datasets (for details, see Section 1.2). For MarkovNet, we train the network at the first timeslot for 1000 epochs. In each subsequent timeslot, we initialize the network using the weights from the previous timeslot and train for 200 epochs. We use a batch size of 200. We perform a training/testing split of 75k/25k samples, and we estimate  $\gamma$  using the training set. To compare the estimation accuracy of each network, we report the NMSE.

Figure 9 shows a random sample from the test set,  $\mathbf{H}$ , and the estimates produced by CsiNet-LSTM and MarkovNet for a CR of  $\frac{1}{4}$ . This sample contains three “peak” magnitude regions. While both networks manage to capture the two larger samples, MarkovNet is able to recover the small peak magnitude region which CsiNet-LSTM fails to produce.

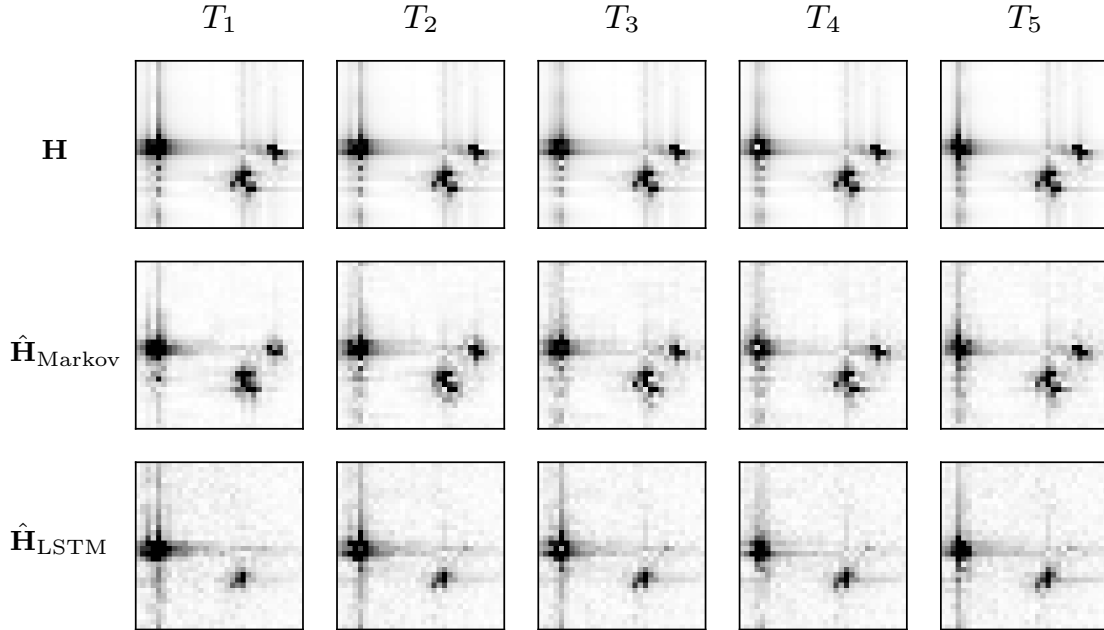


Figure 9: CSI ( $\mathbf{H}$ ), MarkovNet estimates ( $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_{\text{Markov}}$ ), and CsiNet-LSTM estimates ( $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_{\text{LSTM}}$ ) across five timeslots ( $T_1$  through  $T_5$ ) on one outdoor channel sample from the test set, using  $\text{CR} = \frac{1}{4}$ .

## 4 CsiNet-Quant

While previous works investigated neural architectures for learned encoding-decoding of CSI data, such architectures rely on continuous valued latent representations (codewords). The use of such continuous codewords presents at least two issues:

1. **Quantization:** Modulation protocols require quantized data to accommodate bit string representations and IQ constellations. To make neural autoencoders compatible with common modulation schemes, trainable CSI compression techniques should incorporate quantized codewords in the learning process.
2. **Metrics for Compressibility:** Works in learnable CSI compression typically present a given network’s reconstruction error a range of compression ratios (e.g., [18, 22]) but do not discuss the network’s compatibility with coding schemes. Coding techniques such as arithmetic coding [47]) require probability estimates of the encoded symbols in order to operate [48]. Based on Shannon’s coding theorem [49], the entropy of the encoded alphabet establishes is the minimum transmission rate needed to encode a given symbol. To describe their compatibility with optimal coding schemes, neural CSI compression techniques should be presented with the entropy of their encoded alphabets in order to assess the realized encoding distributions.

### 4.1 Related Work

Prior work has investigated feedback quantization in deep learning-based CSI compression. In [24], the authors propose DeepCMC, an autoencoder structure where the continuous compressed elements are discretized via uniform quantization then encoded using context adaptive binary arithmetic coding (CABAC) [50]. Since uniform quantization is non-differentiable, the authors do not perform true quantization during training and instead

apply uniformly distributed noise to approximate quantization noise [24]. In [25], the authors propose AnalogDeepCMC, which encodes latent elements as power-normalized complex elements and decodes using maximal ratio combining. The authors also report the achieved rate of AnalogDeepCMC for different CSI overhead ratios.

To achieve discrete codewords with valid probability distributions, we consider works in neural discrete representations. In [51], the authors propose *vector quantization* (VQ), which partitions a  $r$ -dimensional latent space into  $d$ -dimensional vectors and quantizes the latent space based on a nearest neighbor assignment. In [52], the authors proposed soft-to-hard VQ (SHVQ), a softmax relaxation of VQ which enables a latent entropy term which can be used to regularize the loss function. Unlike the prior work, SHVQ allows for end-to-end training with feedback quantization.

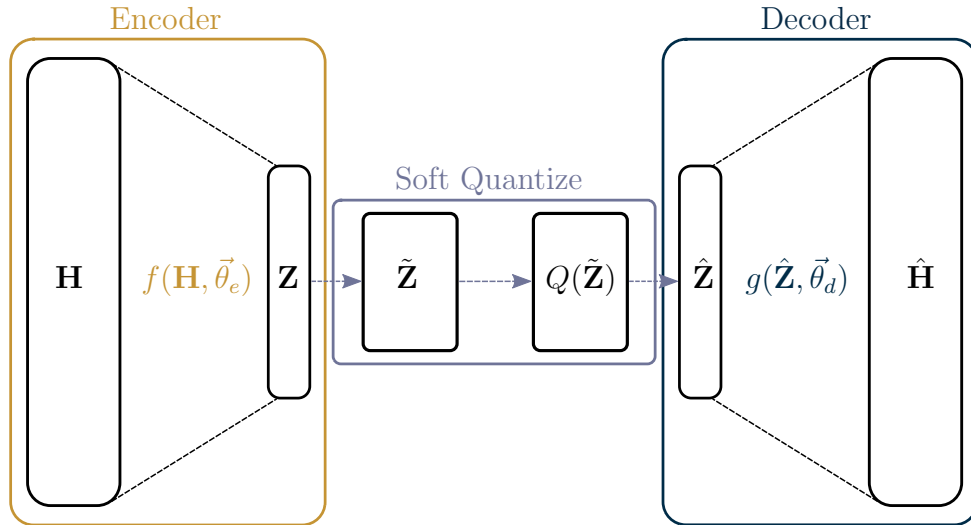


Figure 10: Abstract architecture for CsiNet-Quant. SoftQuantize layer ( $Q(\tilde{\mathbf{Z}})$ ) is a continuous, softmax-based relaxation of a  $d$ -dimensional quantization of the latent layer  $\mathbf{Z}$ .

## 4.2 A Vector Quantized Autoencoder for Trainable Codewords

To incorporate discrete latent codewords in the learning process, we propose to use soft-to-hard vector quantization framework proposed in [52]. We choose a vector dimension,  $m$ , by

which to partition the latent space  $\mathbf{Z} = f(\mathbf{H}, \theta_e)$ , and we denote the vectorized version of  $\mathbf{Z} \in \mathbb{R}^r$  as  $\tilde{\mathbf{Z}} \in \mathbb{R}^{r/m \times m}$ . We define the  $m$ -dimensional codebook of size  $L$  as  $\mathbf{C} \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times L}$ . The soft assignments of the  $j$ -th latent vector  $\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j$  can be written as

$$\phi(\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j) = \left[ \frac{\exp(-\sigma \|\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j - \mathbf{c}_\ell\|^2)}{\sum_{i=1}^L \exp(-\sigma \|\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j - \mathbf{c}_i\|^2)} \right]_{\ell \in [L]} \in \mathbb{R}^L \quad (7)$$

(7) is typically referred to as the *softmax* function, which is commonly used as a differentiable alternative to the maximum function in deep learning. The hyperparameter  $\sigma$  controls the temperature of the softmax scores, with a lower  $\sigma$  yielding a more uniform distribution and a higher  $\sigma$  yielding a “peakier” distribution (i.e.,  $\sigma \rightarrow \infty \Rightarrow \phi(\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j) \rightarrow \max(\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j)$ ). Using the soft assignments, the latent vectors are quantized based on the codewords  $\mathbf{C} \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times L}$ ,

$$Q(\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j, \mathbf{C}) = \phi(\tilde{\mathbf{z}}_j) \mathbf{C}^T. \quad (8)$$

The quantized version of the latent variable is taken by reshaping  $\mathbf{Q}(\tilde{\mathbf{Z}}, \mathbf{C}) \in \mathbb{R}^{r/m \times m}$  into  $\hat{\mathbf{Z}} \in \mathbb{R}^d$ , and the decoder produces the CSI estimates as  $\hat{\mathbf{H}} = h(\hat{\mathbf{Z}}, \mathbf{C})$ . An abstract illustration of an autoencoder using soft quantization can be seen in Figure 10.

#### 4.2.1 Entropy-regularization

To optimize the network with soft quantization, we adapt the loss function to resemble the canonical rate-distortion function by adding an entropy penalization term,

$$\underset{\theta_e, \theta_d, \mathbf{C}}{\operatorname{argmin}} \underbrace{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \|\mathbf{H}_i - g(Q(f(\mathbf{H}_i, \theta_e), \mathbf{C}), \theta_d)\|^2}_{\text{distortion loss}} + \underbrace{\lambda (\|\theta_e\|^2 + \|\theta_d\|^2 + \|\mathbf{C}\|^2)}_{\ell^2 \text{ penalty}} + \underbrace{m\beta H(\phi)}_{\text{rate loss}}. \quad (9)$$

Where  $H(\phi) = H(p, q)$  is the crossentropy based on the hard and soft probability estimates  $p$  and  $q$ , respectively. Before defining the estimates  $p$  and  $q$ , we briefly discuss the population

probabilities of the latent codewords. Denote the symbol encoder/decoder pair as  $E : \mathbb{R}^m \rightarrow [L]^m / D : [L]^m \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ . Denote the distribution of latent variables as  $\mathbf{Z}$  such that  $\mathbf{z} \sim \mathbf{Z}$  with the encoder  $E(\mathbf{Z}) = \mathbf{e}$ . The entropy of  $\mathbf{Z}$  is given as

$$H(E(\mathbf{Z})) = - \sum_{\mathbf{e} \in [L]^m} P(E(\mathbf{Z}) = \mathbf{e}) \log_2(P(E(\mathbf{Z}) = \mathbf{e})).$$

In practice, the true population probabilities  $P(E(\mathbf{Z}))$  are inaccessible, and we must estimate the probability masses via finite sampling over the encoder's outputs,  $e(\mathbf{z})$ . The hard probability estimate  $p_j$  of the  $j$ -th codeword is

$$p_j = \frac{|\{e_l(\mathbf{z}_i) | l \in [m], i \in [N], e_l(\mathbf{z}_i) = j\}|}{mN}.$$

The soft assignments of  $\phi$  admit valid probability masses,  $q_j = \phi(\tilde{\mathbf{z}})$ , over the codewords. Using histogram estimates  $p_j$  and the soft assignments  $q_j$ , the crossentropy term is written

$$H(\phi) := H(p, q) = - \sum_{j=1}^L p_j \log q_j = H(p) + D_{\text{KL}}(p||q)$$

where  $D_{\text{KL}}(p||q) = - \sum_{j=1}^L p_j \log \left( \frac{p_j}{q_j} \right)$  is the Kullback Liebler (KL) divergence. Due to the nonnegativity of  $D_{\text{KL}}$ ,  $H(\phi)$  is an upper bound on  $H(p)$ , and so (9) is a valid optimization target.

The mean squared error of the soft (hard) network is given as  $e_S = \|\tilde{F}(\mathbf{H}) - \mathbf{H}\|^2$  ( $e_H = \|\hat{F}(\mathbf{H}) - \mathbf{H}\|^2$ ), and the performance gap is given as  $\text{gap}(t) = e_H - e_S$ .

### 4.3 Results

We use SHVQ [52] to perform quantization on different CSI estimation networks. We used the COST2100 data introduced in Section 1.2. We train the network in three stages:

1. **Autoencoder pretraining:** Training the autoencoder ( $\hat{\mathbf{H}} = g(f(\mathbf{H}, \vec{\theta}_e), \vec{\theta}_d)$ ) without latent quantization (1000 epochs). The autoencoder is trained with the MSE objective function.
2. **Center pretraining:** Training soft quantization layer to initialize centers,  $\mathbf{C}$  (1000 epochs). Using  $\vec{\theta}_e$  from stage 1, the soft quantizer is trained on  $\mathbf{Z} = f(\mathbf{H}, \vec{\theta}_e)$  to minimize the cluster energy,  $\operatorname{argmin}_{\mathbf{C}} \sum_{i=1}^N \|\tilde{\mathbf{Z}} - Q(\tilde{\mathbf{Z}})\|^2$ .
3. **SHVQ finetuning:** Using the results of stage 1 ( $\vec{\theta}_e, \vec{\theta}_d$ ) and stage 2 ( $\mathbf{C}$ ), we finetune the autoencoder and the soft quantization layer (50 epochs). The soft-quantized autoencoder is trained with the entropy-regularized MSE (Equation (9)).

We use a batch size of 200. We perform a training/testing split of 75k/25k sample. For stage 3, we sweep the parameter  $\beta$  to realize different latent entropy values  $H(\phi)$ . To visualize the rate-distortion of the proposed network, we show the network’s NMSE versus the bits per pixel (bppps),

$$\text{bppps} = \frac{rm}{2n_b R_d} H(\phi) = CR \times mH(\phi).$$

We also perform experiments with arithmetic encoding on the hard quantized centers, and we report the resulting bits per pixel as

$$\text{bppps} = \frac{\frac{1}{N} \sum_i b_{\text{AE}}}{2n_b R_d}.$$

where  $b_{\text{AE}}$  is the average bits per feedback message under arithmetic encoding.

We demonstrate the performance of CsiNet, SphNet, and DualNet-MAG under latent quantization. Table 3 summarizes the parameters used in these tests.

Table 3: Parameters/hyperparameters used for CsiNet-Quant.

Symbol	Values	Description
$L$	1024	Number of centers/codewords for VQ.
$d$	4	Dimensionality of vectors in VQ.
$r$	4	Number of elements at the encoder’s output (i.e., dimension of latent layer).

#### 4.3.1 Rate-Distortion

Figures 11 and 12 show the performance of CsiNet-Quant under minmax and spherical normalization, respectively.

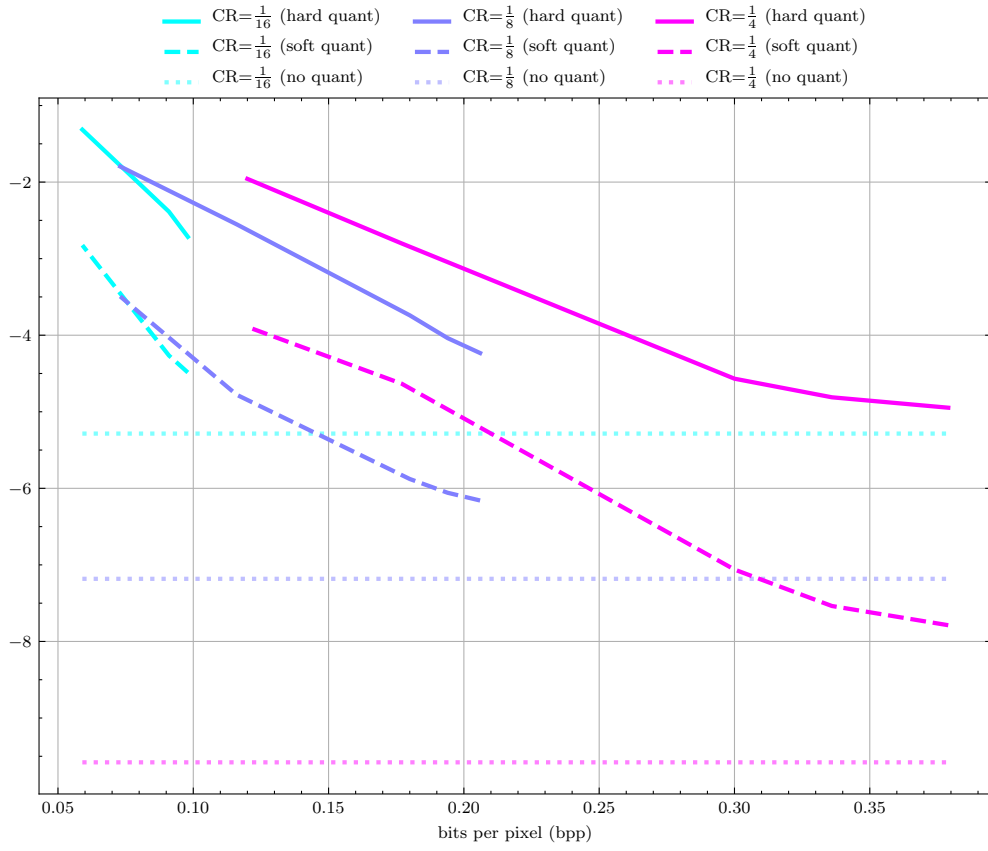


Figure 11: Rate distortion of CsiNet-Quant under minmax normalization using:  $L = 1024$  centers,  $d = 4$ . Hard, soft, and no quantization performance shown for each CR.



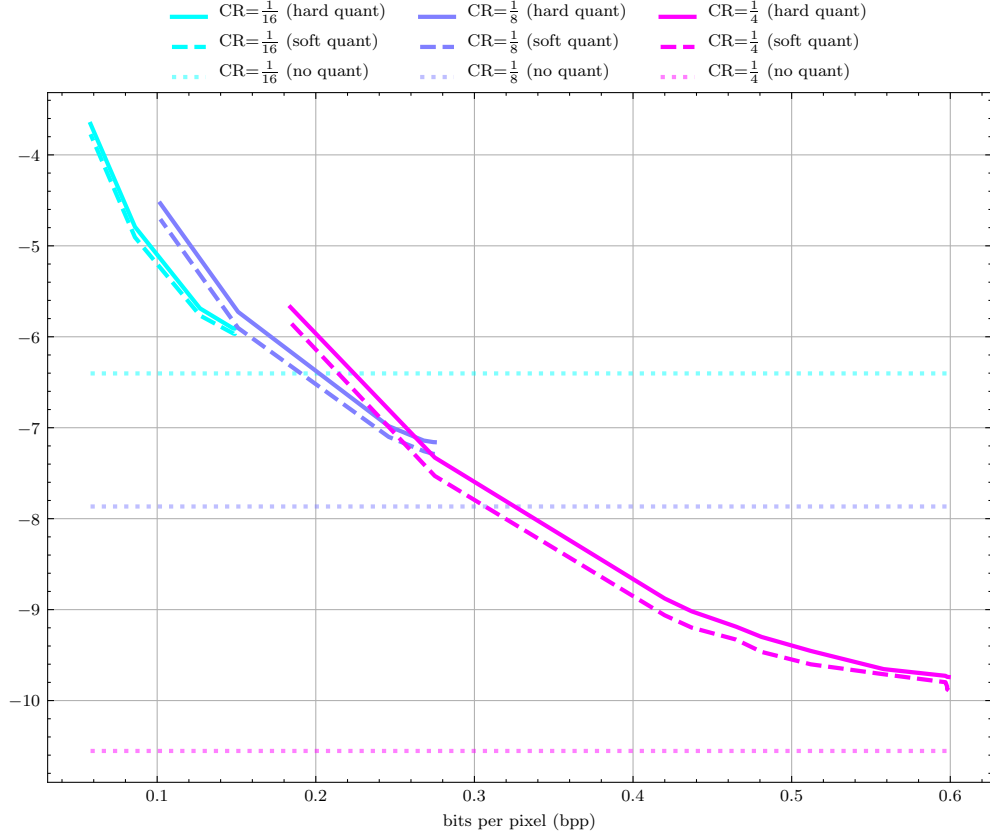


Figure 12: Rate distortion of CsiNet-Quant under spherical normalization using:  $L = 1024$  centers,  $d = 4$ . Hard, soft, and no quantization performance shown for each CR.

## 5 Conclusion

In this proposal, we discussed techniques for efficient MIMO channel state information (CSI) estimation. We outlined the author’s prior work using spherical normalization, which scales each CSI sample by its power, and a deep learning framework for differential encoding, which exploits temporal correlation between CSI at subsequent timeslots. We outlined a future research effort in soft-to-hard vector quantization for practical CSI feedback compression, and we presented initial results based on the SHVQ framework for this network.

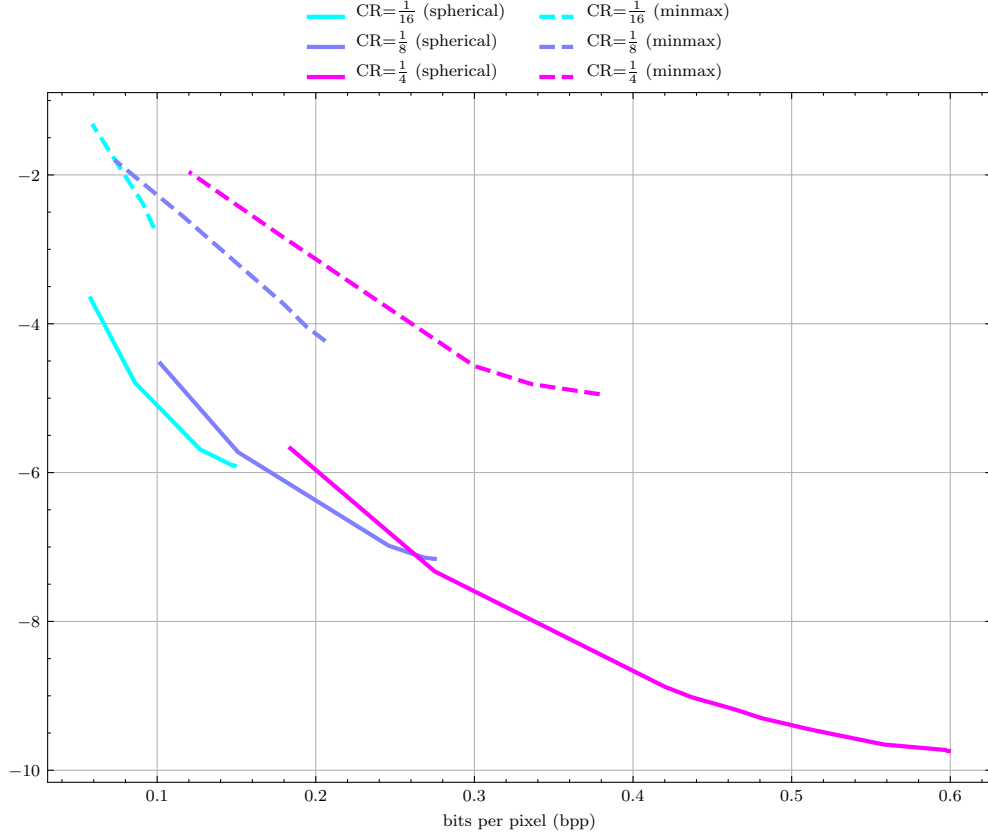


Figure 13: Rate distortion under hard quantization for both minmax (dotted line) and spherical (solid line) normalization using.

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