**Abstract**

Variations in the acoustic properties of ultrasound waves as they propagate through soft tissue contain information regarding the pathological state of tissue scanned. Acoustic parameters that are currently utilized to detect and differentiate tissue types, include: attenuation, speed of sound, integrated backscatter, scatterer size, autocorrelation functions, scatterer number density, mean scatterer spacing and tissue elasticity imaging that are estimated using quantitative analysis of either ultrasound B-mode (envelope) or radiofrequency data. In this dissertation we examine the spectral characteristics of ultrasound attenuation and propose novel signal processing methods for estimating the attenuation coefficient.

Attenuation in ultrasound refers to the reduction in amplitude of the ultrasound wave as a function of distance as it propagates through the imaging medium. We focus on examining spectral variations introduced due to attenuation in soft tissues using ultrasound pulse-echo systems. We develop and evaluate three new attenuation estimation algorithms, two based in the spectral domain, namely the spectral cross-correlation method based on the spectral shift concept, a hybrid method that incorporates the benefits of both the spectral difference and shift approaches and finally an improved time-domain based algorithm using narrowband bandpass filtering techniques.

The proposed spectral shift method, referred as the spectral cross-correlation algorithm, compares entire power spectra instead of the spectral centroid or the center frequency shift. It therefore provides more robust and stable estimation of the attenuation coefficient from the power spectrum. The proposed hybrid spectral domain estimation method incorporates the benefits while reducing the limitations associated with both the spectral shift and spectral difference methods for attenuation estimation. The hybrid method unlike the spectral difference methods is independent of backscatter variations and provides robust attenuation coefficient estimation with fewer spectral noise artifacts when compared to the centroid downshift based algorithms. Ultrasound simulation and experimental results using tissue mimicking phantom demonstrate that the estimation accuracy of the proposed methods are better than spectral shift method (centroid downshift method), while also providing stable estimation at boundaries with variations in the backscatter when compared to the spectral difference method (reference phantom method).

Estimation results for *in-vivo* liver and breast data also demonstrate that proposed estimation methods outperform the classical frequency-domain estimation methods in terms of accuracy and precision. Promising results are obtained for the differentiation malignant tumors from benign masses and to characterize the diffuse tissue properties using the attenuation coefficient estimates.

**Contents**

**Abstract**

**Acknowledgements**

**Contents**

**List of Figures and Tables**

**Chapter 1 : Specific Aims 1**

* 1. Research Statement 2
  2. Organization of the Dissertation 4

**Chapter 2 : Human Health Significance 8**

2.1 Applications for Ultrasound Attenuation Measurement and Imaging 9

2.2 Attenuation Estimation Methods 15

2.2.1 Time-Domain Attenuation Estimation Methods 15

2.2.2 Frequency-Domain Attenuation Estimation Methods 18

2.2.2.1 Spectral Difference Approach 19

2.2.2.2 Spectral Shift Approach 22

2.3 General Framework for Modeling Ultrasound Attenuation 24

2.3.1 Linear System Model 25

2.3.2 Effect of Backscattering 26

2.3.3 Effect of Attenuation 29

2.3.4 Effect of Gating and Windowing 30

**Chapter 3 : Recursive Bayesian Regularization Applied to Ultrasound Strain Imaging 34**

3.1 Procedures for Calculating the Power Spectrum 35

3.2 Determination of the Optimal Block Size 42

3.3 Compensation for Diffraction Effects 48

3.4 Computer-Simulated Phantoms 52

**Chapter 4 : Unbiased Subsample Displacement Interpolation 55**

4.1 Introduction 56

4.2 Spectral Cross-Correlation Algorithm 57

4.3 Materials and Methods 60

4.4 Simulation Results 62

4.5 Experimental Results 68

4.6 Conclusion 73

Appendix – A : Spectral Cross-Correlation Algorithm 74

**Chapter 5 : Calculating Strain From Displacement 78**

5.1 Hybrid Spectral Domain Algorithm 80

5.2 Materials and Methods 85

5.2.1 Ultrasound RF Data Simulation 85

5.2.2 Experimental RF Data Acquisition 86

5.2.3 Attenuation Estimation Methods 88

5.3 Simulation Results 89

5.4 Experimental Results 97

5.5 Conclusion 102

Appendix – B : Hybrid Spectral Domain Algorithm 104

**Chapter 6 : Narrowband Video Signal Analysis Method 106**

6.1 Video Signal Analysis Method 107

6.2 Materials and Methods 109

6.3 Simulation Results 110

6.4 Experimental Results 117

6.5 Discussion 121

6.6 Conclusion 122

**Chapter 7 : *In-vivo* Attenuation Measurements in the Liver 123**

7.1 *In-vivo* Estimation of Attenuation in Liver 124

7.2. Materials and Methods 127

7.3 Attenuation Estimation Results for Patient data 134

7.3.1 Attenuation Estimation Results for Liver Tumors / Benign Masses 135

7.3.2 Attenuation Estimation Results for Diffuse Liver Diseases 161

7.4 Discussion of Negative Attenuation Coefficient Values 174

7.5 Conclusion 181

**Chapter 8 : Transcranial Doppler Monitoring of the Middle Cerebral Artery 183**

8.1 Physiological insights from transcranial Doppler 184

8.2. Methods to increase robustness of unstable data 187

8.2.1 Examination room protocol 192

8.2.1 Retrospective inspection 192

8.3 Microemboli and peak velocity results 190

**Chapter 9 : *In vivo* Quantification of Carotid Plaque Strain 221**

9.1 Strain estimation algorithm 221

9.1.1 Hierarchical framework

9.1.2 Displacement estimation

9.1.3 Strain estimation

9.1.4 Calculation of derived quantities

9.2 Subject case studies

9.2.1 Subject 999

9.3 References

**Chapter 10 : Contributions of this Dissertation & Future Work 221**

9.1 Contributions of this Dissertation 221

9.2 Future Work 224

**List of Figures**

Fig. 3.1 Comparison of execution times between FFT and CZT 38

Fig. 3.2 The overall scheme utilized for RF signal processing 40

Fig. 3.3 The overall procedure for calculating the block power spectrum 41

Fig. 3.4 Definition of FWHM from a power spectrum 43

Fig. 3.5 Estimations of the FWHMs and attenuation coefficients with different gated window sizes 46

Fig. 3.6 Attenuation coefficient estimates obtained with different numbers of gated data segments 47

Fig. 3.7 Diffraction compensation with respect to the reference echo signal 50

Fig. 3.8 Attenuation estimation with and without diffraction compensation 51

Fig. 3.9 Computer-simulated numerical phantoms 54

Fig. 4.1 Attenuation coefficient estimates for simulated uniform phantoms along the entire beam path using SCC algorithm 66

Fig. 4.2 Attenuation coefficient images of TM phantom data (0dB inclusion) 71

Fig. 4.3 Attenuation coefficient images of TM phantom data (3dB inclusion) 72

Fig. 5.1 B-mode images for simulated TM phantoms 86

Fig. 5.2 B-mode images for TM phantom with a cylindrical inclusion 88

Fig. 5.3 B-mode and attenuation coefficient image of the spectral difference

method 91

Fig. 5.4 B-mode and attenuation coefficient image of the spectral shift

method and the hybrid method 92

Fig. 5.5 Comparison of estimated performance of spectral domain methods 94

Fig. 5.6 Estimated attenuation coefficients for different backscatter levels between the inclusion and background 96

Fig. 5.7 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images of TM phantom (3dB inclusion) 98

Fig. 5.8 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images of TM phantom (0dB inclusion) 99

Fig. 5.9 Estimated attenuation coefficients of TM phantom (3 regions) 101

Fig. 6.1 Logarithm of the relative echogenicity versus depth 111

Fig. 6.2 The relative echogenicity between the sample and reference as derived from the original broadband signal and after bandpass filtering signals 113

Fig. 6.3 Attenuation coefficient images for the simulated uniform phantom 115

Fig. 6.4 Estimated attenuation coefficients using different reference phantoms 116

Fig. 6.5 Attenuation coefficient images for Gammex/RMI prototype phantom 118

Fig. 6.6 Estimated attenuation coefficients for wideband and bandpass filtered RF signals 119

Fig. 6.7 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images of TM phantom with cylindrical inclusion 120

Fig. 7.1 B-mode image of *in-vivo* liver data for Patient 17 129

Fig. 7.2 Normalized power spectra vs. gated window size 131

Fig. 7.3 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 17 133

Fig. 7.4 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 33 138

Fig. 7.5 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 20 140

Fig. 7.6 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 27 142

Fig. 7.7 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 32 144

Fig. 7.8 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 21 146

Fig. 7.9 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 19 148

Fig. 7.10 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 18 150

Fig. 7.11 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 22 152

Fig. 7.12 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 30 154

Fig. 7.13 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 35 156

Fig. 7.14 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 31 158

Fig. 7.15 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 13 160

Fig. 7.16 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 23 163

Fig. 7.17 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images for Patient 23 164

Fig. 7.18 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 28 166

Fig. 7.19 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images for Patient 28 167

Fig. 7.20 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 29 169

Fig. 7.21 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images for Patient 29 170

Fig. 7.22 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 36 172

Fig. 7.23 B-mode and attenuation coefficient images for Patient 36 173

Fig. 7.24 B-mode image of *in-vivo* liver hemangioma 176

Fig. 7.25 Attenuation estimation results of the patient with liver hemangioma 177

Fig. 7.26 Logarithm of power spectra of reference and sample and center

frequency changes vs. depth 180

Fig. 8.1 B-mode images of 10 consecutive RF frames 188

Fig. 8.2 Full frame averaged B-mode image obtained 10 consecutive frames 189

Fig. 8.3 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 9 194

Fig. 8.4 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 12 196

Fig. 8.5 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 13 198

Fig. 8.6 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 21 200

Fig. 8.7 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 29 201

Fig. 8.8 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 38 204

Fig. 8.9 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 15 205

Fig. 8.10 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 31 206

Fig. 8.11 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 32 208

Fig. 8.12 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 20 with DCIS 210

Fig. 8.13 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 27 213

Fig. 8.14 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 33 214

Fig. 8.15 B-mode and attenuation estimation results for Patient 35 215

Fig. 8.16 B-mode image of *in-vivo* breast mass 217

Fig. 8.17 Logarithm of power spectra of reference and sample and center

frequency changes vs. depth 219

**List of Tables**

Table 4.1 Estimated attenuation coefficients of the spectral cross-correlation

algorithm 63

Table 4.2 Estimated variance of the spectral cross-correlation algorithm 65

Table 4.3 Estimated attenuation coefficients of the spectral cross-correlation algorithm and the centroid downshift method 67

Table 4.4 Estimated attenuation coefficients of TM phantom 69

Table 5.1 Estimated attenuation coefficients and standard deviations 93

Table 7.1 Attenuation coefficients measured in normal and diffuse liver tissue 125

Table 7.2 Attenuation coefficients measured in liver tumors 126

Table 7.3 Pathological results obtained after biopsy for the patient *in-vivo*

liver data 136

Table 8.1 Representative values of attenuation coefficient for breast tissue 185

Table 8.2 Attenuation properties for breast tumors based on qualitative

B-mode analysis from Rotstein and Neerhut 186

Table 8.3 Pathological results obtained following biopsy from *in-vivo*

breast data 191